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Effectiveness of Group Guidance Using Nonviolent Communication (NVC) Techniques to Reduce Verbal Abuse Among Students

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ABSTRACT

Schools play a crucial role in shaping students' psychological well-being, social relationships, and academic performance. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of group guidance services using Nonviolent Communication (NVC) techniques in reducing verbal abuse among eighth-grade students at MTsN 2 Deli Serdang. The research addresses the increasing prevalence of verbal aggression in school settings, which requires systematic intervention through structured counseling strategies. A quasi-experimental, non-equivalent control group design was employed, involving 18 students divided equally into an experimental and a control group. Data were collected using a verbal abuse questionnaire and analyzed using paired-sample t-tests and independent-sample t-tests through SPSS. Results revealed a significant decrease in verbal abuse behavior in the experimental group after receiving NVC-based group guidance ($p < 0.001$), while no significant changes occurred in the control group. The independent t-test further confirmed significant differences in posttest scores between groups ($p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that NVC-based group guidance is effective in reducing students' verbal aggression by promoting empathetic and constructive communication. Overall, the study demonstrates that integrating NVC techniques into school counseling programs can serve as a practical approach to fostering positive communication habits and creating a healthier, more harmonious learning environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays an essential role in shaping students' personalities, attitudes, and behaviors. Schools function not only as institutions for developing academic competence but also as important spaces for nurturing character through social interaction. The quality of communication within the school environment greatly influences the learning climate;

healthy communication creates a conducive atmosphere, while poor communication often leads to misunderstandings and behavioral problems [1]. Communication itself involves the intentional exchange of messages between a communicator and a recipient to achieve mutual understanding [2]. However, in certain situations, communication can become destructive, particularly when it manifests as verbal abuse. This issue becomes more concerning when negative communication patterns develop into habitual behaviors among students, thereby disrupting both academic and social development.

Verbal abuse may occur across various social settings—including homes, schools, and communities—and is characterized by humiliating, threatening, or insulting language that does not leave physical wounds but causes psychological suffering. Such impacts include anxiety, stress, low self-esteem, and emotional instability [3]. In school environments, verbal abuse is often normalized as part of everyday interactions among students or even in teacher–student relationships, yet its long-term psychological consequences are significant. Students may experience shame, emotional exhaustion, confusion, or feelings of worthlessness as a result of persistent exposure to harsh or degrading words [4]. These psychological impacts can accumulate over time, potentially influencing students' motivation, academic engagement, and interpersonal trust.

Recent data highlight the urgency of addressing this issue. UNICEF reported that 73.7% of Indonesian students experience violence during disciplinary processes [5], while KPAI recorded 309 cases of verbal abuse in Central Java alone between 2011 and 2016 [6]. In Medan, the most common forms include name-calling, humiliation, and insulting family members [7]. A preliminary observation at MTsN 2 Deli Serdang further indicates that verbal abuse is widespread: out of 300 eighth-grade students, approximately 65% were identified as engaging in or experiencing verbal aggression, showing that the problem is deeply rooted in peer interactions. Peer influence plays a major role in shaping adolescents' aggressive behavior, especially when verbal aggression becomes a social norm within peer groups [8]. These statistics demonstrate that verbal abuse is not an isolated phenomenon, but a systemic issue that requires targeted and contextually appropriate interventions at the school level.

Given this condition, schools require systematic interventions. Group guidance emerges as one effective strategy because it uses group dynamics to provide students with support, shared experiences, and training in healthy communication [9], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14]. To strengthen this approach, counselors can integrate the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) technique developed by Marshall Rosenberg. NVC emphasizes empathetic communication through four components—observation, feelings, needs, and requests—which help individuals express themselves clearly while respecting others' emotional states [15], [16], [17]. When applied in group guidance sessions, NVC enables students to practice expressing their needs without resorting to aggression, thus fostering supportive peer interactions and reducing the likelihood of verbal abuse. Although the NVC approach requires patience and emotional commitment from both counselors and students, it has shown potential in transforming conflict and improving interpersonal relationships [18]. Therefore, combining group guidance with NVC offers a structured method for

reshaping communication patterns and equipping students with the skills necessary to manage emotions and prevent aggressive speech.

