


The Effectiveness of Healthy Romantic Relationships Training on Enhancing Active-Empathic Listening Skills Among Emerging Adults

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<p>Revised: 2024-12-29</p> <p>Published: 2024-12-08</p> <p>Keywords: Active-empathic listening skills, emerging adult, healthy romantic relationship, relationship education, quasi-experimental</p> <p>Copyright holder: © Author/s (2024)</p> <p>This article is under: </p> <p>How to cite: Utami, L. A. C., Ginanjar, A. S., & Pranawati, S. Y. (2024). The Effectiveness of Healthy Romantic Relationship Training on Enhancing Active-Empathic Listening Skills Among Emerging Adults. <i>Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy</i>, 6(3). https://doi.org/10.51214/002024061200000</p> <p>Published by: Kuras Institute</p> <p>E-ISSN: 2656-1050</p>	<p>ABSTRACT: Active-empathic listening skills is one important factor in building healthy romantic relationship for emerging adults. Previous studies have focused more on sexual education, dating violence prevention, active listening, and empathic listening separately, without specifically targeting emerging adults (18 to 29 years old). This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of healthy romantic relationship training on enhancing the active-empathic listening skills among emerging adults. The training included knowledge and skills related to active-empathic listening, such as knowledge about healthy romantic relationships, self-concept, adaptive coping strategy, and active-empathic listening skills. This study was conducted using a quasi-experimental within-subject design, measured using the Healthy Romantic Relationship Scale and the Active-Empathic Listening Scale (AELS). 13 unmarried emerging adults ($M = 21.9$) completed the training session until the follow-up session. Results from quantitative analysis using repeated measure ANOVA indicated that healthy romantic relationship training is effective on enhancing active-empathic listening skills in emerging adults ($F(2,11) = 4.872, p = .031$). Qualitative data further supported the hypothesis, showed the improvement in knowledge, skills, and confidence in applying active-empathic listening skills within future romantic relationships. Findings highlighted the importance of training programs focused on enhancing active-empathic listening skills to support emerging adults in achieving healthier outcomes in their romantic relationships.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

One of important aspect of emerging adults' development is establishing romantic relationships, which can be a source of well-being or negatively impact personal development (Gómez-López et al., 2019). Being in a healthy romantic relationship offers numerous benefits, including improvement in physical and mental health, coping abilities, and life satisfaction (Beckmeyer & Cromwell, 2019; Braithwaite et al., 2010; Whitton et al., 2013). Healthy romantic relationships also contribute to the development of emerging adults, such as shaping identity, gaining meaning and purpose in life, improving emotion management, developing caring or prosocial behavior, increasing responsibility for life and work, and shaping the capacity for intimacy (Gala & Kapadia, 2013; Kerpelman et al., 2009).

Despite the positive impact of romantic relationship, emerging adults showed a high prevalence of unhealthy romantic behaviors. Global Data from World of Health Organization WHO (2021) revealed the prevalence of violence in romantic relationship among emerging adults ranged from 24% to 27%. Meanwhile, national data indicated that there were 8,228 cases of violence in intimate relationships throughout 2024, of which 3,108 involved emerging adults (Simfoni-PPA, 2024). Emerging adults who have experienced unhealthy relationships were more likely to develop physical problems (chronic diseases, gastrointestinal diseases, and sexually transmitted diseases), mental health problems (depression and post-traumatic stress disorder), and perpetuate unhealthy relationship patterns into adulthood (Campbell, 2002; Kerpelman et al., 2009; Whitton et al., 2013). Given the benefits of healthy romantic relationships and the serious risks associated with unhealthy romantic relationships, it is important to provide training program focused on promoting healthy romantic relationship for emerging adults.

