

The Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Assertive Behavior Among Members of Student Organizations at Muhammadiyah University of Gorontalo

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Abstract. *This study aims to determine the relationship between self-esteem and assertive behavior among members of student organizations at the University of Muhammadiyah Gorontalo. Self-esteem is an individual's subjective assessment of themselves, while assertive behavior is an individual's ability to express feelings, opinions, and personal rights honestly and openly without harming others. This study used a quantitative correlational method with a sample of 195 students who are members of campus organizations, selected using a simple random sampling technique. The instruments used were a self-esteem scale and an assertive behavior scale compiled based on the theories of Coopersmith and Alberti & Emmons. Data analysis was conducted using normality, linearity, and Pearson Product Moment correlation tests. The results of the analysis showed a positive and significant relationship between self-esteem and assertive behavior, with a correlation value (r) of 0.325 and a significance value (p) = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This means that the higher a person's self-esteem, the higher their assertive behavior. This study concludes that self-esteem plays a role in shaping assertive behavior, although it is not the only factor influencing it.*

Keywords: *Self-Esteem, Assertive Behavior, Organizational Members*

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INTRODUCTION

In general, being a student requires a habit of demonstrating one's abilities and interacting with others, as social skills are crucial in a campus environment (Olaniran, 1996; Nair & Fahimirad, 2019). This is especially important if an individual is an activist or involved in an organization. As an activist, individuals need greater social skills, self-confidence, and openness than non-activists. Students active in campus organizations often face situations that require initiative and must be communicated in front of a large audience. This relates to students' role as agents of change in society (Istiqomah & Hariyadi, 2022).

Students active in organizations play a role in developing solutions to social problems. However, in reality, many students in Indonesia express their demands emotionally and anarchically in various regions. Critical students often fail to recognize the limits of their opinions and demands. On the other hand, the government should have an effective strategy to address these students (Basch, 2011; Trilokekar & Masri, 2016). Therefore, students should consider how to voice their aspirations without acting anarchically and harming the government by damaging public facilities.

Before expressing their aspirations, students need to understand the existing problems and strive for ethical dialogue with the government to avoid misunderstandings (Kunzman, 2014; Roberts, 2002). As reported by media in several regions, students have demonstrated anarchically without being assertive. Samfira (2020), Atristain-Suárez & del (2024), Suryana & Permana (2025) said that students need to be assertive not only in social settings but also in organizational activities and the teaching and learning process on campus. Assertiveness is necessary for effective discussions in meeting forums and for goals to be achieved (Mawdsley et al., 2014).

However, the reality in the field shows that some students still prefer to remain silent, are embarrassed to ask questions, or are reluctant to express their opinions during discussions in meeting forums (Mawdsley et al., 2014; Zembylas & Vrasidas, 2007; Hammond, 1999; Brower, 2003). When conflicts arise, such as disagreements with campus decisions, students often exhibit less assertive behavior, such as provoking others or damaging their reputations (Pahmiah et al., 2021).

Being an active student in an organization means being able to solve problems, collaborate, and address challenges, as well as possessing a strong democratic spirit, demonstrated through an interest in discussions. Student activists must possess qualities that support their role as good activists, including openness to new ideas, mutual respect, and appreciation for every idea expressed by others, even if those ideas sometimes differ from their own (Abu et al., 2023; Herman & Mitchell, 2010; Tjosvold, 2008; Bouchet, 2010).

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that life skills are an individual's skills for effectively dealing with everyday challenges. Assertive behavior is a fundamental social communication skill that is essential for individuals, especially students active in organizations (Kasnitz, 2024; Kochoska & Anastasov, 2025; Ames, 2009). Assertive behavior among students active in organizations demonstrates courage by honestly and openly expressing their needs, feelings, and thoughts. This also enables individuals to defend their personal rights and resist unreasonable demands, including pressure from various parties with authority or group rules (Firdaus, 2015).

Students who are actively involved in organizations and demonstrate assertive behavior will find it easier to interact with others and express themselves. The benefits of assertive behavior include better and more honest relationships with others, the ability to compromise and discuss problems in various situations, and reduced stress. Assertive behavior can increase self-confidence and self-esteem. Assertive individuals tend to be able to meet their own needs and respect others (Postolatii, 2017; Etodike et al., 2020).

