

## The differences in assertive behavior between Minang, Malay, Batak, and Kerinci student's culture

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### Abstract

Assertiveness is the ability of students to convey what they feel without hurting the feelings of others. This study examines the differences in the assertive behavior of students based on cultural backgrounds (Minang, Malay, Batak, Kerinci). It utilizes a comparative descriptive approach with a total sample of 248 students. The samples were selected using a proportional random sampling technique. The instrument of this research is a questionnaire on assertive behavior with a Likert scale model. Data were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and processed through SPSS version 20.00. The findings of this study indicate that there is no significant difference in the assertive behavior of students when viewed from a cultural background. In other words, the cultural background does not determine assertive student behavior. This is indicated by the calculated F value, which is equal to 0.779 while Sig. on the degree of freedom (db) 1 and alpha ( $\alpha$ ) worth 0.05 is 0.506. According to hypothesis testing criteria through analysis of variance (ANOVA), a value of more than 0.05 means that there is no significant difference between the assertive behavior of guiding and counseling students of Universitas Negeri Padang in terms of cultural backgrounds.

**Keywords:** Assertive behavior, cultural background

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### Introduction

Adolescence is a transition from childhood to adulthood, which is accompanied by the growth and development of all aspects. Teenagers at the age of 17/18 to 21/22 years are often in the tertiary level of education and about to join adulthood. (A. P. Sari, Ilyas, & Ifdil, 2017). In general, students are young individuals studying in college whose principal activities include learning science, organizing, socializing, and training themselves to be leaders (Sagita, Daharnis, & Syahniar, 2017; Chan, 2014; Goldstein & Keller, 2015).

Adulthood is the longest time in the human life span and starts from the age of 18 years until death (Yahya, 2012). At this time, the development of individual experiences, including physical, mental, social, and emotional maturity. They experience changes, such as the need to adapt to physical and psychological adjustments, the search for identity, and forming new relationships (MacDonald & Price, 2019; A. P. Sari et al., 2017; Shu & Lam, 2016). Also, during adulthood, individuals socialize with family and community environment and adjust to the prevailing norms (Liu, Peng, Zeng, Zhao, & Zhang, 2019; Prayitno & Amti, 2004).

As social creatures, individuals will always adjust to others through their ability to socialize. In case individuals behave assertively, they may relate positively to the surrounding environment (Yulmirti, 2014). Assertiveness refers to interpersonal behavior that involves honesty, open-mindedness, and feelings (Gunarsa, 2004). This means that the individuals convey what they feel without hurting the feelings of others.

Assertive behavior varies between different individuals as well as cultures. In general, culture emanate from the efforts made by humans to meet all their needs (Ahmadi, 2016). According to (Marpaung, 2007), there were differences in the level of assertiveness between students from different institutions. For instance, Toba Batak students in Medan were more assertive compared to their counterparts in Yogyakarta. From (Andayani & Mardianto, 2017) different test analyses had at value of -5,498 with a significant two-sided 0.002 level at  $<0.01$ . Work hypotheses were accepted, and there were significant differences in assertiveness between Minang and Batak students. The research also shows that the Batak is more assertive compared to the Minang. This is attributed to the culture adopted, including being open in communication and expressing their feelings. Furthermore, (Fajriana & Listiara, 2018) showed that students of Ormada members with Javanese cultural backgrounds at Diponegoro University had a high level of assertiveness. They felt that they could excel and be involved in various organizations on campus. Additionally, these students could adapt to changes effectively. This boosted their self-confidence, encouraging them to be actively involved in organizational activities on campus. Therefore, cultural background greatly influences the ability of individuals to behave assertively.

Several studies will be discussed in this study, including Minang, Malay, Batak, and Kerinci. The four tribes have a unique way of communicating and a philosophy of life that influence their approach to problems, both personal and as groups, including expressing their opinions (Wisma, Nirwana, & Afdal, 2018). For instance, the Minang culture is known to pay attention to the family system in conveying emotions. Malay is known to be simpler because it often avoids something that causes discomfort. Batak is harder than other cultures because they do not accept to be seen lowly in front of others. Lastly, Kerinci is known to be more courageous in expressing their opinions.

