

Perception of Roles as Peer Educators in High Schools to Prevent Drug Abuse among Adolescents

Ira Nurmala¹, Elisa Dwi Pertiwi¹, Yuli Puspita Devi¹, Muthmainnah¹, Riris Diana R¹

¹Faculty of Public Health, Universitas Airlangga, Campus C Mulyorejo Surabaya 60115

Abstract

Adolescence is a transition period between childhood and adulthood, adolescent tends to have high curiosity and seek identity. Adolescent is a vulnerable group as a target for drug dealer. The objective of this study was to determine the perception of students in carrying out their duties as peer educators. This study used qualitative study approach with a case study design which intended to define the perceptions of the research subjects through in-depth interviews, observations, and also document studies. The students' perception of their roles as peer educators such as a keeper of confidential informations, motivators, sources of information, and discussion partners. The conclusion was that the students who were selected as peer educators in their school environment had a positive perception of the application of the method to prevent drug abuse among their peers. Therefore, the application of peer educator method in high schools in North Surabaya can be used as a reference for other schools to implement peer educator method to their students.

Keywords: Student, Peer Education, Drug Abuse Prevention, School

Introduction

Adolescence is a transition period between childhood and adulthood which is characterized by changes in physical, psychological and psychosocial aspects⁽¹⁾ The process of independent for these adolescents are easily affected by their environment and it can lead to drug abuse⁽²⁾.

Drug abuse that occurs in adolescents is caused by many factors that lead to addiction. Several factors causing drug abuse include personality, family, environment, education, and social and community, and vulnerable population factors⁽³⁾.

A report from the United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2015) stated that drug abuse at 15-64 years old was as much as 3.4-6.6% of the total world population. The increase number of drug abuse also occurred in several ASEAN countries, especially

Indonesia. Of the 100% narcotics transactions in the ASEAN region, 40% were in Indonesia⁽⁵⁾.

East Java Narcotics Agency explained that in 2010 there were 2,986 cases, and then in 2011 there was an increase of 3,008 cases. The highest drug abuse occurred in adolescents between 15-19 years old with a percentage of 37.88% in 2015. Social reinforcement among students must be carried out as the basis of national development.

A research explained how to fund youth-based school programs. The article presents the rationale and content of PASS, a Danish school-based prevention program targeting cannabis-culture-related beliefs among high school students (i.e. typically 15-19 years old). The objective of the program was to prevent or delay initiation of cannabis use and limit use among students who already initiated⁽⁷⁾.

The implementation of the peer educator was developed based on the assumption that teens will feel more open in expressing their problems to their peers. Therefore, the establishment of peer educators in the school environment is a strategy that can minimize the occurrence of drug abuse in adolescents.

Corresponding author :

Ira Nurmala,

Faculty of Public Health Universitas Airlangga
iranurmala@fkm.unair.ac.id

The senior high schools in North Surabaya that formed peer educator method empowered their students as peer educators with the aim that students can play an active role in activities in the school environment as well as outside school activities. In carrying out the peer educator strategy, the students were required to be able to play an active and sensitive role in the social environment in their schools especially as facilitators for their friends in providing solutions and bridging the problems experienced by them. The aim of this study was to understand the students' perception of their role as peer educators.

Material and Method

This study used qualitative study approach with a case study design which intended to define the perceptions of the research subjects⁽⁸⁾. A Case Study Research was conducted to gain in depth/detail/complete information to obtain a complete picture of an event, in the sense that the data collected in the research was studied as a whole, complete and integrated.

The key informants of this study were students who appointed as peer educators. The informants were chosen to explore information according to the purpose of the study. The number of informant in this study was 10 student identified as peer-educator by the teachers.

In a qualitative case study approach, the researcher becomes the main instrument in the data collection because the aim of the research was to explore the students' perceptions to obtain comprehensive information. Other data collection tools used to support this research were interview guidance, observations and tape recorders.

The interview guidance was prepared based on the objectives of the study, which was also guidance in the form of questions to explore the students' perception in carrying out their roles as peer educators. The observation was done by observing the students' access to health promotion media in the school environment such as the presence of drug abuse prevention posters. The researcher conducted an interview by using open questions. The researcher tried to create a comfortable atmosphere, so that the informants could freely convey information that the researcher wanted to obtain.

The data analysis in this study was done through some procedures, namely data reduction, data presentation

and conclusion drawing.⁽⁹⁾ After collecting the data, the recording of the interview with each informant was transcribed and the key words related to this study was identified.

There are four forms of data analysis along with the interpretation in the case study research, namely collection of categories, direct interpretation, researcher formed pattern and found comparability between two or more categories, and later the researcher developed the result of the data obtained to infer the result of the research⁽¹⁰⁾.

Regarding the explanation of peer educator about the program that has been running at each school, the program has varied activities. The informants explained that the existing program was considered to be less effective because of the lack of activities, so the school have to make a lot of programs that could build the students' enthusiasm in avoiding drug abuse.