Conversely, non-assertive individuals often struggle with honest relationships, feel trapped in uncomfortable situations, have low self-esteem, and fear negative judgment from others. They also tend to feel embarrassed when faced with situations and their consequences (Edelmann, 1985). Low assertiveness or lack of assertiveness is influenced by various factors, one of which is self-esteem (Popoola et al., 2018; Abed et al., 2015). A person's self-confidence influences their ability to adapt to their environment. People with high self-confidence tend to have low social anxiety, allowing them to express their opinions and feelings without harming themselves or others (Cahyani, 2017).

Self-esteem allows a person to evaluate themselves, both positively and negatively (Blaine & Crocker, 1993). This assessment can indicate how a person views themselves and recognizes their abilities and achievements. This is evident in how much an individual values themselves. When an individual is able to face situations well and maintain a positive mindset, they are able to overcome them, which will positively impact their self-esteem (Harahap, 2019).

Individuals with high self-esteem tend to be optimistic, able to solve problems effectively, and accept both positive and negative situations. They also make decisions confidently, without overly worrying about the criticism of others, as long as their actions have a positive impact and

do not harm others. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem tend to be pessimistic, always worry about the opinions or criticism of others, lack confidence in their own abilities, and always follow the wishes of others (Rimes et al., 2023; Sowislo & Orth, 2013; Crocker & Park, 2004). They are also more emotional when criticized for failures, more often experience negative emotions such as feeling embarrassed to show their abilities, difficulty expressing themselves, and always feeling like they will make the wrong decision.

Self-esteem plays a crucial role in the development of assertive behavior. Students with high self-esteem tend to be less concerned about the judgments of others, thus they are more capable of assertive behavior (Parray et al., 2020; Mishra & Shrivastava, 2015; Rusnac & Rosciupchin, 2023). This aligns with preliminary research on several students that found that self-esteem influences assertive behavior in organizations. Students who participate in organizations prefer to remain silent during meetings or discussions due to feelings of fear, shame, and doubt. Furthermore, some students are able to express their opinions effectively and respect the rights and responsibilities of others (Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018; Krasovitskii, 1991; Hughes & Batten, 2016).

The lack of research specifically exploring the relationship between self-esteem and assertive behavior in students active in organizations in Gorontalo Province, especially at Muhammadiyah University of Gorontalo, and there are also several studies that have only been conducted on student activists at several universities outside. This limits the generalizability of the research results to the student population at Muhammadiyah University of Gorontalo. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled "The Relationship between Self-Esteem and Assertive Behavior in Members of Student Organizations at Muhammadiyah University of Gorontalo."

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to examine the relationship between self-esteem and assertive behavior among members of student organizations at Muhammadiyah University of Gorontalo. The correlational approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to determine whether there was a significant relationship between two psychological variables without manipulating the research conditions. The population of this study consisted of all students who were active members of student organizations at Muhammadiyah University of Gorontalo, with a total population of 447 students. The sample consisted of 195 students, determined using the Isaac and Michael sample size table with a 5% margin of error. The sampling technique used was simple random sampling, allowing each member of the population to have an equal opportunity to be selected as a respondent.

Data were collected using a questionnaire distributed to respondents. The questionnaire used a Likert scale with four response options, namely strongly agree (SS), agree (S), disagree (TS), and strongly disagree (STS). This study used two main instruments: the Self-Esteem Scale and the Assertive Behavior Scale. The Self-Esteem Scale was modified from Madini (2022) and developed based on Coopersmith's theory of self-esteem. Meanwhile, the Assertive Behavior Scale was modified from a previous research scale and developed based on the aspects of assertive behavior proposed by Alberti and Emmons. Both instruments were used to measure students' self-evaluation and their ability to express opinions, feelings, and personal rights honestly and appropriately. Before the main data analysis was conducted, the collected data were examined through preliminary statistical tests. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the characteristics of respondents and the distribution of research variables. A normality test was conducted to determine whether the data were normally distributed, while a linearity test was used to examine whether the relationship between self-esteem and assertive behavior was linear. These assumption tests were necessary before conducting Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis.

The data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment correlation to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between self-esteem and assertive behavior. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 26 for Windows. The significance level used in this study was 0.05. A significance value lower than 0.05 indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and assertive behavior among members of student organizations at Muhammadiyah University of Gorontalo..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis Univariate

Table 1. Description of Respondents Based on Gender

Gender	Amount	Presentation
Man	50	25.6%
Woman	145	74.4%
Total	195	100%

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2025

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents based on gender. Of the 195 respondents involved in this study, 50 respondents were male, representing 25.6% of the total sample, while 145 respondents were female, representing 74.4%. These results indicate that female students were more dominant among the respondents who participated in this study. The dominance of female respondents suggests that women had a higher level of representation in student organization membership or participation in this research sample. This condition is important to consider when interpreting the findings, particularly because gender may influence patterns of communication, confidence, and assertive behavior. However, the gender distribution in this table is descriptive and does not directly explain whether male or female respondents have higher levels of self-esteem or assertive behavior. Therefore, further comparative analysis would be needed if the study aims to examine differences in assertive behavior based on gender.