A healthy romantic relationships can be defined as one characterised by trust, honesty, fairness, loyalty, communication, caring, respect, providing protection, emotional and financial support, and the absence of violence (Davila et al., 2021; Hielscher et al., 2021; Noonan & Charles, 2009). In addition to these key components, several important aspects to established healthy romantic relationships, including (1) Knowledge of the concept of healthy romantic relationships (Hielscher et al., 2021; Kerpelman et al., 2009). An understanding of such concept helped forming behavior patterns that support healthy romantic relationships (Gower & Baldwin-White, 2021; Kerpelman et al., 2009); (2) Self-concept (McIntyre et al., 2017). Positive self-concept supported better relationship outcome, while a poor self-concept hindered healthy romantic relationships (Kamp Dush et al., 2008); (3) Adaptive coping strategies (Papp & Witt, 2010). Coping ability played a crucial role in building emotional closeness, maintaining relationship stability, and improving relationship quality (Adler-Baeder et al., 2007); and (4) Active-empathic listening skills (Lachica et al., 2023; Manusov et al., 2020). Active-empathic listening skills contributed to effective communication and increased relationship satisfaction (Bodie, 2011; Drollinger et al., 2005). By considering these factors in training program, emerging adults can maintain healthy romantic relationships.

This study focused on enhancing active-empathic listening skills through healthy romantic relationship training. Active-empathic listening is the ability to engage actively and emotionally in listening to others (Angera & Long, 2006; Bodie, 2011). Active-empathic listening skills consisted of three active processes: sensing, processing, and responding. Active-empathic listening skills considered a good listening because it involved two important aspects of listening, active listening and empathic listening (Pence & Vickery, 2012). Active-empathic listening was known beneficial to reach a deeper level of listening (Drollinger et al., 2005), which gave a positive impact on romantic relationships. These positive impacts included effective communication, promoting behaviors that benefit the relationship, maintaining romantic stability (Angera & Long, 2006; Drollinger et al., 2005), resolving conflicts (Gower & Baldwin-White, 2021), and providing emotional support to partners, which increased their life satisfaction (Pence & Vickery, 2012). It highlighted the importance of training programs that not only addressed problems in romantic relationships, but also on focused on improving active-empathic listening skills.

Emerging adults demonstrated a need for training program on healthy romantic relationships, but there was lack of programs that focus on general healthy romantic relationships and active-empathic listening skills for emerging adults (Solomon et al., 2021). Previous studies have focused on assertive communication in the context of sexual education, dating violence (Coyle et al., 2019; Joppa et al., 2016; Lederman et al., 2010), and conflict management communication (Kerpelman et al., 2009; Larson et al., 2007). Other trainings have focused on active listening skills and empathy separately (Angera & Long, 2006; Lachica et al., 2023; Long et al., 1999). Lachica et al. (2023) found that behavioral listening training improved listening skills in individuals in romantic relationships. Angera and Long (2006) demonstrated that empathy training increased empathy scores and

expression over a six month period in adults in romantic and married relationships. Long et al. (1999) examined the effectiveness of empathy training on adults in romantic relationships, with the result that there was an increase in empathy scores over 6 months, and it was related to relationship satisfaction.

The studies mentioned above were limited to developing active listening or empathic skills separately, using married and cohabiting participants, and conducted in the United States (Angera & Long, 2006; Lachica et al., 2023; Long et al., 1999). In addition, it has been found that combining both active and empathic listening leads to better outcomes than only one aspect (Comer & Drollinger, 2013). Active listening alone, may allow emerging adult to receive verbal and nonverbal cues, but fail to deeply comprehend their partner's feelings (Comer & Drollinger, 2013; Drollinger et al., 2005). Factors such as self-concept and adaptive coping strategies also can play significant role in improving active-empathic listening skills. Having a positive perception of oneself enhanced the ability to listen and recognize other's need (Falanga et al., 2012; Levitt, 2008). Greater coping strategy such as emotional coping (e.g, mindfulness) also helped stabilize attention and affect facilitating greater insight during listening (Manusov et al., 2020). Incorporating these concepts into training modules will benefit the enhancement of active-empathic listening skills in emerging adults. Based on the literature review, training that emphasized healthy romantic relationship knowledge in general and aimed to enhance active-empathic listening skills had not been found. Therefore, the researcher developed a healthy romantic relationship training that targeted the enhancement of active-empathic listening skills.

