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Assertiveness as a New Strategy for Physical Education Students to Maintain Academic Performance

Jusuf Blegur

Universitas Kristen Artha Wacana, jusufblegur@ukaw.ac.id

Aniq Hadiyah Bil Haq

Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur, ahbh@umkt.ac.id

Muya Barida

Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, muya.barida@bk.uad.ac.id

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Abstract

Serious problems occur in social life. In several cases in Indonesia, students often abuse their group collectivity and social relations with disciplinary behaviour such as following peer persuasion to spend much time hangout so that students neglect to manage study time, complete study assignments, and even be absent from lectures.. However, other students have managed to control unproductive social relations (persuasion to hang out during class hours, inducement not to do coursework, and others) to stabilize their academic performance with assertiveness. This explore student assertiveness strategies. At the same time, they were projecting strategic assertiveness protocols to maintain their academic performance. This qualitative study involved 11 purposefully sampled university students. Student assertiveness strategies were explored using observation, interview, and documentation techniques. Spardley's (1979) domain analysis technique and Miles and Huberman's (1994) analytical procedure were used to find meaning and project assertive syntax. The study results suggest that students tend to show assertiveness, permissiveness, and aggressiveness in effective dialogue, constructive feedback, conflict resolution, and non-verbal communication domains. However, students who had good academic performance were more effective in using assertiveness. Furthermore, our study identified six strategic models (syntax) that students use to maintain their academic performance, namely: (1) being open, objective, and rational in expressing their aspirations, (2) being firm and brave when making decisions, (3) believing in one's abilities, (4) prioritizing priorities, (5) carry out obligations without disturbing the rights of other colleagues, and (6) accept differences of opinion/views. As a result, students can use assertiveness to maintain and control destructive behaviour in their environment and social relations to remain achievers while keeping being friendly in maintaining and building social relationships. Lecturers and administrators need to do assertive training and assistance to their students on an ongoing basis so that students have additional soft skills that help them succeed in the academic field and the future.

Keywords

assertiveness, assertive behaviour strategies, physical education, academic performance, qualitative research

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Assertiveness as a New Strategy for Physical Education Students to Maintain Academic Performance

Jusuf Blegur¹, Aniq Hudiya Bil Haq², and Muya Barida³

¹Universitas Kristen Artha Wacana, Indonesia

²Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur, Indonesia

³Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia

Serious problems occur in social life. In several cases in Indonesia, students often abuse their group collectivity and social relations with disciplinary behaviour such as following peer persuasion to spend much time hangout so that students neglect to manage study time, complete study assignments, and even be absent from lectures.. However, other students have managed to control unproductive social relations (persuasion to hang out during class hours, inducement not to do coursework, and others) to stabilize their academic performance with assertiveness. This explore student assertiveness strategies. At the same time, they were projecting strategic assertiveness protocols to maintain their academic performance. This qualitative study involved 11 purposefully sampled university students. Student assertiveness strategies were explored using observation, interview, and documentation techniques. Spardley's (1979) domain analysis technique and Miles and Huberman's (1994) analytical procedure were used to find meaning and project assertive syntax. The study results suggest that students tend to show assertiveness, permissiveness, and aggressiveness in effective dialogue, constructive feedback, conflict resolution, and non-verbal communication domains. However, students who had good academic performance were more effective in using assertiveness. Furthermore, our study identified six strategic models (syntax) that students use to maintain their academic performance, namely: (1) being open, objective, and rational in expressing their aspirations, (2) being firm and brave when making decisions, (3) believing in one's abilities, (4) prioritizing priorities, (5) carry out obligations without disturbing the rights of other colleagues, and (6) accept differences of opinion/views. As a result, students can use assertiveness to maintain and control destructive behaviour in their environment and social relations to remain achievers while keeping being friendly in maintaining and building social relationships. Lecturers and administrators need to do assertive training and assistance to their students on an ongoing basis so that students have additional soft skills that help them succeed in the academic field and the future.

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Introduction

Academic performance is the ability of students to complete learning assignments within a certain study period (Steinmayr et al., 2017; as cited in Le et al., 2020). The most familiar indicator that measures academic performance, learning outcomes, or learning

achievement is the overall score or student achievement index (Cahyani et al., 2019; Duruji et al., 2014). Academic performance can also be measured by students' level of success in level of education (Rasto et al., 2021) so that academic performance, learning outcomes, or learning achievement have the same meaning (Ramdani et al., 2021). Academic performance encompasses more than just grade point average (GPA). Academic performance is the ability to develop a career progressively, securing and instilling meaningful changes (psychological, affective, cognitive, and behavioural; Kumar et al., 2021) so that students can help a to thrive in society (Peconcillo et al., 2020).

Learning success is marked by an increase in student academic performance (Subiyantoro & Ismail, 2017). Academic performance is affected by socio-economic, psychological, and environmental factors (Hijazi & Naqvi, 2006) or even the participation of peers as part of students' social bonds during the learning process (Kassarnig et al., 2017). Thus, students need to control their social interactions so that the socialization patterns they build are used to strengthen and support their academic performance (Al-Dheleai & Tasir, 2017; Hurst et al., 2013; Kassarnig et al., 2017). In university students learning, lecturers are responsible for designing learning methods and strategies that address the needs of their student's academic performance (Ghiasvand, 2010; İlçin et al., 2018; Vanthournout et al., 2012; Wijaya, 2012). This responsibility is an effort for lecturers to improve their competence by making various models, methods, and learning strategies effective to maximize the potential of their students (Blegur, Wasak, & Manu, 2017).

