

## The Effectiveness of Assertiveness Training to Increase Self-Confidence in Early Adult Women Experiencing Body Dissatisfaction

Siti Aisyah Nuralifah Marimin<sup>1</sup>, Faradillah Firdaus<sup>2</sup>, Tri Sulastri<sup>3</sup>

Psychology Study Program, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Makassar,  
Indonesia<sup>1</sup>

Psychology Study Program, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Makassar,  
Indonesia<sup>2</sup>

Psychology Study Program, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Makassar,  
Indonesia<sup>3</sup>

E-mail: [aisyahmarimin123456@gmail.com](mailto:aisyahmarimin123456@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [faradillah@unm.ac.id](mailto:faradillah@unm.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>,  
[trisulastri99@unm.ac.id](mailto:trisulastri99@unm.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>

Correspondent Author: Siti Aisyah Nuralifah Marimin,

[aisyahmarimin123456@gmail.com](mailto:aisyahmarimin123456@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

Self-confidence experienced by early adult women adversely affects their individual interpersonal relationships. This study aims to determine the effect of assertive training in increasing self-confidence in early adult women who experience body dissatisfaction. This study used a quasi-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest approach involving 8 women aged 18-22 years with the criteria of experiencing high levels of body dissatisfaction and low levels of self-confidence. Data were collected using body dissatisfaction and self-confidence measurement scales, as well as observation to record relevant information or behaviors of participants, and an intervention in the form of assertive training conducted over six sessions within in 2-day period. The results of the analysis using the Wilcoxon Test showed a significance value of 0.012 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating an statistically significant increase in self-confidence. The evaluation of knowledge showed a significance value of 0.014 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating an increase in understanding among participants. Based on the study's results, it can be concluded that assertive training has a significant impact on individual self-confidence.

**Keywords:** body dissatisfaction, self-confidence, assertive behavior, early adult women

### Abstrak

Kepercayaan diri yang dialami oleh wanita dewasa awal berdampak buruk pada hubungan interpersonal individu mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh pelatihan asertif dalam meningkatkan kepercayaan diri pada wanita dewasa awal yang mengalami ketidakpuasan tubuh. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain quasi-experimental dengan pendekatan pretest-posttest satu kelompok yang melibatkan 8 wanita berusia 18-22 tahun dengan kriteria mengalami tingkat ketidakpuasan tubuh yang tinggi dan tingkat kepercayaan diri yang rendah. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan skala pengukuran ketidakpuasan tubuh dan kepercayaan diri, serta observasi untuk mencatat informasi atau perilaku peserta yang relevan, dan intervensi berupa pelatihan asertif yang dilakukan selama enam sesi dalam periode 2 hari. Hasil analisis menggunakan Uji Wilcoxon menunjukkan nilai signifikansi 0,012 ( $p < 0,05$ ), menunjukkan peningkatan kepercayaan diri yang signifikan secara statistik. Evaluasi pengetahuan menunjukkan nilai signifikansi 0,014 ( $p < 0,05$ ), artinya terjadi peningkatan pengetahuan masing-masing peserta. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa pelatihan asertif memiliki dampak yang signifikan terhadap kepercayaan diri individu.

**Kata kunci:** ketidakpuasan tubuh, kepercayaan diri, perilaku asertif, wanita dewasa awal

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the stages of individual development throughout the life span is early adulthood. Santrock (2012) explains that early adulthood is a transitional phase between adolescence and adulthood, typically occurring between the ages of 18 and 25 years. Hurlock (2013) states that the tasks of early adult development are getting a job, choosing and establishing relationships with members of the opposite sex as life partners, forming a family, caring for children, managing a household, accepting responsibilities as a citizen, and being involved in social groups.

Pratami et al. (2023) explained that women in early adulthood tend to pay more attention to their physical appearance than men. This is because individuals feel they will look more attractive, allowing them to participate in various activities. Hidayati et al. (2023) stated that individuals in Indonesia tend to choose ideal body criteria similar to those in Western countries, which include a slim body, tall stature, clean white skin, a sharp nose, and large eyes. Anjela and Ambarwati (2022) stated that adult women who do not have the body shape they desire tend to make individuals feel uncomfortable with their own body shape. Dissatisfaction with one's body shape is commonly referred to as body dissatisfaction.