Study Aim and Hypothesis

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of healthy romantic relationship training on enhancing the active-empathic listening skills in emerging adults. The hypothesis is healthy romantic relationship training is effective on enhancing active-empathic listening skills in emerging adults.

METHODS

Design

This study used a quasi-experimental within-subject design to test cause and effect of variables without any independent variable being manipulated and comparing scores in a single group obtained before and after the treatment (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018) . We tested the impact of training by comparing scores on healthy romantic relationship knowledge and active-empathic listening skills at three times, before training (pre-test), at the end of training (post-tets), and one month later (follow-up).

Participants

The participant criteria were emerging adults, aged 18 to 29 years, unmarried individuals who were willing to participate in face-to-face training. This study was not limited to participants who currently in romantic relationships but involved general participants who wanted to build healthy romantic relationships in the future. The sampling technique used convenience sampling, which was selected on the basis of their availability and willingness to participate (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). From the initial 30 target participants, we prioritized participants who had lower scores on healthy romantic relationship knowledge and active-empathic listening skills. Total of 13 participants completed the training until follow-up session. The demographic description of the participants can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristic

Demographic Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Age	M = 21.9	SD = 2.2
Gender		
Woman	7	53.8%
Man	6	46.2%
Domicile		
Jakarta	6	46.2%
Depok	4	30.8%
Tangerang	3	23%
Education		
Bachelor's Degree	9	69.2%
Undergraduate Students	4	30.8%
Romantic Relationship Status		
In a Romantic Relationship	5	38.5%
Not in a Romantic Relationship	8	61.5%

Procedures

A new module was developed for Healthy Romantic Relationships Training based on theoretical foundations and modification to existing modules designed to enhance active-empathic listening skills (Fitts & Roid, 1964; Lachica et al., 2023; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Long et al., 1999; Western, 2011). This module addressed knowledge and skills identified contributing to the enhancement of active-empathic listening skills, including healthy romantic relationships knowledge, self-concept, adaptive coping strategy, and active-empathic listening skills. To address knowledge about healthy romantic relationship, we incorporated the materials from Healthy Relationship Resource Kit (Western, 2011). We developed material and activities related to self-concept from self-concept theory (Fitts & Roid, 1964), while material and activities about adaptive coping strategy from coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Lastly, to address active-empathic listening skills, we modified activities from module designed to enhance active listening skills (Lachica et al., 2023) and module aimed to promote empathy skills (Long et al., 1999, p. 199).

The training conducted in six sessions, consisted of four main sessions determined based on four specific topics taught, along with one initial session and one follow-up session. Each main session was conducted over three hours. Total of six sessions of healthy relationships training were sufficient to provide participants with knowledge and skills that supported the enhancement of active-empathic listening skills. Previous study demonstrated enhancement in knowledge and skills related to healthy romantic relationships with minimum of two sessions, each lasted in three hours (Davila et al., 2021). Other studies reported improvement in knowledge and skills related to healthy romantic relationships through the inclusion of at least four specific topics in minimum of four sessions (Joppa et al., 2016; Kerpelman et al., 2009). Additionally, the small number of sessions was expected to make it more appealing for participants to complete the entire training.

Initial session was held separately from main sessions and was designed to gather participants, introduce the training, and obtain informed consent as evidence of participants' willingness and commitment to participate in the program. In main sessions, each session focused on learning four specific topics that contributed to the enhancement of active-empathic listening skills (for details, see Table 2). Interactive activities such as lectures, discussions, and roleplay are also utilized. Follow-up sessions are conducted one month after to evaluate the effectiveness of the training. During follow-up session, participants completed the instruments, received electronic certificates and booklets, and had the opportunity to win electronic money through a lucky draw. The academic program's ethics committee approved the training procedure and assigned it the approval number: 051/FPsi.Komite Etik/PDP.04.00/2024.