Based on the prevalence of verbal abuse and the documented potential of NVC-based interventions, research on the effectiveness of NVC in reducing verbal aggression among students is highly relevant. Therefore, this study aims to determine whether NVC-based group guidance is effective in reducing verbal abuse among junior high school students. This study aims to provide empirical evidence supporting the integration of empathy-based communication training into school counseling programs, particularly within the Indonesian educational context.

2. METHOD

Participants

The population of this study consisted of all eighth-grade students at MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, totaling 300 students distributed across 13 classes. The sample was selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria aligned with the research purpose. The primary criterion was that students had been identified as engaging in verbal abuse, based on the school counselor's documented observations. This sampling strategy was chosen to ensure that participants represented individuals who exhibited the behavioral characteristics targeted by the intervention.

From the screening process, two classes with the highest levels of verbal abuse—comprising 54 students—were identified. From these classes, 18 students met the inclusion criteria and were selected for participation. They were then divided into two groups: 9 students in the experimental group and 9 in the control group. The experimental group received group guidance sessions using the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) technique, while the control group received no intervention. The equal distribution of participants across the two groups was intended to maintain comparability and reduce potential biases in outcome measurement.

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study. Parental consent, student assent, and confidentiality assurances were obtained prior to data collection to ensure adherence to ethical standards. Ethical considerations were emphasized to protect participants' rights and to create a safe environment throughout the research process.

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pretest–posttest control group structure. Unlike actual experiments, quasi-experiments do not involve complete randomization, yet the use of control groups and pretest–posttest measurements helps approximate ideal experimental conditions [19]. This design was selected because random assignment was not feasible within the school setting; however, a comparative analysis between groups remained necessary.

Two groups were included in the design:

1. Experimental group – received group guidance services using the NVC technique.
2. Control Group – did not receive any treatment.

This design enabled the researcher to evaluate changes in verbal abuse behavior within each group and compare differences between groups after the intervention. By measuring both intra-group and inter-group changes, this study aimed to determine the specific effectiveness of the NVC-based guidance compared to natural behavioral variations over time.

Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study was a Verbal Abuse Questionnaire, adapted from the instrument developed by Assadiyah [20]. Content validation ensured that the instrument aligned with the study's focus, used accessible language, and was relevant to the behavioral indicators of student verbal abuse. Experts in counseling psychology reviewed the instrument to ensure clarity, relevance, and cultural suitability for junior high school students.

A reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha produced a coefficient of $\alpha = 0.85$, indicating strong internal consistency. The instrument measured several dimensions of verbal aggression, such as insulting, mocking, threatening, and using degrading or hurtful language. These dimensions provided a comprehensive assessment of students' verbal aggression patterns before and after the intervention.

Procedure

The research procedure consisted of four main stages:

1. Pretest Administration
   Both the experimental and control groups completed the verbal abuse questionnaire to establish baseline scores. This initial measurement served as a reference point for evaluating the effectiveness of the treatment.
2. Intervention
   The experimental group underwent six sessions of group guidance integrating the NVC technique.
   - Frequency: 1–2 sessions per week
   - Duration per session: 45–60 minutes
   - Core Components of Sessions:
     - Observing communication without judgment
     - Identifying and expressing feelings
     - Understanding needs behind behaviors
     - Formulating respectful and transparent requests
     - Practicing empathetic communication through role-play

   The control group did not receive any counseling intervention during this period. The structured session design ensured that NVC principles were introduced progressively and practiced consistently by the participants.
3. Posttest Administration
   After the final session, both groups completed the same questionnaire to measure changes in verbal abuse behavior. This allowed for a direct comparison between the pre-intervention and post-intervention conditions.