Students' academic performance can fluctuate due to various determining factors. For example, the role of peer groups affects student academic performance (Filade et al., 2019; Leka, 2015; Wang et al., 2020), including playing an important role in decreasing academic performance (Deepika & Prema, 2017; Winingsih et al., 2017). Several studies reported cases of decreased academic performance of students motivated by maintaining unproductive social relations (Blegur, Wasak, Tlonaen, & Manggoa, 2017), poor emotional control (Hasan et al., 2017) and communicating and interacting with peer groups who misbehaved (Binong, 2020). Furo and Kagu's study (2020) detailed that their peers' behaviour influences 55% of students. When their peers behave well, students tend to behave well, and vice versa when their peers behave negatively. It means that good or bad behaviour in the peer group will influence the majority of student behaviour (>50%). Furthermore, Furo and Kagu's study (2020) found that 20% of students reported that their association with negative peer groups reduced academic performance, so if they remain build the relation with peers who affect them negatively, then their academic performance will continuously decrease.

Moldes et al. (2019) recommended that students use a positive approach to deal with peer pressure, and assertive behaviour. Assertive behaviour is closely related to mental health (Pourjali & Zarnaghash, 2010) because it can overcome anxiety and avoid stress and manage emotions (Alghamdi, 2015; Budi, 2009; Falentina & Yulianti, 2012), control depression (Khan, 2012), have practical and adaptive self-defence mechanisms (Widjaja & Wulan, 1998), as well as proven to reduce verbal victimization (Boket et al., 2016). Assertiveness also helps students express personal rights actively, directly, positively, objectively, honestly, and always respects others (Budi, 2009; Falentina & Yulianti, 2012; Mardani et al., 2013; Setyowati & Dwikurnaningsih, 2014). Act without feeling anxious, happy, and naturally when expressing feelings, and wisely use their rights in conflict management and situations of injustice (Indrawati et al., 2014; Oana & Ona, 2019). As a result, assertiveness can also directly improve communication skills (Al'Ain & Mulyana, 2013; Gultekin et al., 2018) and characterize a firm personality (Yuyun, 2014).

A qualitative study by Blegur, Wasak, Tlonaen, and Manggoa (2017) once released that one of the promotions for student disciplinary behavior is to build destructive social relations due to the wrong use of their free time. For this reason, assertiveness is needed to help students

control their free time with various productive activities (Eratay & Aydoğan, 2015) while helping students predict emotional adjustments, social adjustments, and academic adjustments (Parmaksız, 2019) so that they affect academic performance (Fatemeh et al., 2016; Mehrgan & Nadereh, 2019; Parray et al., 2020; Thenmozhi & Bharathy, 2019). Parray and colleagues' quantitative study (2020) noted that assertiveness only predicts 01.40% of academic performance, so not all of the effects of assertiveness are on the maximum curve. In a qualitative study, Kalzhanova et al. (2022) recently found that the majority of students stated that academic success would increase with increased assertiveness. Nonetheless, the study of Kalzhanova et al. (2022) did not explain the domain of assertiveness used and how students used assertiveness in maintaining and improving their academic performance.

Students in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, are in groups and highly differentiated social relations (ethnicity, culture, thinking skills, and sports preferences). They live in boarding houses with low control and stay away from their parents, which is a problematic dilemma they experience. In this differentiation, do they want to be "recognized" in certain social groups but ignore their academic responsibilities? Otherwise, be assertive so that academic performance is maintained. Several students have gone through this crisis phase by maximizing their assertive behavior so that their academic performance is consistent and even increases. Thus, the research questions include: (1) how do students use assertiveness to maintain their academic performance? and (2) how is the projection of the assertiveness model to maintain student academic performance? This success model is then widely diffused to overcome disruptions to student academic performance in their socialization patterns on campus, in the community, and their social community.

The three lecturers involved in this study have consistent attention and experience in trans-disciplinary investigations, including micro-teaching, educational psychology, counseling, and communication. Jusuf Blegur has dedicated himself to teaching and researching the professional development of prospective physical education teachers. His studies investigated various determinant variables that contribute to the professionalism of prospective teachers. It included exploring student academic performance issues, designing lesson plans, developing instruments, and promoting HOTS learning models. Aniq Hudiyah Bil Haq is a lecturer in educational psychology who focuses on teaching and research using various psychological attributes to promote academic success, career development, and students' psychological well-being. Finally, Muya Barida is a teacher and researcher who focuses on counseling and communication and actively collaborates on assertiveness research, including difficulties in assertive communication and developing assertive communication instruments, as well as conducting assertive training to support positive social behavior and academic success.

Methods

Research Approach and Participants

The study used a qualitative approach with an exploratory design. Exploratory research aimed to find "what is happening," "seek new insights," and "assess phenomena in new light" (Makri & Neely, 2021; Saunders et al., 2009). The researchers explored the assertiveness of the participants according to their perspective on life, especially their success in maintaining their academic performance. There were 11 participants involved. They were final semester students ($M = 25.45$; $SD = 1.51$) who studied undergraduate at the Physical Education, Health, and Recreation Study Program, Universitas Kristen Artha Wacana, Kupang, Indonesia. Seven of them have a reputation for good academic performance. Meanwhile, the other four were inversely related (see Table 1). We recruited participants using a purposive sampling technique

by looking at notes on student academic development from their academic advisors and the GPA, given that this investigation wants to get balanced information about how students' strategies use assertiveness to maintain their academic performance. Therefore, assertiveness information is needed from participants with excellent academic reputations and vice versa. From the different information or experiences of the participants, we explored and made meaningful assertive conclusions as well as project assertiveness models that could be used to maintain and improve academic performance among students.