Rosen et al. (1995) stated that body dissatisfaction refers to dissatisfaction with one's body shape, which can have an impact on an individual's feelings of shame and self-esteem. Edmawati (2023) states that individuals who are dissatisfied with their body condition tend to experience stress, lack self-confidence, and have difficulty interacting socially. Individuals tend to avoid or remain silent in social environments. Grogan (1999) said that individuals who experience body dissatisfaction tend to make various efforts just to achieve the desired ideal body criteria, such as dieting, exercising, and using beauty products. Research conducted by Kurniawan et al. (2023) found that individuals with a negative perception of their body shape tend to exhibit low self-confidence.

Lauster (2003) stated that self-confidence is an individual's belief in the skills they have, so that they do not need to feel anxious or worried when they want to do something they want, but still act politely, be responsible, and accept their strengths and weaknesses, so that they can be used as motivation or encouragement for achievement. Perdana (2019) said that self-confidence in early adulthood has a real role in daily activities, including in the realm of getting a partner and a job. Andiwijaya and Liauw (2019) stated that several factors influence individual self-confidence, including self-concept, self-esteem, physical condition, life experiences, and environment.

Malau and Rosito (2023) explain that self-doubt in individuals is partly caused by changes and adjustments in physical appearance, leading individuals to make comparisons with physical appearances that are considered to meet ideal criteria. Kurniawan et al. (2023) suggest that individuals with high self-confidence tend to live happier lives and are less likely to feel worried about anything. Apart from that, Mandagi (2023) states that individuals with self-confidence will be better able to improve their performance, easily establish social relationships, and be less easily influenced by others. On the other hand, Andiwijaya and Liauw (2019) said that individuals who have low self-confidence will feel nervous and anxious, have difficulty in social interactions, and have trouble in building a self-concept.

However, based on phenomena that occur in the field, it is still found that individuals in early adulthood have low levels of self-confidence because they feel dissatisfied with their physical appearance, such as an imperfect body, facial shape, teeth shape, and other skin problems, which results in feelings of shame, anxiety, restlessness,



and withdrawal from the social environment. This is in line with the results of research conducted by Pratami et al (2023), which found that 97.7% of 131 Tourism Industry students at the UPI Sumedang Regional Campus, with an age range of 18-22 years, had a low level of self-confidence caused by the beauty privilege trend. Individuals need to improve their negative attitudes and behavior to become more positive, which in turn will increase their self-confidence. Individual self-confidence can be increased through several intervention methods.

Intervention methods that can be used to increase individual self-confidence are self-instruction techniques (Navion & Khasanah, 2023), sociodrama techniques (Halik & Rakasiwi, 2020), self-talk techniques (Indriana & Rahmi, 2019), and assertive techniques (Lestari et al., 2020). Based on phenomena found in the field, the lack of self-confidence experienced by early adult women has an impact on their interpersonal relationships. Individuals experience psychological symptoms such as anxiety, nervousness, and fear when trying to interact with their social environment, so researchers conclude that it is necessary to increase self-confidence in early adulthood by using intervention in the form of assertiveness training. This is in line with the opinion expressed by Lestari et al (2020) that assertiveness training is used for individuals who experience difficulties in carrying out interpersonal relationships. Speed et al (2018) define assertiveness training as a technique using a behavioral therapy approach that can be used to help individuals express feelings or desires verbally and openly in various life situations.

Wikhayah and Abdullah (2021) said that assertive training is carried out so that individuals' positive behavior can be improved, so they can live their daily lives more optimally. Dewantari et al (2021) added that assertiveness training can be a means of developing everyone's self. In line with what was stated by Paterson (2000), the application of assertive techniques can make individuals more emotionally prosperous and have a more positive view of themselves.