Findings

Role as a Keeper of Confidential Information

In carrying out the role as peer educators, the informants explained that their interaction with their peers was spontaneous and informal. This means that the interaction can occur anytime and anywhere (inside or outside school area). However, the principle of confidentiality should be upheld.

Seven students revealed their reason for being peer educators was because they wanted to help their peers to solve their problem. According to informants, the students tend to feel reluctant or afraid if they had to consult their problems with teachers. For example, as SK (Student 1) explained:

I want to help my friends. When they get into problems and go to the guidance counselor, they certainly will not feel comfortable. They will be less open. If they have friends to share what they feel, they will be more opened.

Although not all of the problems can be solved properly, peer educators are committed to help their peers. Peer educators also sometimes ask for help or input from the Teachers regarding problems experienced by their peers to find solutions for the problems. SK (Student 1) explained:

The problem is that there are students who tell us about their problems with their significant others, but then I cannot give them solution because I have no experience in that field. But, they said, what kind of counselor you are. That is what I experienced.

Role as Motivators

Based on the result of the interview, the peer educators also revealed that they have a role as motivator. They have ability to help their peers solve the problems become a motivation for them.

The peer educators encouraged their peers to solve problems without having to do negative things like drug abuse. By motivating their peers, it is hoped that this program will be able to help students to solve their problems, and motivate them to be more productive at school activities. As DH (Student 2) pointed out:

When my friends seemed not in a good mood, I must be sensitive. I would ask them why. Maybe they are having problems or feared of something, like fear of falling into negative things. So I should motivate them.

The role of peer educators as motivators is an attitude that can be an example for other young people that as the next generation of the nation they must stay away from drug abuse by participating in positive activities at school and outside of school.

Role as a Sources of Information

The lack of knowledge of adolescents about the consequences of drug abuse is caused by the limited access to obtain information regarding the impact that will happen. Peer educators are students who become resources or counselors for their peer groups (11).

Peer education is a program that is implemented as a useful source of information for adolescents regarding the dangers of drug abuse so that they can avoid all kinds of drug abuse forms.

In conveying information on the dangers of drug abuse, peer educators must have good knowledge. At present, trainings are provided for the peer educators, but are still not as intensive as they once were, so the peer educators need support from the schools and the government in providing guidance and trainings for them so that they can give information to their peers optimally. The following comment was from RH (Student 3):

[...] (The training) from the school is still minimal. Although the school gives us support but it is not maximal. There is also a funding problem.

Role as Discussion Partners

To achieve the goal to make students understand the danger of drug abuse, peer educators can provide peer counseling through formal and non-formal situations. Formal situation counseling can be carried out in counseling events and non-formal counseling can be done by holding a discussion (11).

The role of the peer educators as friends of discussion can also be seen from how often their friends at the school use the peer educators as facilities to exchange thoughts about information in preventing drug abuse. The following comments were from DH and KN:

Almost every day I get questions from my friends (DH, Student 2).

Yes, (I) often (experience the same thing), it is just not as often as every day. The problem is that we are now in different classes, XII class. We often had discussion when we were still classmates. (KN, Student 5).

Students who become peer educators have the ability to understand the main tasks and roles as peer educators. However, sometimes, some cases were not well understood because the peer educators have never experienced the same things.

Actually, this can be anticipated by conducting regular joint discussion that is accompanied by teachers. The discussion can be a media to exchange views on the possibility of cases that occur in adolescents and discussion of actions to be taken so that the peer educators can carry out their role to the fullest.

Discussion

Perception is a process of how stimulus that influences responses is selected and interpreted the perceptions of each person towards an object is different⁽¹³⁾. Therefore, perceptions have a subjective nature. Stimulus is any physical form or verbal communication that can affect individual responses.

The previous research explained that peers are friends who can influence each other towards goodness or toward risky behavior⁽¹⁴⁾. In a study regarding

strategies for prevention and intervention of drug abuse among students in secondary schools in Kenya, it was showed that drug abuse was widespread among students, regardless of gender, and that there was a strong relationship between drug abuse and family members abusing drugs ⁽¹⁵⁾.

According to the psychological abilities, adolescents, including students, have mental characteristics that are still unstable. This condition makes them vulnerable to the effects of negative interactions such as drug abuse. Students must have strong and independent attitudes and characters with the spirit to build the nation by staying away from drug abuse.

One program that has been running in several high schools in North Surabaya, is peer educator as a facility to share stories, experiences, and problems faced by students. Peer educators thought peer education to be an effective method to prevent drug abuse ⁽¹⁶⁾. To be effective, the program is recommended to be started during middle school instead of high school, that families and local institutions should be involved in the program, and the students should be directed to participate in arts, sports, and social activities.

Goodlad (1998) explained that there are seven regulations as criteria for implementing peer educator strategy, one of which is giving trainings to students who are peer educators with assignments and explaining techniques in teaching the possibility to solve problems that are often experienced among adolescents. The Goodlad Theory provides an explanation that the school should be represented by accompanying teachers or Teachers to hold trainings so that the peer educators can carry out their duties in a good way ⁽¹⁷⁾.