Table 1
Partisipant Demographics

No	Initial	Gender	Age	Semester	Academic performance
1	KMNN	Male	27	VIII	Good
2	MT	Male	27	VIII	Poor
3	MNM	Male	27	VIII	Good
4	WHHSP	Male	27	VIII	Good
5	PD	Male	26	VIII	Good
6	OL	Male	26	VIII	Good
7	MK	Male	25	VIII	Poor
8	LK	Male	24	VIII	Good
9	UR	Male	24	VIII	Good
10	EGM	Female	24	VIII	Poor
11	MKA	Male	23	VIII	Poor

Data Collection Technique

We continuously carried out this research project throughout 2019-2021. Three techniques were used for data collection, but the primary data collection technique was in-depth interviews. The structure of the questions was open-ended to explore the meaning and strategies of participant assertiveness while maintaining their academic performance (see Table 2). For example, "Do you have difficulty making a choice? Why did that happen?" "Do you have confidence in your judgment? Why do you do that, namely?" "Do you express anything you feel? How do you do it?" We always confirmed additional explanations from participants in each of their answers, which we did simultaneously in the second interview session, and so on. As we mentioned, this is an extended study (two years), so we have enough time to confirm the participants' explanations at the next interview time and opportunity.

The second technique used direct and indirect observations through social media such as WhatApps stories and Facebook statuses. The last technique was to use documentation data, which was from lecture assignments, such as essays, video presentations, papers, and a list of grades and other documents that showed students' assertiveness and academic performance. These two techniques were only secondary, so their position was only to confirm various answers submitted by the participant. For example, from social media, we found that students did not attend a class but they were with their colleagues at different events. They did not complete their study assignments on time because they spent much time hangout with their colleagues (one to two weeks). We can confirm these data with the answers that the participants put forward during the interview session. The results of essay work or video presentations of lecture assignments are accurate data confirming the development of participant academic performance, whether excessive hangout time affects participant performance in completing college assignments or vice versa.

Research Procedure

The research procedure was started with making several agreements with students about the time and place of the meeting, how the researchers collected the data, and asked various questions to the participants. The interviews were conducted in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, by one research team with the help of one colleague (student) who was different from the city of two research members (Samarinda and Yogyakarta). Nevertheless, the formulation of the questions was always coordinated and discussed with the research team. Several questions were asked in the first interview session, and the results or participants' answers were used to further investigate by formulating other questions. Thirty-five questions (see Table 2) were not submitted at once but in several interviews and sessions supported by developing questions (open questions) following the participant responses. Interviews were conducted between 10-30 minutes for each participant at different times and occasions, including in classrooms, workspaces, student boarding houses, student canteens, and others, according to a mutual agreement. In addition, data were also collected partially or simultaneously to check the various data that we had obtained from research subjects (primary and secondary). We carried out the analysis process simultaneously with the data collection process to find meaning and project models and helped formulate new questions and indicators while exploring subjects' views and experiences regarding assertive behaviour and academic performance.

Data Analysis Technique

Participants' answers were explored and analyzed using assertiveness domain analysis from Montes de Oca (2016), including effective dialogue, constructive feedback, conflict resolution, and non-verbal communication using 35 questions (see Table 2). After exploring and mapping of student assertiveness, the interview data was reviewed to determine and project a strategic model (syntax) for the success of assertiveness on student academic performance.

Table 2

Sub Domain and Assertiveness Criteria of Montes de Oca (2016)

Sub domain	Criteria	Item
Effective dialogue	Begins, keeps and ends dialogues according to own needs and third parties' needs, with emotional regulation. Expresses precisely points of view and takes into account third parties' points of view. Includes requests for improvement of functions with the corresponding emotional regulation. Asks for necessary support to improve work and expresses disagreement with friendly and conciliatory words when irrational petitions are made	7, 9, 11, 14, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 31, 32, 34, 35
Constructive feedback	Explains the other his points of view about performance observed; makes emphasis on strengths; praises the other for effort shown or achievement obtained. Poses questions to reflect about what should be improved or if any doubt or if he does not know anything to conduct activities and achieve purposes or solve work problems	3, 4, 6, 13, 16, 23, 28, 29
Conflict resolution	Solve interpersonal conflicts serenely, seeking that both parties win by showing his emotions are understood and experiences empathy. If necessary, he gives up for common benefit	1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 12, 18, 19, 20, 27, 30
Non-verbal communication	Makes eye contact and approaches in a regulated manner, by means of laughs, gestures with the head, hugs and slaps with love or recognition or consolation coherent with the message he desires to express and with the situation itself	15, 17, 33

Interview data were analyzed using taxonomy analysis from Spardley (1979), which is based on causal semantic relationships, rationale, and attributes or characters (see Table 3) through the analytical procedures of Miles and Huberman (1994), namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. For example, we collected data from interviews and confirmed it with other supporting data, then summarized it in various critical and reflective notes from the views or experiences of the participants while using their assertiveness. In the next stage, we displayed the data according to the assertivity subdomain determined by Montes de Oca (2016). Finally, we concluded the student assertiveness strategy and project it into six protocols for the assertiveness strategy model, namely from openness, objective, and rationale in conveying aspiration to accepting differences of opinion/view. The protocol model was verified based on participant experience, which helped guide students to maintain their academic performance in pluralistic communication and social relations.

Table 3*Example of Taxonomy Analysis*

Semantic relationship	Form	Question	Answer
Cause-effect	X is the cause which effects Y	Do you avoid people or situations out of fear of embarrassment? (question number 5, subdomain conflict resolution)	Yes, that is right, because of doubt, indecision, and lack of confidence (cause). These three facts are really in my personality right now, so I avoid people or situations (effect)
Rational	X is the reason for doing Y	If a friend of yours is making noise in class while you are studying, do you stop it? (question 16, subdomain constructive feedback)	Yes, I will stop it, (because) it will disturb my concentration and that of other people who are studying
		Do you find it difficult to maintain eye contact when talking to other people? (question 17 subdomain , non-verbal communication)	It is not difficult for me (because) when speaking under applicable ethics and norms, eye contact is not difficult to communicate with others.
Attribute/character	X is an attribute/characteristic of Y	Do you finish other people's sentences for them when speaking? (question 32, subdomain effective dialogue)	No, because interrupting is (an attribute or characteristic of) impolite behavior

Findings

Assertiveness exploration resulted succeeded in classifying the meaning that students tend to show assertiveness, permissiveness, and aggression in the domain of effective dialogue, constructive feedback, conflict resolution, and non-verbal communication.