Kostanski and Gullone (1998) said that individuals who have a high sense of self-esteem and self-confidence will be more able to express or voice their feelings about their body condition. Providing intervention in the form of assertiveness training has been proven to influence increasing self-confidence. Based on the results of research conducted by Wikhayah and Abdullah (2021), it was found that there was an influence in providing assertiveness training on self-confidence in teenagers with divorced parents. Apart from that, based on the research results conducted by Lestari et al. (2020), it was found that assertiveness training increased the self-confidence of female students.

## METHOD

This research uses a research design, namely a quasi-experiment with a one group pretest-posttest design approach. Creswell (2019) stated that one group pretest-posttest design is a research design that does not use a control group and takes measurements before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the intervention. The sampling technique used in this research is non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling approach. Hadi (2017) said that the purposive sampling technique is a sample selection technique that is based on special characteristics or traits that have been previously determined by the researcher. The research design can also be described through a table, as follows:



**Table 1.**  
 Research Design

<b>Group</b>	<b>Pre test</b>	<b>Treatment</b>	<b>Post test</b>
Experiment (E)	O1	X1	O2

At the start of data collection, the researchers obtained 42 participants, but only 10 met the research criteria. After selecting the 10 people, the researcher then asked about the willingness of each participant, but only 8 people were willing to attend and participate in the entire series of interventions. Therefore, the participants in this study consisted of 8 women aged 18-22 years, experiencing high levels of body dissatisfaction and having low levels of self-confidence. Data collection was conducted using a researcher-prepared Likert scale and supplemented with observations as additional data. The scale used is the self-confidence scale in accordance with the aspects proposed by Lauster (2003), namely confidence in one's abilities, optimism, responsibility, objectivity, and rationality and realism. Apart from that, the Body Dissatisfaction Scale is in accordance with the aspects proposed by Rosen et al. (1995), namely appearance self-evaluation, feeling ashamed or embarrassed, avoidance of social situations, body camouflaging, and body checking behavior. The reliability coefficients for the self-confidence scale and the body dissatisfaction scale are 0.836 and 0.855, respectively.

The intervention provided to participants took the form of assertiveness training, which was conducted over two consecutive days and consisted of six sessions. In the first session, namely Introducing, this session was conducted as a starting point to implement the intervention and foster interaction between fellow participants and the facilitator. In the first session, participants were allowed to introduce themselves through a game method called "Frame Yourself," which also included questions that could serve as a stimulus for each participant to try to become more open. In the second session, namely Interconnected Dialogues, this session was carried out to find out the condition or situation of each participant when they had trouble in behaving assertively. In this session, the researcher employed the "Paper Ball" method, allowing participants to take turns sharing their conditions according to the direction indicated by the facilitator's thrown paper ball. In the third session, titled "Inner Your Insight," the goal was to provide each participant with an understanding of the concepts of self-confidence and assertive behavior in general. After being given an experience, "Self-Reflection" is then carried out, where participants are asked in turn to determine whether the behavior described previously is passive, assertive, or aggressive.

In the fourth session, titled "Inner You Empowerment," participants were encouraged to practice, discuss, and demonstrate assertive skills with confidence. In this session, participants were asked to create a dialogue and play roles in pairs, according to the summary of the story provided and randomly chosen by the facilitator. In the fifth session, specifically the Case Study, this session was conducted to assess and improve each participant's ability to analyze and solve problems. In this session, each participant will be given several conditions to explore and write down the responses they would make when faced with these conditions. In the sixth session, namely Feedback and Closing, this session was held as the closing of the series of intervention implementation. In this session, the facilitator concludes and provides feedback on the behavior demonstrated by each participant during the intervention process. Apart from that, in this session the researcher also asked each participant to complete a post-test, activity evaluation, and knowledge evaluation.