4. Data Preparation
   Responses were scored, tabulated, and prepared for statistical analysis. Data cleaning procedures were implemented to minimize errors and ensure accurate scoring.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using parametric statistical procedures because the assumptions of normality and homogeneity were met. Three primary analyses were conducted:

1. Normality Test
2. Shapiro–Wilk was used to ensure that the sample data followed a normal distribution.
3. Homogeneity Test
4. Levene's test was conducted to verify that the variances between the two groups were equivalent.
5. Hypothesis Testing
6. With normality and homogeneity confirmed, hypothesis testing proceeded using:
   - Paired-sample t-test to examine the difference between pretest and posttest scores within each group.
   - Independent-sample t-test to determine differences between the experimental and control groups' posttest scores.

Data were analyzed at a significance level (α) of 0.05.

Additionally, the study calculated effect size using Cohen's d to determine the magnitude of the treatment's impact, complementing statistical significance and providing a more comprehensive understanding of treatment effectiveness. The combination of significance testing and effect size analysis ensured that results were interpreted not only statistically but also practically.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Normality Test

A data normality test was performed using two methods available in SPSS: the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests. This test aims to determine whether the pretest and posttest data in the experiment and group control are normally distributed. Test results are presented in Table 1 below :

Table 1. Results of Normality Test (Shapiro–*Wilk)*

Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	KELAS	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
HASIL	PRE EKS	,208	9	,200*	,899	9	,248
	POST EKS	,192	9	,200*	,917	9	,364
	PRE KO	,163	9	,200*	,909	9	,308
	POST KO	,214	9	,200*	,893	9	,215

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Information:

- If the Sig. Value > 0.05, then the data is normally distributed.
- If the Sig. Value ≤ 0.05, then the data is not normally distributed.

In Table 1, all p-values from the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests are greater than 0.05, indicating that the data for all groups are normally distributed. Although SPSS displays the second test, research indicates that this refers to the results of the Shapiro–Wilk test, as the number of samples used is insufficient, with only 50 respondents. *The Shapiro–Wilk test is more recommended for small sample sizes because it has greater test power* [21].

Analysis results indicate that the data meet the assumptions of normality, enabling the use of parametric tests, such as the Paired Sample t-test for paired data and the Independent Samples t-test for inter-group data. This is in accordance with the opinion that states that when the data meet the assumptions of normality, researchers can use parametric tests that have more test power compared to non-parametric tests [22].

Homogeneity Test

Homogeneity test performed using *Levene's Test* in SPSS. This test aims to determine whether the variation between comparison groups is the same (homogeneous) or different (heterogeneous). *Homogeneity of variance is one of the assumptions that must be met before performing parametric tests, such as the Independent Sample t-test.* Test results are presented in Table 2 below :

Table 2. Homogeneity Test Results: Variance (Levene's Test)

Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
HASIL	Based on Mean	1,099	3	32	,364
	Based on Median	,775	3	32	,517
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	,775	3	25,581	,519
	Based on trimmed mean	1,061	3	32	,379

Information :

- If the Sig. Value > 0.05, then the data have the same variance (homogeneous).
- If the Sig. Value ≤ 0.05, then the data have different variances (not homogeneous).

Based on Table 2, the results of the homogeneity test for variance with the method based on Mean show a marked significance of 0.364. This value is significantly larger from 0.05 to 0.1, suggesting that the variance between the groups is not homogeneous. In research, the Mean Is used as a reference because it is the most common calculation for a homogeneity test [23].

Homogeneity of variance meets the assumptions to continue with the Independent Sample t-Test, which can be executed without the need for adjustment. Findings indicate

that data variation in the experimental groups and control groups is at a comparable level. It is important to ensure that the average difference found in the analysis is not influenced by differences in data distribution between groups [24]

Hypothesis Testing

a. Paired *Sample T-Test*

The *Paired Sample T-Test* is used to determine whether there is a significant Difference between two paired data sets, namely pretest and posttest scores in the same group. This test is used when the same research subject is given the same treatment, and then the return is measured after treatment. Test results are presented in Table 2 below :

Table 2. Paired Sample T-Test Results

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	PREeks - POSTeks	4,222	1,394	,465	3,150	5,294	9,084	8	<,001	<,001
Pair 2	PREkontrol - POSTkontrol	8,111	2,028	,676	6,553	9,670	12,001	8	<,001	<,001

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PREeks	104,56	9	1,130	,377
	POSTeks	100,33	9	1,000	,333
Pair 2	PREkontrol	85,89	9	1,537	,512
	POSTkontrol	77,78	9	1,856	,619

Description:

- If the Sig. Value (2-tailed) < 0.05, then there is a significant Difference between the first and second data.
- If the Sig. (2-tailed) ≥ 0.05, indicating no significant difference between the first and second data sets.