Students who had good academic performance/academic success had effective dialogue/communication aptitude (Mahmud, 2014). They can refuse something without harming it. For example, the case experienced by KMNN (27 years old, male), that if someone offered something, he did not hesitate to refuse it. He said that, he liked to be open with something he has experienced. However, he chose an attitude that did not offend others or his colleagues. KMNN behaviour confirms that effective dialogue is the skill of expressing opinions with complete confidence in what is felt, thought and believed, straightforward and

firm without offending each other verbally and non-verbally or respecting the rights of others who have different points of view (Burgoon, Hunsaker, & Dawson, 1994; Hellriegel & Slocum, 2009; Montes de Oca, 2016). Although effective dialogue is essential, students can define their own dialogue carefully according to the context. For example, LK (24 years old male) stated:

When I eat with my family, I do not control the conversation because when eating with my family, Father or Mother talk the most as the head of the family. As a child, I did not want to control the conversation because I still respect my parents.

So effective dialogue can also be grouped into "polite culture" and academic areas. When having a dialogue with parents, they preferred to listen or followed because they knew that is being said or suggested by parents is good. However, during dialogue with colleagues, students still debated several discussion topics before agreeing.

For the constructive feedback subdomain, students who performed well also showed behaviour that emphasizes improving performance, and they did not hesitate to appreciate a positive action. However, students can also criticize various deviant performances (Montes de Oca, 2016). For example, UR (24 years old, male) openly criticized other people's ideas, opinions and behaviour. He said:

Yes, depending on the situation. For example, I will criticize ideas and opinions in a discussion or debate. If their actions are detrimental to other people's behaviour, I will criticize them. However, if the deed is good, I will appreciate it.

Not only that, concretely, UR (24 years old, male) also objected to if his colleagues did not respect other people, such as in the registration queue: "Yes, I will protest. For example, when the queue took the registration code, I was already queuing, but there was a friend who broke through the queue; I would protest and tell him to follow the queue." Otherwise, students with low academic performance did not show good constructive feedback because they avoided communication about improving performance. For example, MKA (23 years old, male) did not want to criticize or respond to deviant performance: "No, because it is enough to be heard and seen so that it can be a lesson in the future." In the case of MK (25 years old, male), he did not want to reprimand the older people, even though they violated the rules. According to him, "I do not reprimand or criticize if the person taking my queue position is older than me."

Domain conflict resolution helps students to resolve interpersonal conflicts calmly, trying to win both parties by showing their emotions are understood and experiencing empathy. If necessary, they give up for the sake of mutual benefit (Montes de Oca, 2016). PD (26 years old, male) said that he will never forget it if someone acts unfairly. According to the PD, "Yes, I remember it, (1) For example, slow service, where have you experienced such as during registration, or student cards. (2) Not following the teaching schedule, finish teaching faster, assessment problems that are not following performance." Furthermore, EGM's answer (24 years old, female), "Yes, I remember it because I felt that injustice was something he should not do." Differences of opinion and even disputes often occur in a social community, but these conflicts must be immediately neutralized through assertiveness strategies so that social relations remain stable. Asrowi and Barida (2013) provided five arguments that assertive communication is very beneficial for someone. First, clear communication facilitates effective interaction in education units, communities, and elsewhere. Second, people feel comfortable expressing their true feelings and opinions to others. Third, people can find solutions to their problems with or without the help of others. Fourth, people can develop and improve their

skills by interacting with others. Fifth, with firm communication, people will understand their shortcomings and try to be better.

People who make regular eye contact and approach through laughter, head gestures, hugs with love or acknowledgement or consolation that are coherent with the message to be conveyed and with the situation itself suggest having good non-verbal communication (Montes de Oca, 2016). In conclusion, even if you refuse, you must still do it with friendly feelings, love, and peace. It proves openness and honesty in refusal, not just refusing out of dislike or making excuses because of lies. The feeling experienced by MT (27 years, male) when doing non-verbal communication is avoiding eye contact. He said, "Yes, I find it difficult because eye contact can attract attention." As for OL (26 years old, male), he did not experience any difficulties. He said, "It is not difficult for me to follow the ethics and norms in communication. I feel that eye contact is not difficult to communicate with other people." The individual's ability to show assertiveness can also maintain his academic performance in carrying out his duties as a student. All individuals have the right to refuse or accept invitations from others. However, how the individual responds to the invitation is the starting point for the sustainability of his social relations. Students have a goal to maintain their academic reputation and performance, so they need to be selective in choosing the activities they do.

Indeed, in the two poles of academic performance (good and bad), the assertive behaviour shown also tends to overlap. However, the results of this study provided empirical evidence that students who have good academic performance tend to use assertiveness better than students with poor academic performance. Academic performance is stimulated by various factors, including personal background, including language skills, attendance, learning efforts, academic self-efficacy, and family socioeconomic status (Sothan, 2019). Students with good academic performance tend to have good career adaptation skills, such as openness, friendliness, and awareness (Avram et al., 2019) and maximize psychological capital resources (Martinez et al., 2019). We can highlight the research results by Avram et al. (2019) that openness, friendliness, and awareness were also essential parts in maintaining academic performance. It means that assertiveness is an integral part of neutralizing the student transition period to maintain academic performance while also maintaining social relations in a heterogeneous community. The five benefits of assertiveness that Asrowi and Barida (2013) offered are also still limited to conceptual ideas. So it is still premature to provide factual and operational experience to students to maintain their academic performance. According to the research, two main things agreed upon from the five ideas of Asrowi and Barida (2013) were clear communication that facilitates their interaction effectively and a feeling of comfort when expressing opinions or objections.