Table 2. Healthy Romantic Relationship Module

Session	Topic	Example Activities	Duration (Min)
Initial session	Healthy romantic relationships training introduction	Introduction to general information about the training, completion of instruments (pre-test) and informed consent forms	30
Main session 1	Healthy Romantic Relationship Knowledge	Knowledge about healthy romantic relationships; healthy romantic relationship discussion and sharing experiences	180
Main session 2	Self-Concept	Self-concept and its relationship to self-esteem and self-acceptance discussion; Positive and negative self-exploration using worksheet and discussion	180
Main session 3	Adaptive Coping Strategy	Common stressors in romantic relationship identification; adaptive coping strategies exploration and discussion	180
Main session 4	Active-Empathic Listening Skills	Active-empathic listening principal and techniques discussion; roleplay activity to perform the active-empathic listening skills, completion of instruments (post-test)	180
Follow-up Session	Follow-up	Completion of instruments (follow-up), lucky draw, and closing statements	30

Instruments

The study used two measuring instruments: The Healthy Romantic Relationship Knowledge Scale and The Active-Empathic Listening Scale (AELS). The reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's alpha, with a minimum value of .7 considered of good reliability (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2004).

The Active-Empathic Listening Scale (AELS) developed by Bodie (2011) and adapted into bahasa Indonesia by Mahanani (2018). AELS consisted of 11 items with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never or almost never true) to 7 (always or almost always true). It measured three dimensions of listening: sensing, processing, and responding, with a reliability of .76, indicating of good reliability. Some example of items on AELS were: "I listen for more than just the spoken words" and "I assure others that I am listening by using verbal acknowledgments". Higher score indicated greater active-empathic listening skills.

The Healthy Romantic Relationship Knowledge Scale, developed by author based on materials from Healthy Relationship Kit module (Western, 2011). It consisted of 20 items, including 14 true or false statement and 6 multiple choice question. The reliability test was .73, indicating good reliability. Sample items in The Healthy Romantic Knowledge Scale were, "Your relationship respects each other's opinions even when there is a difference opinion" and "Your partner uses silent treatment when in conflict". Higher score indicated greater knowledge about healthy romantic relationships.

Data Analysis

Research data was processed in quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative analysis technique used was Repeated Measure ANOVA, pre and post-test, conducted using IBM SPSS Statistic software version 25 for Windows. The impact of romantic relationship training was measured from the mean difference of The Active-Empathic Listening Scale (AELS) and The Healthy Romantic Relationship Knowledge Scale at three different time points. Qualitative analysis was conducted using thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The themes were obtained from the participants' evaluation data, discussions, reflections, and insights during the sessions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Result showed change in mean scores of active-empathic listening skills as follows: pre-test ($M = 58.231$, $SD = 1.915$, $CI [54.058, 62.404]$), post-test ($M = 64.385$, $SD = 1.738$, $CI [60.598, 68.171]$), and follow-up ($M = 64.077$, $SD = 1.439$, $CI [60.942, 67.212]$). As shown in Figure 1, there was a significant increase in average score of active-empathic listening skills in pre-test and post-test, and a slight decrease in follow-up after one month training, although the score remained higher than pre-test. As presented in Table 3, the ANOVA result indicated that healthy romantic relationships training significantly improved active-empathic listening skills, $F(2,11) = 4.872$, $p = .031$. Bonferroni post hoc testing revealed a significant difference in active-empathic listening skills between pre-test and follow-up after one month of training ($M = -5.846$, $SD = 1.808$, $CI [-10.870, -.822]$). However, no significant differences were found between pre-test and post-test and between post-test and follow-up. It can be concluded that healthy romantic relationships training had a significant impact on enhancing active-empathic listening skills within one month of the training.