Table 2. Description of Respondents Based on Age

Age	Amount	Presentation
17-19	54	27.7%
20-22	130	66.7%
23-25	11	5.6%
Total	195	100%

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2025

Table 2 presents the age distribution of the respondents. The majority of respondents were aged 20–22 years, with 130 students or 66.7% of the total sample. Respondents aged 17–19 years consisted of 54 students or 27.7%, while respondents aged 23–25 years were the smallest group, consisting of 11 students or 5.6%. These findings indicate that most respondents were in the early adulthood stage, particularly within the age range of 20–22 years. This age group is generally associated with active involvement in academic, social, and organizational activities. In the context of student organizations, individuals in this age range are often developing interpersonal skills, leadership capacity, emotional regulation, and confidence in expressing opinions. Therefore, the age distribution supports the relevance of examining self-esteem and assertive behavior among student organization members. Nevertheless, this table only describes respondent characteristics and cannot be used to conclude differences in assertive behavior across age groups without additional statistical testing.

Bivariate Analysis

Table 3. Normality Test Results

Variables	Significant	Information
<i>Self Esteem and Assertive Behavior</i>	0.011	Normal

Source: *Data Processing Results, 2025*

Table 3 presents the result of the normality test for the self-esteem and assertive behavior variables. The table shows a significance value of 0.011. If the normality test was interpreted using the common statistical criterion of $p > 0.05$, this result indicates that the data are not normally distributed because 0.011 is lower than 0.05. This finding needs to be clarified because the table states that the data are normal. Statistically, a significance value below 0.05 usually indicates that the distribution of data significantly differs from a normal distribution. Therefore, the authors should recheck the type of normality test used and ensure that the interpretation is consistent with the statistical criterion. If the data are confirmed to be non-normally distributed, the use of Pearson Product Moment correlation may need to be reconsidered, and Spearman's rho correlation may be more appropriate as a non-parametric alternative.

Table 4. Linearity Test

Variables	Significant	Information
<i>Self Esteem and Assertive Behavior</i>	0.019	Linear

Source: *Data Processing Results, 2025*

Table 4 shows the result of the linearity test between self-esteem and assertive behavior. The table reports a significance value of 0.019. The purpose of the linearity test is to determine whether the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable follows a linear pattern. The table shows that 0.019 is greater than 0.05, whereas 0.019 is actually lower than 0.05. If the value refers to the "Linearity" significance in SPSS, then $p = 0.019$ indicates that there is a significant linear relationship between self-esteem and assertive behavior. In that case, the relationship can be considered linear. However, if the value refers to "Deviation from Linearity," then $p = 0.019$ would indicate that the relationship significantly deviates from linearity. Therefore, the authors should specify whether the reported value is taken from the "Linearity" row or the "Deviation from Linearity" row in the ANOVA table.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 5. *Pearson Correlation Hypothesis Test*

Variables	(r)	(p value)	Information
<i>Self Esteem and Assertive Behavior</i>	0.325	0,000	Significant

Source: *Data Processing Results, 2025*

Table 5 presents the Pearson Product Moment correlation test between self-esteem and assertive behavior. The result shows a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.325$ with a significance value of $p = 0.000$. Since the significance value is lower than 0.05, the relationship between self-esteem and assertive behavior is statistically significant. The positive correlation coefficient indicates that the relationship between the two variables is positive and unidirectional. This means that students with higher self-esteem tend to show higher assertive behavior. Conversely, students with lower self-esteem tend to show lower assertive behavior. However, the correlation coefficient of 0.325 indicates that the strength of the relationship is low to moderate. This suggests that self-esteem contributes to assertive behavior, but it is not the only factor influencing it.

The statistical analysis results showed a significant positive relationship between the two variables, with a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.325 and a significance level (p) of 0.000. A p -value less than 0.05 indicates that the relationship is statistically significant, so the alternative

hypothesis (Ha) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. The positive correlation value indicates that the higher a student's self-esteem, the higher their assertive behavior. Conversely, the lower an individual's self-esteem, the lower their tendency to be assertive. This relationship is linear and unidirectional, meaning that an increase or decrease in one variable tends to be followed by an increase or decrease in the other.