The interview showed that students are unable to behave assertively. They prefer to remain silent than to ask questions while the lecture is in progress (Ilkhchi, Poursharifi, & Alilo, 2011). Additionally, they cannot respond to the statement they want to refute or play truant during the lecture, showing that they lack assertiveness (Orengo Castellá, Zornoza Abad, Prieto Alonso, & Peiró Silla, 2000; Ingram & Salzberg, 1990). Also, cultural differences owned by students influence their mindset, attitudes, and behavior (Zollo, Heimberg, & Becker, 1985). Therefore, this study examines the differences in students' assertive behavior based on cultural backgrounds (Minang, Malay, Batak, and Kerinci).

## Method

This is a comparative descriptive study that aims to describe the assertive behavior of students based on their cultural backgrounds. The number of the sample comprised 248 students, including Minang culture with 148, Malay 31, Batak culture 38, and Kerinci 31. The research instrument was an assertive behavior questionnaire with a Likert scale model. Data were analyzed using variance analysis technique (ANOVA) and processed through SPSS version 20.00.

## Results and Discussions

Overall, data processing results regarding the assertive behavior of students based on the cultural background is shown in the following table 1. The data analysis showed that the assertive behavior of BK students with Minang, Malay, Batak, and Kerinci cultural backgrounds was in the medium category (S). The highest mean score was in the Kerinci culture with 121.97, while the lowest was in Malay with 118.10. This shows that Kerinci culture is more assertive than Malay. Moreover, the Kerinci culture was able to express positive feelings more effectively compared to the rest. They also introduce themselves to the new people around them. This means that individuals can introduce themselves to new people and ask for help from those around them by express their feelings. Individuals need to express the feelings experienced to be it in happiness or difficulties (Supratiknya, 2003).

**Table 1.** Average Assertive Behavior of Students from Cultural Background

Aspect	Minang		Malay		Batak		Kerinci	
	Mean	Category	Mean	Category	Mean	Category	Mean	Category
Express positive feelings	51,93	Medium	50,77	Medium	50,89	Medium	53,74	Medium
Self-affirmation	30,88	Medium	30,26	Medium	29,82	Medium	30,81	Medium
Express Negative Feelings	37,33	Medium	37,06	Medium	37,71	Medium	37,42	Medium
Total	120,14	Medium	118,10	Medium	118,42	Medium	121,97	Medium

In terms of showing positive feelings to others, Kerinci culture has the highest mean score of 53.74 compared to Minang, Malay, and Batak. This means that they are more open in conveying positive things to other people around them. Individuals with the ability to express positive feelings often display honesty and comfort. They have the ability to express disapproval, anger, show reflection and friendship with others, and acknowledge feelings of fear or anxiety, express approval, support, and be spontaneous (Oktafisa, Mitra & Mulyana, 2013). The interview with one of the respondents from Kerinci culture showed that individuals feel more satisfied when they express their feelings directly without covering it politely. The respondent showed an example by praising a friend with good grades.

Self-affirmation, referred to in assertive behavior, can defend all rights and dare to express a personal opinion even though others may not like it (Andayani & Mardianto, 2017). The Minang people had the highest mean score compared to Malay, Batak, and Kerinci cultures, specifically 30.88. This means they can adequately defend their rights in various situations compared to other cultures. However, this assertion contradicts (Andayani & Mardianto, 2017), which stated that Batak culture could better defend its rights compared to Minang since they are hard-tempered and consistent in advocating for their rights. Fajri & Nirwana established that individuals from Minang backgrounds only display their emotions temporarily because they adhere to the kinship system (Fajri, Nirwana, & Alizamar, 2019).

In expressing negative feelings, Kerinci culture had the highest mean score of 37.42 while the lowest was Malay. This is because Malay people prefer avoiding the things that cause disagreements or disputes with others. Primarily, the Malay people are known to be quiet and shy (Wisma et al., 2018).

Batak culture with a mean score of 37.71 can better express negative feelings to others. The study showed that they are angry and express their feelings to the persons concerned. Moreover, they are known to be harder than other cultures because they show themselves superior to others. (Andayani & Mardianto, 2017) states that individuals from the Batak culture are more honest, frank, more open, and do not involve themselves in complicated deals. This means they have the ability to express negative feelings than Malay culture.