Living amid a social community (campus, boarding houses, or in a dormitory, as well as in the community) causes students to need assertiveness. It is because they are side by side but heterogeneous in their majors, sports hobbies, learning preferences, and academic interests and talents. Of course, they need to make an objective consideration of the various invitations that come to them. Some invitations may need to be accepted, or that need to be firmly rejected without damaging the social relations that have been established by maximizing effective dialogue, constructive feedback, conflict resolution, and non-verbal communication.

Besides successfully classifying sub-domains of creativity (see Table 3), the results of this research verification also succeeded in projecting some meaningful assertiveness strategies that students did to maintain their academic performance. Six assertive strategy protocols that have been synthesized and improvised based on interviews with students' subjective experiences have proven helpful for maintaining and improving student performance as follows.

Openess, Objective, and Rationale in Convyng Aspiration

Students' social relations are established wherever they are, whether in lecture classes, dormitories, sports fields, etc. However, this relationship does not necessarily make good performing students passive and receptive to their peers' various destructive behaviours or actions. They will try to convey and clarify various destructive behaviours because it is the best option not to be contaminated. For example, MNM (27 years old, male) said, "I have no difficulty when choosing because I have thought about the things I choose beforehand." Furthermore, relating to injustice, he also always reminded their colleagues, as said by UR (24 years old, male), "Of course, I always remember it, because it is an adverse situation. They should have made a fair decision." According to Miasari (2012), expressing feelings honestly and comfortably, including saying "no" to bad things, is a characteristic of assertiveness. As a result, assertiveness is also correlated with students' critical thinking skills (Larijani et al., 2014). Students are open, objective, and rational in expressing their aspirations based on their curiosity or disagreement, not just asking questions or clarifying "credit points" or gaining legitimacy from certain social groups.

Zulkaida (2005) reported on areas of assertiveness that are difficult to do; namely, refusing requests, making requests, and expressing feelings. However, the results of this study confirmed that the area of assertiveness in question to Zulkaida (2005) can be controlled, resulting in behaviors that lead to satisfactory academic performance and results (Miguelsanz, Martín, & Martínez, 2012), motivating individuals to excel in academics (Sitota, 2018), as well as predicting self-esteem and academic achievement (Parray et al., 2020). The problems that students experience are also stimulated by their not being open to expressing opinions that make them uncomfortable (e.g., asking them to skip class). They are just silent and reluctant to give a refusal. As a result, they are burdened by ignoring more substantial things about academic performance. In the second level problem, students do not convey objectively and rationally. When giving a refusal or avoiding an invitation, it is better to express objections using objective and rational data so as not to cause misunderstandings and negative tendencies towards the decisions taken. For example, I do not want to skip class because today, there is an evaluation of the results of the observation study, and my group gets the first turn. With such a rationalization, it could be that his colleagues discouraged him from asking him to skip college. As a result, to use assertiveness and fulfil the transparency aspect, consider objectivity and rationality for refusing arguments measured with common sense.

Firm and Courageous when Making Decisions

Students who maintain their academic performance are also firm and courageous when responding to invitations from their peers or even daring to confirm with lecturers or colleagues. When they encountered discomfort, they are easy to convey by paying attention to the applicable ethics so as not to cause tension and offence. For example, WHHSP (27 years old, male) flatly refused an unreasonable request made by a friend. "Yes, I will refuse because it can not be done." The same is true for UR (24 years, male). He also expressly refuses, such as "Yes, I often refuse. For example, a friend asked me to skip college. I will refuse, because it does not reflect my status as an exemplary student." OL (26 years old, male) shared the same view, such as "Yes, if there is discussion, I will choose a joint decision and avoid unreasonable opinions." Assertiveness expressions that participants put forward explained that they still prioritized rationality and the principle of mutual consensus. So as long as colleagues offer unreasonable invitations, they firmly reject them, as Yuyun (2014) refers to it as the main characteristic of assertiveness, courage!

People who want to appear safe will make "diplomatic" decisions rather than reject them. However, students with good performance preferred to express their rights objectively and positively (Falentina & Yulianti, 2012; Mardani et al., 2013; Setyowati & Dwikurnaningsih, 2014) when objecting to an invitation. Assertiveness will lose its meaning if there is no courage. Courage is the "spearhead" of the channel of feelings, but courage must be used in an elitist way so as not to cause conflict between fellow students. Blegur, Wasak, Tlonaen, and Manggoa (2017) and Cooper and Klein (2018) report that cases of deviant behaviour are a form of low student assertiveness. They do not dare to make a refusal because of poor decision making (Trudeau et al., 2003). Students who have good academic performance are responsive to their decisions and what actions they take. Ideally coherent with various duties and responsibilities as a student. So daring to make decisions does not only apply to "foreign" people but also applies to colleagues, as long as they are out of instructional standards (e.g., in semester learning plans or lecture contracts/mutual agreements) that have been determined as guidelines in socializing, we must firmly reject, including his colleagues.

Believe in Self Ability

Learning performance is visible and can be measured through certain works or instructions. This definition makes lecturers apply various learning activities that are more open and expressive, including field observations, discussions, or debates. Students implicitly use assertiveness to support their academic performance. They started by training their self-confidence by making decisions about their choices (e.g., refusing to hang out because they have to practice presentations). That is why Yessi and Oktaviana (2017) view that self-confidence is part of assertiveness because it is closely related to mental problems (Pourjali & Zarnaghash, 2010). There is a linear correlation between assertive behaviour and academic performance. The results of exploration on students with poor performance have poor assertiveness. Call it EGM (24 years, female); she is reluctant to speak in discussions or debates. He prefers to avoid conversations such as the following: "Yes because I was not confident in conveying material or opinions so that people's assessments and people's points of view were different." It is also experienced by MT (27 years, male); he chose to avoid it because he was afraid of being wrong. "Yes, always avoid because I am afraid of being wrong." MKA (23 years old, male) also stated, "Yes, because I am shy and cannot speak well." There are two interesting things in the above case. First, they do not believe that there is potential in themselves, instead choosing to remain silent because they are afraid of their peers' "social judgment." Second, they do not follow specific instructional or performance standards, so they prefer to stay away.