In Table 2, the results *of the Paired Sample T-Test analysis, as shown in the Paired Samples Statistics, indicate that the average pretest value was 33.63 with a standard deviation of 8.549, while the average posttest value was 56.00 with a standard deviation of* 5.210. This shows the improvement in existence score after treatment. For pairs of control and pretest data, posttest control, the Significance value (2-tailed) is <0.001 < 0.05, so that there is a significant Difference between pretest and posttest scores in the group experiment. The positive *Mean Difference value* (4.222) indicates that posttest scores are higher than the pretest scores, suggesting improvement results after treatment.

For the pretest control and posttest control data pairs, the significance level is... (2-tailed) value is also < 0.001 < 0.05, so that there is a significant difference between pretest and posttest in the group control. *The mean difference is positive (8.111), indicating that the posttest score is higher than the pretest score in the control group*. According to the Paired Effect Size table, the value of Cohen's d at 4,034 indicates a very large effect, sugges*ting that the treatment given has a strong influence on the results for* the Study participants.

This result shows that the Good group's experiment and control experience improvement scores increased from the pretest to the posttest. However, to find out the difference in improvement between the groups, an advanced analysis using the Independent Sample T-Test was required. If the value significance is <0.05, it can be concluded that the treatment given is influential in changing scores on the subject study.

b. Sample *T-Test*

Samples *T-Test* used to determine whether there is a significant difference between two groups that are not in pairs, namely the posttest scores of the experiment group and the control group. This test is used when two groups are sampled with different treatments or one of them is given no treatment, and then the results are compared. Test results presented in Table 3 below :

Table 3. Results of *the Independent Samples T-Test*

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means							
				Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
HASIL	Equal variances assumed	10,099	16	<,001	<,001	8,111	,803	6,408	9,814
	Equal variances not assumed	10,099	15,462	<,001	<,001	8,111	,803	6,404	9,819

Group Statistics

	KELAS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
HASIL	Post Eks	9	85,89	1,537	,512
	Post Kontrol	9	77,78	1,856	,619

Information :

- If the Sig value. (2-tailed) < 0.05, then there is a significant difference between the second group.
- If the Sig value. (2-tailed) ≥ 0.05, then there is no significant difference between the second group.

In Table 3, the results *of the Independent Samples t-Test analysis, assuming equal variances, are shown in the row marked 't(16) = 10.099 with Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.001, which indicate*s a significant difference between the posttest scores of the experimental and control groups. *The mean difference value of 8.111 with a standard error of 0.803 indicates that the average posttest score for the experimental group is 8.111 points higher than that of the control group*.

Hose 95% *independent for* differences. This range is between 6,408 and 9,814, indicating a very small possibility that this difference could occur by chance. By chance, the descriptive average posttest score of the experimental group is 85.89, with a standard deviation of 1.537, while the control group has an average of 77.78, with a standard deviation of 1.856. Difference score: This indicates that the treatment given to the experimental group has a positive impact on the study's measured results.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the students in the experimental group experienced a substantial reduction in verbal abuse behavior after participating in group guidance sessions based on the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) technique. Prior to the intervention, their pretest scores indicated that verbal aggression was at a high level. However, following the NVC sessions, their posttest scores showed a meaningful decline, indicating clear behavioral improvement. In contrast, the control group, which received no intervention, showed only minimal, non-significant changes between the pretest and posttest. The posttest comparison between groups further confirms that students in the experimental group exhibited notably lower verbal abuse scores than those in the control group.