**Table 2.** Variant Analysis (ANOVA) assertive behavior score data based on cultural background

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Explanation
Cultural background	260,618	3	86,873	.779	.506	Not significant

From the data in table 2, the cultural background, including Minang, Malay, Batak, and Kerinci culture categories, had a Fcount value of 0.779, while sig. at degrees of freedom (dk) 1 and ( $\alpha$ ) 0.05 was 0.506. According to the hypothesis testing criteria through analysis of variance (ANOVA), sig. more than 0.05 means there is no significant difference between the assertive behavior of students based on cultural background (Minang, Malay, Batak, and Kerinci). This means that assertive behavior is not significantly influenced by cultural background, and therefore, the hypothesis in this study was rejected. That is because

the Minang, Malay, Batak, and Kerinci people are almost the same when it comes to displaying assertive behavior. According to (Minauli, Desriani, & Tuapattinaya, 2006), there were no significant differences between Javanese, Bataks, and Minangkabau when it comes to handling family conflicts. This is attributed to living in urban areas and studying in tertiary institutions. Consequently, they can control anger and behave decisively. Assertiveness, referred to in this case, is a form of behavior displayed by individuals in communicating privately or between people characterized by the desire to defend their needs and interests openly and directly (Parray & Kumar, 2016).

Culture is a unique way for humans to adapt to their environment and involves building nature to meet their desires and life goals. It is a process of humanization and the whole system of ideas, actions, and results of human work in the community life (Kuswarianandhika, 2017). Culture exists because a human creator is living in its midst (Setiadi, dkk, 2006:27). Also, it is made from patterns of thought passed down from parents to children and between other individuals in a society. In coordinating people's actions, it is necessary to understand their values, beliefs, and expressions (Hofstede, 1984). Cultural values are always held fast and learned from the beginning of life and changes from generation to generation (Parham et al., 2015). Previous works showed how ethnic and cultural norms affect the assertiveness and willingness of individuals to ask questions, raise concerns, or be assertive (Alston-Mills, 2003; Taras, Rowney, & Steel, 2013). For this reason, appropriate treatment is needed to form direct assertive behavior (Galassi, Delo, Galassi, & Bastien, 1974; Rathus, 1973).

Data analysis showed that the assertive behavior of college students with Minang, Malay, Batak, and Kerinci cultural backgrounds was in the medium category (S). One of the factors that influence assertive behavior is a cultural factor. According to (Kuswarianandhika 2017), in case culture is high, assertive behavior formed increase. Conversely, if culture is low, the assertive behavior formed decreases. Therefore, each culture discussed in this study has different characteristics that affect assertive behavior.

The study also shows that Kerinci culture is more assertive than Batak. This is because the Batak culture pays more attention to itself, perceiving itself as superior to others. When behaving assertively, detailed culture pays attention to what is said to avoid hurting the feelings of others and feel relieved when they convey their feelings without limitations. The Batak culture fears to hurt other people's feelings with what and therefore prefer not to convey or use intermediaries.

The provision of information services is also useful in improving assertive student behavior and help them adjust to different cultural environments. Individuals need a variety of information both for their daily needs now and for future life planning (M. N. Sari, Yusri, & Sukmawati, 2015). Furthermore, content mastery services are needed to improve assertive behavior. This involves assistance provided both individually and in groups to master abilities. It helps to express opinions and responses and good ways without hurting the feelings of others (Ilham & Ibrahim, 2014).

## Conclusions

The assertive behavior of students is in the medium category, with a percentage of 67.74%. The results also showed that Kerinci had a high assertiveness compared to other cultures, specifically 41.94%. Furthermore, there was no significant difference in the assertive behavior of students based on cultural background. This means that differences in cultural backgrounds do not determine the assertive behavior of students. This is indicated by the calculated  $F_{count}$  value of 0.779 while Sig. at degrees of freedom (db) 1 and alpha ( $\alpha$ ) 0.05, which is 0.506. According to the hypothesis testing criteria through analysis of variance (ANOVA), if  $F_{count}$  is higher than  $F_{table}$ , there is no significant difference between the assertive behavior of students from a cultural background. Students with low assertive behavior can be assisted through guiding and counseling services. This helps to convey what they feel without hurting others, even though they are in a different culture.

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