The above phenomenon is inversely proportional to students with good academic performance. They like to talk in a discussion or debate situation. As claimed by MK (25 years old, male), "I like to argue because it allows me to think, express my opinion and can share knowledge with the other person." Likewise, LK (24 years old, male) said, "I am not reluctant to speak in a discussion or debate situation, although I still speak a little bit because we are discussing to resolve something. Like group discussions in lectures." Meanwhile, KMNN (27 years, male) chooses to respect the other person, so he waits for the time and opportunity given. "I prefer to listen, but if there is an opportunity to speak, I will speak modestly." The assertiveness strategy the participants initiated was to provide social assertiveness. They also had rights that required attention. It provides evidence that assertiveness were used to overcome anxiety, control depression, stress, and emotions, and played effective and adaptive self-defence (Alghamdi, 2015; Budi, 2009; Falentina & Yulianti, 2012; Khan, 2012; Widjaja & Wulan, 1998). Assertiveness also arises when students do not want peers to monopolize their rights with verbal domination or other social justifications that can irritate their self-confidence.

They conveyed personal rights directly, positively, objectively, honestly, and always respect others (Budi, 2009; Falentina & Yulianti, 2012; Mardani et al., 2013; Setyowati & Dwikurnaningsih, 2014).

Prioritizing

Students who perform well must prioritize short, medium, and long-term priorities. At least students want to graduate on time (seven - nine semesters). It is a top priority when they enter college. In order to realize their priorities, they must pass each course. To graduate, students must meet numerous predetermined standards or instructions (do observation tasks, make video presentations, conduct self-evaluations, etc.). For example, OL (26 years old, male) feels that he can take responsibility for his self-evaluation, "Yes, because I am responsible for my judgment. Such as criticism that is positive in the process of presenting lecture material." OL's accountability refers to the priority of improving instructional performance so that he is honest in assessing himself based on the assessment rubric and even accepts criticism if it is useful. Specifically, LK (24 years, male) expressed his self-assessment, "Yes, I have confidence in my judgment because I have always believed in it. Like in college, I took a major when I enrolled in college. I chose a sports major because I was confident in my assessment." The priority shown by this LK is because he wants to be a Physical Education teacher, so he knows what major to choose and how he is responsible for his choice by trying to meet the needs of future work performance during college.

Prioritization is beneficial when students are faced with some activity options. Only those with priorities can selectively postpone or even eliminate non-priority activities or activities. The determination of this priority is closely related to the quality of work displayed in the future. The more time they spend preparing, the better their academic performance will be good. Some students had difficulty due to low sensitivity in determining priorities so that their work seems "as is" or even fails. The findings of Rahimi and Hall (2021) reported that students who experience academic procrastination have problems with assertiveness. They are easily "tempted," so they tended not to be assertive to refuse an invitation that can delay the work of the task. Students even experienced decreased academic performance problems. They have poor emotional control and social relations (Binong, 2020; Blegur et al., 2017; Hasan et al., 2017) because they often interacted with colleagues who misbehave (Deepika & Prema, 2017; Furo & Kagu, 2020; Winingsih et al., 2017) rather than refusing. To avoid deteriorating academic performance, students must set priorities to be more focused have a certain amount of time and opportunity to study and practice. In addition, it confirms that they are individuals who are committed and firm on the decisions previously determined (Yuyun, 2014).

Carrying out Obligations Without Interfering with the Rights of Peers

Inevitably, various cases that arise in group study classes are responsibility issues, so Oana and Ona (2019) recommended that individuals use assertiveness to control conflict and overcome injustice. Students can complete their learning responsibilities. On the other hand, some ignore it. The problem was that this can interfere with a student's focus on his academic performance if he drags on thinking about other people's responsibilities. For example, each student focuses on their responsibilities in presenting the material, such as the introductory part of the paper, discussing material A or discussion of material B, etc. So this assertive strategy was to carry out their obligations without intervening in the duties of their colleagues. Students with good academic performance did not need to intimidate or even conflict with their peers because of different opinions. OL (26 years old, male) said, "I do not want to intimidate or conflict, because everything related to work, I am used to having real principles and not taking

advantage of other people." Furthermore, KMNN's opinion (27 years old, male) is "I do not like to force other people to do what I want, because it will ruin my friendship with them. I just tell or remind, if I do not want to, I am responsible for my duties or work."

Peers in study classes, study groups, or in social communities should ideally build social bonds and social interactions so that their socialization activities should support each other to improve and enhance academic performance (Al-Dheleai & Tasir, 2017; Filade et al., 2019; Hurst et al., 2013; Kassarnig et al., 2017; Leka, 2015; Wang et al., 2020). As long as the presence of peers has not been cooperative to complete performance/instructional learning, students must decide to carry out their learning responsibilities. The decision to carry out responsibilities does not need to end in conflict and dispute but still reminds and conveys the nuances of kinship. Assertiveness strategy through the implementation of responsibilities because students know that in order to have a good performance, they must master certain instructional (Steinmayr et al. in Le et al., 2020), which are cumulatively identified in the cumulative achievement index (Cahyani, Pramono, & Firmansyah, 2019; Duruji et al., 2014). They are unlikely to drag on waiting and even think about the responsibilities of their peers when completing their assignments or study projects because it has an impact on students' academic procrastination (Winingsih et al., 2017). There are time limits and opportunities given, so immediately starting responsibilities will determine how much students carry out preparations to perform optimally on the instructions they receive.