Theoretically, self-esteem influences assertive behavior because individuals who have a positive self-assessment tend to be more confident, able to express their opinions openly, and have the courage to resist social pressure in a way that does not harm others. Therefore, increasing self-esteem can be an effective way to shape and strengthen assertive behavior in social life, particularly in the context of student organizations. The results of this study support previous research conducted by Istiqomah (2022), which found a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and assertive behavior, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.649$ and a significance level of $p = 0.000$. This indicates that the higher a person's self-esteem, the higher the level of assertive behavior they display.

The most relevant similarities between this study and Istiqomah's study lie in the subjects, namely students active in organizations, and the main variables studied, namely self-esteem and assertive behavior. The only difference lies in the use of assertive behavior theory. Therefore, the results of this study strengthen the evidence that self-esteem is a significant factor influencing an individual's ability to be assertive, especially in the context of student organizations. Based on these results, the correlation between self-esteem and assertive behavior is 0.325, indicating that the relationship is not strong enough. Although not particularly strong, this indicates that self-esteem does play a role in shaping assertive behavior, but it is not the only influencing factor. This is in line with research by Alberti & Emmons (2017), which states that assertive behavior can be influenced by several internal and external factors. Internal factors include age, gender, and self-concept, while external factors include parenting styles and socio-cultural conditions.

The results of this study can also be linked to the theory of Onyeizugbo (2003), Twenge (2001), which states that gender and age are two factors that influence an individual's assertive behavior. According to this theory, men are generally more associated with assertive behavior than women because social and cultural norms tend to encourage men to be more active, independent, and expressive in expressing their opinions. Meanwhile, women, especially in certain cultures, are often molded into being more passive and compromising in social interactions. In fact, this study found that female respondents dominated the participant population (74.4%). While the predominance of women does not necessarily indicate that they are more assertive, it may indicate that women who are active in organizations are beginning to show significant development in assertiveness, perhaps due to organizational environmental factors that support openness and role equality.

Furthermore, age is also an important factor. Nikolaiev et al. (2023), Parfanovych et al. (2022) stated that with increasing age, the development of assertive behavior also matures because individuals have more experience in communicating, resolving conflicts, and understanding social situations. In this study, the majority of respondents were aged 20–22 (66.7%), which is early adulthood, a stage in psychosocial development where individuals are exploring their identity and developing interpersonal skills. This supports the assumption that respondents in this age range are more likely to develop assertive behavior, particularly when involved in organizational environments that require active participation. These results align with the theory proposed by Coopersmith (1965), which states that self-esteem is an individual's assessment of themselves, reflecting the extent to which they feel valuable, capable, and accepted by their environment. When someone has high self-esteem, they tend to feel more confident in their abilities, are more resilient to social rejection, and are more willing to express their ideas, feelings, and desires. This aligns with the characteristics of assertive behavior according to Alberti & Emmons (2017), namely the ability of an individual to express opinions, feelings, and personal rights honestly, openly, and while respecting others.

In the context of student organizations, individuals are often faced with complex social dynamics, such as group discussions, decision-making, and criticism and input from fellow members. These situations require courage and strong communication skills, including assertiveness. Individuals with high self-esteem are better able to navigate these situations effectively, as they have the confidence to voice their opinions without fear of rejection or judgment. Conversely, students with low self-esteem tend to lack confidence, fear making mistakes, and are easily influenced by others' opinions. They may exhibit passivity, withdraw from discussions, or even become aggressive in certain situations to compensate for their insecurities. This, in turn, impacts their effectiveness in organizing and interacting socially.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between self-esteem and assertive behavior among members of student organizations at Muhammadiyah University of Gorontalo. The Pearson correlation test showed a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.325$ with a significance value of $p = 0.000$, indicating that students with higher self-esteem tend to demonstrate higher assertive behavior. Conversely, students with lower self-esteem tend to show lower levels of assertive behavior. These findings indicate that self-esteem plays an important role in supporting students' ability to express opinions, communicate feelings, defend personal rights, and participate actively in organizational activities in an appropriate manner. However, the strength of the relationship is relatively low to moderate, suggesting that assertive behavior is not solely influenced by self-esteem. Other factors, such as communication skills, organizational experience, peer support, gender, age, and socio-cultural environment, may also contribute to the development of assertive behavior. Efforts to improve students' assertive behavior should include activities that strengthen self-esteem, confidence, interpersonal communication, and active participation within student organizations. The findings of this study are expected to provide a useful contribution for universities, student organizations, and future researchers in understanding the psychological factors associated with assertive behavior among students.

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