These results can be interpreted within the theoretical framework of NVC, as proposed by Rosenberg [25], which emphasizes empathy, emotional awareness, and respectful dialogue. NVC encourages students to recognize their own feelings and needs before expressing themselves, allowing them to communicate without resorting to hurtful language. The significant behavioral improvement observed in this study aligns with previous empirical evidence showing that NVC-based programs reduce aggressive communication patterns. Tavandashti et al. [26] reported that adolescents who received NVC-focused counseling exhibited a marked decline in verbal and relational aggression. In contrast, Sobhani Najafabadi et al. [27] found that a structured NVC training significantly reduced bullying behaviors and social anxiety among aggressive youths. These theoretical and empirical foundations strengthen the interpretation that the decline in verbal abuse in the current study is directly linked to the mechanisms promoted in NVC.

From a behavioral perspective, the students' improvement can be attributed to how NVC restructures their communication habits. NVC teaches individuals to replace impulsive reactions—such as insults, mockery, or harsh responses—with intentional expressions of feelings and needs. Through the guided activities during the sessions, students learned to identify emotional triggers, articulate their frustrations appropriately, and practice empathetic listening. This helped them gradually weaken habitual patterns of verbal aggression and adopt more constructive communication strategies. Additionally, role-playing and peer feedback during the group sessions provided students with opportunities to rehearse non-aggressive responses in realistic scenarios, thereby reinforcing the development of new behavioral skills.

When compared to similar interventions, the results show strong consistency. Putri et al. [28] found that group guidance settings enable students to share experiences, reflect on their communication patterns, and develop positive interpersonal skills, resulting in a reduction of negative behaviors. Similarly, Qudsyi et al. [29] successfully developed an NVC-based module for elementary students in Yogyakarta, which improved psychosocial functioning and was well received by educators and psychologists. These studies suggest that empathy-based communication training fits well within the Indonesian educational context, supporting the effectiveness found in the present research.

The findings also reflect broader cultural dynamics in Indonesia, where verbal teasing, shouting, and derogatory expressions are often normalized in peer groups, particularly among adolescents. In many school environments, such behaviors are perceived

as harmless jokes or part of everyday communication, shaped by habits learned at home, exposure to media, and peer influence. Because verbal harshness is sometimes seen as a sign of assertiveness or social dominance, students may not recognize its harmful impact. The NVC intervention in this study helped challenge these cultural norms by providing students with a framework for expressing themselves without aggression and by fostering a group environment where empathy and respectful communication were modeled and reinforced. This contextual relevance enhances the practical value of NVC within Indonesian schools, where verbal aggression remains a persistent interpersonal issue.

Taken together, these findings provide strong support for the use of NVC-based group counseling in school settings. The reduction in verbal abuse among students demonstrates that interventions emphasizing empathy and emotional awareness can meaningfully reshape communication patterns and promote healthier interactions. Group counseling provides a structured environment for students to practice communication skills, reflect on their emotional experiences, and receive support from peers—all of which contribute to sustained behavioral change.

Overall, the intervention demonstrates that integrating empathy-based communication training into group guidance sessions can effectively reduce verbal aggression and foster a more respectful school climate. For school counselors, the practical implication is clear: implementing NVC systematically can serve as a powerful strategy to address interpersonal conflicts, reduce harmful verbal behaviors, and strengthen students' social-emotional competencies. Counselors are encouraged to incorporate NVC modules into their routine guidance programs, provide ongoing reinforcement through follow-up sessions, and collaborate with teachers and parents to cultivate a school environment where empathetic communication becomes a shared value.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the application of *Nonviolent Communication* (NVC) techniques through group guidance was effective in reducing students' verbal abuse behavior. The decrease in the average score of the experimental group, which was significantly different from that of the control group, indicates that the intervention successfully encouraged students to communicate more empathetically, manage their emotions more effectively, and resolve conflicts constructively. The implementation of NVC also contributed to the development of a more positive and supportive school environment, suggesting that this technique can serve as a practical strategy for school counselors in efforts to prevent and minimize verbal aggression among students. However, this study has several limitations. The sample size was relatively small, the duration of the intervention was brief, and the research was conducted in only one school, which limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader audience. Future studies are recommended to involve larger samples, employ longitudinal approaches to observe long-term effects, and further explore the impact of NVC on aspects such as empathy and emotional intelligence, thereby achieving a more comprehensive understanding of its benefits in educational settings.

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