Accepting Differences in Views or Getting Rejection

When studying in a heterogeneous class, the potential for conflict is very open if students cannot maintain and manage their emotions. For this reason, assertiveness strategies will be helpful for student adjustment (Eguchi & Hamaguchi, 2015; Mardani et al., 2013). Students must be aware that not all colleagues who commit negligence will openly convey it. It is one of the reasons why completing study assignments in groups was often problematic. Problems are generally about the substance of working on materials or papers and because of various opinions. Few were also in prolonged conflict because they did not want to be open and accept diversity. Students who were willing to accept differences prioritize harmony and disclosure of information and solution-based discussions rather than looking for "scapegoats" for all kinds of negligence that occur. Students with good academic performance did not show "allergy" to failure to complete responsibilities. For example, what was conveyed by WHHSP (27 years old, male) that: "I also need help from other people, so if in this case there is a colleague who has not completed the task, I do not need to be angry." Additionally, UR (24 years, male) stated, "I often do that (ask for help) because when I am not able to do it. If I cannot solve it, I will ask a friend to help me with the slightest thing. For example, when doing college assignments."

In the case of the final strategy, it focused on the sustainability of social relations among peers. Both assertive actors and assertive recipients must prioritize social relations by accepting different views or being open to rejection. So when colleagues did not want to accept our assertiveness or refusal, or colleagues do not want to accept our invitation, it should be resolved happily, peacefully, naturally, and without conflict (Indrawati et al., 2014; Oana & Ona, 2019) of course with good communication. good (Al'Ain & Mulyana, 2013; Gultekin et al., 2018). Let the intimacy continue so that at another time and opportunity, peers or even students can accept invitations or views that are both oriented towards constructive learning behaviour. Assertiveness is indeed used to anticipate failure or various destructive behaviours. However, assertiveness should not be a "wall" separating pre-existing social relations. For this reason, in various disputes or differences to even rejection, students must continue to use the intent, purpose, and benefits of each invitation and action that we choose as a basis for evaluation.

Every student cannot be a “remote control” for people to follow our various views and behaviours, so students who perform well use assertiveness to accept various views and even rejection, because at different times and on different occasions, they must still complement each other.

Table 4

Projection of a Strategic Model of Student Assertive Behavior to Maintain Academic Performance

No	Syntax	Descriptions	Examples
1	Open, objective, and rational to express aspirations	Students provide correct, honest, and transparent opinions according to performance orientation transparently and objectively.	Aryani refused Jusuf's invitation to hang out late because Aryani had to prepare to present the results of the observation tomorrow at 07.00 am
2	Firm and courageous when making decisions	Students are not disturbed by social status or do not live within a “certain social definition” if the chosen decision is against the invitation of peers or with certain social groups.	Though Jusuf stated that Aryani was not loyal to his friend, Aryani decided not to stay up late with Jusuf.
3	Believe in self-abilities	Students maximize various opportunities to learn new things from their decisions that support their academic performance.	Aryani believes that her decision not to hang out late at night yet to prepare herself will bring her to the maximum presentation the next day.
4	Prioritizing	Students are active or oriented to academic performance standards that have been set in the lesson plan or assessment instruments or rubrics the lecturer has prepared.	Aryani is aware that when she gets a poor academic performance (presentation), it will affect her final semester or grade and may impact her graduation and prolong her study time.
5	Carry out obligations without interfering with the rights of other peers	Students begin to carry out their priority activities with various strategic preparations. Then students do not intimidate or provoke because they respect the decisions of their peers.	Aryani continues studying and practising at the boarding house or rented house without disturbing Jusuf not to stay up late because Aryani respects Jusuf's rights and decisions.
6	Accept differences of opinion/views	Keep socializing and making friends with colleagues even if they disagree on the self-development activities that have been decided.	Aryani and Jusuf should disagree and hate each other. They stick to their own decisions (Aryani did not go because of studying, and Jusuf kept hanging out until late) so that they remained harmonious and socialist.

Notes. Names (Aryani and Jusuf) are used to operationalize the example and already get permission.

Discussion

There is a meaning that students who have high assertiveness have high academic performance. However, even those who tend to have assertiveness also have a permissive and aggressive side when faced with situations that make them feel threatened or unjust. Assertiveness is an important part that supports the development of student academic performance and helps students maintain their social relations to remain harmonious in differences and/or neglect. There are numerous students whose academic performance has

soared, but their social relations have decrease because they do not use their assertiveness optimally. On the other hand, some students have high social relations, but their academic performance has failed. Assertiveness strategy will ensure the stability and proportion of students' academic performance and social relations. Students must ensure that learning is about academic performances that tend to highlight disparities and maximize their various potentials to remain in a learning environment that complements each other despite various limitations. The six syntaxes can be used as strategic models for students to use assertiveness to the maximum in socialization patterns to maintain stable and maximum academic performance.

Overall, this research supports previous research that assertiveness helps students control their free time with various productive activities (Eratay & Aydoğın, 2015), predict their emotional adjustments, social adjustments, and academic adjustments (Parmaksız, 2019), and helps students maintain their academic performance (Fatemeh et al., 2016; Mehrgan & Nadereh, 2019; Parray et al., 2020; Thenmozhi & Bharathy, 2019). However, the quantitative reports have not provided a meaningful subjective and empirical exploration of students' experiences using assertiveness in controlling destructive social relations (in-disciplinary behavior). At the same time, limited qualitative studies have successfully reported strategies for using assertiveness in maintaining and improving student academic performance. A recent qualitative study by Kalzhanova et al. (2022) only reported the perceptions of Kazakh students about the relationship between the level of assertiveness and the level of academic achievement by categorizing 7.5% of students stated that assertiveness and academic achievement were highly related, 65% related, 12.5% slightly related, 10% unrelated and 5% very unrelated even though there is a need for students in a pluralistic social class to use assertiveness in maintaining unproductive social relations.