The data analysis employed in this research is the Wilcoxon test, an alternative to the Paired Sample T-Test. Periantalo (2017) stated that the Wilcoxon Test is a non-parametric statistical test used to compare a group's measurements using a measuring instrument before and after receiving a specific intervention. Data analysis in this research was carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics 23 software.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive research data were obtained through the responses given by each participant. Descriptive data for this research will be described through mean, standard deviation, minimum value, maximum value, and categorization. Descriptive analysis in this research was carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics 23 software. Descriptive analysis can also be seen through tables, as follows:

**Table 2.**

Descriptive analysis

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Body dissatisfaction	53	62	56,37	3,88
Pretest (self-confidence)	31	39	35,25	2,49
Posttest (self-confidence)	34	55	43,75	6,49

Based on the table above, it is known that the average body dissatisfaction score is 56,37. Then, during the pretest, the average self-confidence score was 35.25. Meanwhile, during the posttest, the average self-confidence score increased, specifically to 43.75. Apart from that, there are also standard deviation values, namely SD body dissatisfaction of 3.88, SD pretest self-confidence of 2.49, and SD posttest self-confidence of 6.49. Apart from that, there is a categorization of the body dissatisfaction scale, as follows:

**Table 3.**

Body dissatisfaction scale categorization

Formula	Criteria	Category
$X < (\mu - 1,0\sigma)$	$X < 38$	Low
$(\mu - 1,0\sigma) \leq X < (\mu + 1,0\sigma)$	38-52	Currently
$(\mu + 1,0\sigma) \leq X$	$X \geq 53$	High

Based on the table above, it is evident that the scores for the body dissatisfaction scale are categorized into three groups. The first category is low with a score  $< 38$ , the second category is medium with a score range of 38-52, and the third category is high with a score  $\geq 53$ . The results of the categorization of participant responses from the body dissatisfaction scale can be seen in the table, as follows:



**Table 3.**  
 Results of Body Dissatisfaction Scale Response Categorization

Initials	Score	Category
SF	53	High
NAA	56	High
ARI	53	High
AI	58	High
SRJM	62	High
AR	62	High
N	54	High
A	53	High

Based on the table above, it is known that the body dissatisfaction score range for participants in this study was between 53 and 62. The overall score obtained by participants showed high body dissatisfaction. Apart from that, there is a categorization of the self-confidence scale, as follows:

**Table 4.**  
 Self-Confidence Scale Categorization

Formula	Criteria	Category
$X < (\mu - 1,0\sigma)$	$X < 40$	Low
$(\mu - 1,0\sigma) \leq X < (\mu + 1,0\sigma)$	40-53	Currently
$(\mu + 1,0\sigma) \leq X$	$X \geq 54$	High

Based on the table above, the scores for the self-confidence scale are divided into 3 categories. The first category is low with a score  $< 40$ . The second category is moderate with a score of 40-53. The third category is high with a score  $\geq 54$ . The results of the categorization of participant responses based on the pretest and posttest of the self-confidence scale can be seen in the table, as follows:

**Table 3.5**  
 Results of Self-Confidence Scale Response Categorization

Initials	Pretest	Category	Posttest	Category
SF	39	Low	48	Keep
NAA	37	Low	41	Keep
ARI	34	Low	40	Keep
AI	31	Low	45	Keep
SRJM	36	Low	38	Low
AR	34	Low	48	Keep
N	34	Low	35	Low
A	37	Low	35	High



**Table 6.**  
 Summary Results of Self-Confidence Scale Responses Categorization

Criteria	Category	Experimental Group			
		Pretest		Posttest	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
X < 40	High	0	0	1	13
40-53	Currently	0	0	5	62
X ≥ 54	Low	8	100	2	25

Based on the table above, it is evident that the participants' overall pretest scores indicated a low level of self-confidence. Then, the scores for the posttest showed that 2 participants, or 25%, were still in the low category, 5 participants, or 62%, were in the medium category, and 1 participant, or 13%, was in the high category. Based on this description, it can be concluded that most participants in this study experienced improvement. The pretest and posttest results for each participant were then tested using the Wilcoxon test to see the effectiveness of assertiveness training in increasing the self-confidence of young adult women who experience body dissatisfaction. The Wilcoxon test results can be seen in the table, as follows:

**Table 7.**  
 Result of Pretest-Posttest

	Pretest-Posttest	Mean Positive Rank
<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	0,012	4,50

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon test, it can be seen that the p-value = 0.012 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a significant difference in the level of self-confidence among early adult women who experience body dissatisfaction before and after receiving intervention in the form of assertive training. Overall, participants experienced an increase in self-confidence scores with an average increase of 4.50. Apart from that, participants were also given a knowledge evaluation at the beginning and end of the intervention to measure participants' understanding before and after the intervention was given. Knowledge evaluation in this study consisted of 10 questions, including true-false and multiple-choice questions. The results of the pretest and posttest knowledge evaluation can be seen in the table, as follows:

**Table 8.**  
 Result of Knowledge Evaluation

Initials	Pretest	Posttest	Category
SF	8	10	Increased
NAA	7	10	Increased
ARI	5	8	Increased
AI	5	9	Increased
SRJM	5	8	Increased
AR	6	9	Increased
N	6	9	Increased
A	8	8	Increased

Based on the table above, it is known that there were seven people or 87% who experienced an increase and there was one person or 13% who did not experience a



change in score. Based on the results of statistical calculations using the Wilcoxon test, the results show significance with a p-value of 0.014 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores in knowledge evaluation.

Based on the pretest results of the self-confidence scale, it is evident that participants overall experienced low self-confidence. The lack of self-confidence experienced by participants had physical and psychological impacts. The physical implications experienced by individuals are shaking hands and experiencing cold sweat. At the same time, the psychological effect is difficulty carrying out effective interpersonal communication, feeling anxious, and nervousness when interacting with others. This is in line with the opinion expressed by Pratami et al (2023) that individuals who are not confident will feel more anxious, nervous, will be more dependent on other people, tend to position themselves as the last, be pessimistic, tend to judge everything from a negative side, and tend to reject praise for themselves. Apart from that, Rais (2022) added that low self-confidence will result in individuals experiencing difficulties in social interactions.

The intervention provided to participants took the form of assertiveness training, which was conducted over two consecutive days, with a duration of approximately 120 minutes per day. Overall, the assertive training provided consisted of 6 sessions. Specifically, the aim of providing assertive training is to enable participants better to understand the general concepts of self-confidence and assertive behavior. Apart from that, assertive training is also expected to be a space or forum for participants to practice demonstrating assertive behavior skills so that they can be applied in everyday life.

After following the intervention process, it was discovered that the overall posttest results showed an increase in scores for participants, although some remained in the low category. Based on the posttest results on the self-confidence scale, it is evident that 2 participants remained in the low category, 5 participants advanced to the medium category, and 1 participant progressed to the high category. Murray (2006) stated that confident individuals tend to have an optimistic attitude and are less fearful about the future. Apart from that, Wibowo and Rozali (2021) also noted that individuals with high self-confidence tend to view themselves more positively.

The results of this research are in accordance with those of Hasanah et al. (2024), who found that providing assertive training affected students' level of self-confidence. Student self-confidence is demonstrated through an increase in students' ability to socialize with others, which can support improved student learning outcomes and achievements. The results of similar research conducted by Dewantari et al. (2021) found that providing training in assertive techniques can effectively increase self-confidence. This is demonstrated by the desire to succeed, not giving up easily, taking responsibility for the decisions made, being open, and feeling comfortable interacting with others.

## CONCLUSION

Studies of eight women aged 18–22 years who experienced body dissatisfaction showed that assertiveness training was effective in increasing individual confidence. An increase in confidence scores between the pre- and post-intervention periods evidences this. This research contributes to the development of psychological science, particularly in understanding the relationship between assertiveness and self-confidence, and helps to create more effective interventions for early adult women. However, this study has limitations because no follow-up evaluation was conducted after the intervention, so the effects may not be sustained. In addition, personal awareness is needed to continue to develop yourself and choose a positive environment. Researchers were then advised to



self-task and re-measure the participants' assertive behavior and body dissatisfaction levels after the intervention to improve the validity of the study results.

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