The facilities provided by the school are in the form of support to the peer educators. If there is an event outside the school that asks the peer educators to contribute, the peer educators should get a dispensation to leave the class. In addition, the guidance counselor's room can be used as a discussion room, unless this discussion activity has not been conducted regularly.

Based on the data obtained from the peer educators and also from the teachers, there was no funding assistance from the school. The funding was intended to be developed by the peer educators in making an activity in the school environment involving the students at the school with the aim of getting to know the danger of

drugs and preventing drug abuse.

From the results obtained by the informants regarding the perception of the peer educators in carrying their duties, the researcher reviewed the need to improve the support for the peer educators to be more maximal in carrying out their roles.

Peer educator program needs to be organized, starting from appointing a chairman of the management. The point is that it will ease the peer educators to hold meetings or discussions with other peer educators and teachers.

In addition, the guidance counselor, as a companion to the peer educators, must routinely control the development and notice obstacles faced by the peer educators. If there are problems that are difficult to solve by the peer educators, the accompanying teachers can provide input or solution.

In addition to the assistance that can be provided by the guidance counselor, the person in charge for the health unit must also routinely provide information to the peer educators. The information provided is specifically related to health impacts that will occur if adolescents commit drug abuse. Thus, in conveying the danger of drug abuse to the students, the peer educators can link it to the health problem that might occur.

The school must also involve the peer educators with activities outside the school that are collaborated with stakeholders to provide trainings for the peer educators. The activities can be in the form of counseling from the National Narcotics Agency or from the police related to the prevention of drug abuse. In addition, the school must also provide facilities to the peer educators to hold regular discussions.

Conclusion

The conclusions of this study are about the perceptions that arise in students who are motivated to become peer educators because they want to contribute to prevent their peers from committing drug abuse. Most students who are peer educators felt changes in themselves such as getting new friends from various classes, understanding life problems and gaining new knowledge when they were invited to the counseling. Only a few students who just felt neutral or stated that they did not feel any change in their individual self.

The constraint that was still felt by the peer educators was the lack of guidance, so that when they faced new problems that they had never experienced before, their role as peer educators could not function optimally.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

Funding: This work has been fully supported by Annual budget of Faculty of Public Health Faculty, Universitas Airlangga.

Ethical Clearance: Ethics approval was received from the Health Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Airlangga.

References

1. Dariyo A. Psikologi Perkembangan Dewasa Muda. Jakarta: Grasindo; 2004.
2. Gunarsa SD. Psikologi Remaja. Jakarta: Gunung Mulia; 2006.
3. BNN. Buku Panduan Pencegahan Penyalahgunaan Narkoba Sejak Dini. 2012;(11):1–101.
4. UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME. World Drug report. New York; 2015.
5. Prayoga R. BNN: transaksi narkoba Indonesia tertinggi se-ASEAN. antaranews. 2016 Apr;
6. Peraturan Walikota Surabaya Nomor 65 Tahun 2014 Tentang Rencana Aksi Pelaksanaan Kebijakan dan Strategi Daerah Bidang Pencegahan, Pemberantasan Penyalahgunaan dan Peredaran Gelap Narkoba Kota Surabaya Tahun 2014-2015. 2014.
7. Holm S, Tolstrup J. PASS: School-based prevention addressing cannabis culture-related beliefs. *Drugs Educ Prev Policy*. 2016;25(2):164–72.
8. Moeloeng LJ. Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif. Bandung. PT.Remaja Rosdakarya; 2006.
9. Paramastri I, Supriyati, Priyanto MA. Early Prevention Toward Sexual Abuse on Children. *J Psikol*. 2010;37(1):1–12.
10. Creswell JW. Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches. SAGE Publications Inc; 1998.
11. Imron A. Manajemen Peserta Didik Berbasis Sekolah. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara; 2012.
12. Hurlock EB. Psikologi Perkembangan Suatu Pendekatan Sepanjang Rentang Kehidupan. 5th ed. Istiwidayanti, Soedjarwo, editors. Jakarta: Erlangga; 2006.
13. Webster MS, Werner JS, Field DJ. Adaptation and The Phenomology of Perception. 2005.
14. Dalimunthe EM. Efektivitas Pelatihan Pendidik Sebaya (Peer Group) Terhadap Pengetahuan dan Sikap Siswa SMA N 1 Padangsidempuan Tentang Pencegahan NAPZA di Kota Padangsidempuan. Universitas Sumatera Utara Medan; 2013.
15. Marais P, Maithya R. Strategies for prevention and intervention of drug abuse among students in secondary schools in Kenya. *J Africa Educ Rev*. 2015;12(2):193–210.
16. Karaca A, Akkus D, Sener DK. Peer Education from the Perspective of Peer Educators. *J Child Adolesc Subst Abus*. 2017;27(2):76–85.
17. Goodlad S. Mentoring and Tutoring by Students. London: Association with BP; 1998.