Referring to the discussion of the study results above. There has yet to be a single study that has explored students' operational experiences in using their assertiveness strategies. Therefore, our research is more about answering the problems and operational needs of using assertiveness in students who live in a pluralistic social group. In addition, our study has also succeeded in offering a projection model for using assertiveness which is useful among students to maintain their academic performance. Our study also responds to recommendations from research by Eratay and Aydoğın (2015) and Thenmozhi and Bharathy (2019), in which universities take a vital role in providing rigorous training programs to help students maximize free time as well as face challenges and overcome destructive situations that can interfere with their academic performance and academic success. Universities can conduct assertiveness training using our protocol as a reference in their assertiveness training for students, namely (1) Open, objective, and rational to express aspirations, (2) firm and courageous when making decisions, (3) believe in self-abilities, (4) prioritizing, (5) carrying out obligations without interfering with the rights of other peers, and (6) accepting differences of opinion/views.

Limitations

Most of the participants with good academic reputations had traumatic experiences with academic problems from previous universities (moving from a university to other and starting college from the first semester due to various problems). It means that the students only attend education at an average age, generally at the undergraduate level. This problematic experience also provided another "additional value" for them to be more assertive in using their college opportunities. In addition, we used participants with poor academic performance group, which were also limited to four people (see Table 1), so we have yet to explore the experience of assertiveness in a balanced way from different perspectives.

During the study, we limited the domain of assertiveness using Montes de Oca's (2016) concepts, such as effective dialogue, constructive feedback, conflict resolution, and non-verbal communication. Other assertiveness domains can be adopted as a comparison, including the domain of Watanabe (2010), namely activities with friends, considerate behavior toward friends, interpersonal stress events, and social anxiety. A critical note to equip our research going forward needs to be underlined from the case of this research that we have yet to provide an open opportunity to explore the assertiveness domain that emerged purely from the participant's perspective. Therefore, other purer, more critical, and more in-depth investigations are needed to explore students' experiences using assertiveness to succeed academically and complete studies on time.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research can be equated with external validity or generalization in the positivist paradigm. We remain open to the results of this study obtaining a good transferability index from potential users. However, caution should be exercised when generalizing to different contexts, including gender, age, learning experience, social experience, etc. Borrowing Lincoln and Guba's (1985) ideas about transferability, the inquirers need to be tasked with providing transferability indexes to readers in qualitative research. However, they are responsible for providing databases, data evidence, and data collection procedures that enable transferability for potential users. At least in this study, several data characteristics that can be considered in carrying out transferability are the assertiveness domain from Montes de Oca (2016), participant demographics, research procedures, interview guidelines, and data analysis techniques using taxonomic analysis from Spardley (1979) with the Miles and Huberman's analysis procedures (1994).

Implication

In the future, investigations into early semester students may provide different perspectives on using assertiveness to maintain academic performance. We still recommend that qualitative investigation be maintained in this case because it can explore students' experiences of assertiveness more effectively for diffusing to others. Another interesting study looks for differences in assertiveness strategies between two different social groups of students. What strategies do students from plural and non-plural social groups use their assertiveness to maintain academic performance? Why is that? Because they have very different preferences in many ways, including social orientation, academic orientation, and even economic orientation.

The assertiveness strategy begins openness, objectivity, and rationality when conveying aspirations to colleagues. Even though all aspirations are not always acceptable, we still recommend that honesty makes students' psychological well-being more secure. At least when they speak honestly and rationally according to their mood, they will feel satisfied. Due to dishonesty, students often do not express their objections, thus trapping them in various disciplinary actions, as reported in Blegur, Wasak, Tlonaen, and Manggoa (2017). Our research places the final continuum of the model by suggesting that communicators and communicants must be able to accept different views, opinions, and even choices with good communication (Al'Ain & Mulyana, 2013; Gultekin et al., 2018) and remain happy, peaceful, natural, and harmonious in its socialization (Indrawati et al., 2014; Oana & Ona, 2019). It is a sign of human maturity to socialize by applying assertiveness strategies because assertiveness does not need to end in prolonged conflict.

Administrators must follow up on various life skills development activities, including assertiveness strategies for their students, as an essential part of the additional academic

curriculum program. Given that there are various invasions from outside that have the potential to disrupt student focus in maintaining academic performance and success. Thus, universities must facilitate assertiveness programs for their students to adapt themselves (Eguchi & Hamaguchi, 2015; Mardani et al., 2013; Parmaksız, 2019) because people with high assertive behavior have critical reasoning. (Larijani et al., 2014) and competent in knowledge content and informal delivery of rejection responses (Bruch, 1981). It means that we still support the previous recommendations from the studies of Eratay and Aydoğan (2015) and Thenmozhi and Bharathy (2019) and the results of our study of the six protocols as one of the references in assertiveness training for students as a regular university program.

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Author Note

Jusuf Blegur is an Assistant Professor for Subject Micro Teaching, so he is actively researching various critical interventions in improving teaching skills and student success in their studies. Please direct correspondence to jusufblegur@ukaw.ac.id.

Aniq Hudiyah Bil Haq is an Assistant Professor in the field of Educational Psychology who actively researches to support the search for various psychological interventions to improve academic success. Please direct correspondence to ahbh@umkt.ac.id.

Muya Barida is an Assistant Professor in the field of Guidance and Counseling who actively researches to address various student and student learning problems as well as find ways to overcome those problems. Please direct correspondence to muya.barida@bk.uad.ac.id.

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