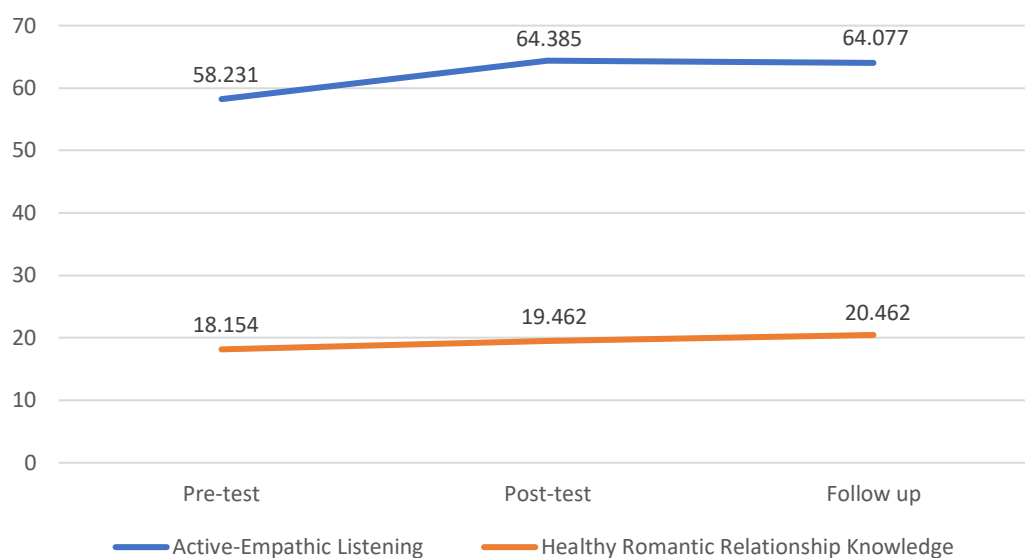


Figure 1. Mean Difference at Pre-test, Post-test, dan Follow-up

As shown in Figure 1, the result of analysis revealed an increase in the mean score of knowledge of healthy romantic relationships as follows: pre-test ($M = 18.154$, $SD = .732$, $CI [16.558, 19.750]$), post-test ($M = 19.462$, $SD = .526$, $CI [18.315, 20.609]$), and follow-up ($M = 20.462$, $SD = .183$, $CI [20.063, 20.861]$). ANOVA analysis result presented in Table 3 showed that healthy romantic relationships training significantly improved healthy romantic relationships knowledge, $F(2,11) = 5.277$, $p = .025$. Bonferroni post hoc testing revealed a significant difference in healthy romantic relationships knowledge between pre-test and follow-up after one month of training ($M = -2.308$, $SD = .737$, $CI [-4.357, -.259]$). Nevertheless, no significant difference was found between pre-test and post-test and between post-test and follow-up. In conclusion, healthy romantic relationships training had a significant impact on enhancing knowledge of healthy romantic relationships within one month of the training.

Table 3. Summary of ANOVA Result

Variable	Value	F	df	Error df	Sig.
Active-Empathic Listening Skills	.470	4.872	2	11	.031
Healthy Romantic Relationship Knowledge	.490	5.277	2	11	.025

Qualitative analysis was conducted to support the quantitative results, aimed to explore insights, changes in understanding of active-empathic listening skills, and confidence in using these skills in romantic relationships. Themes in the thematic analysis were identified based on the dimensions of The Active-Empathic Scale (AELS; Bodie, 2011). The results, presented in Table 4, supported the research hypothesis and indicated that the training helped participants become more aware and proficient in various dimensions of active-empathic listening skills. These dimensions included sensing verbal and non-verbal signals, remembering and understanding information, and responding actively to indicate that participants were listening, such as through head nodding, minimal encouragers, or paraphrasing. Furthermore, participants evaluated the training as useful, reported feeling satisfied, and expressed greater confidence in applying active-empathic listening skills to improve their future romantic relationships.

Table 4. Qualitative Analysis of Improvement in Active-Empathic Listening Skills

Themes	Sub Themes	Description
Sensing	-	Participants showed a higher awareness of the importance of observing nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and behaviors, as these were perceived to enhance understanding and reduce conflict Participants became more aware of the importance of perceiving both verbal and nonverbal cues as others often show facial expressions were not in line with their feelings
Processing	Remembering	Participants demonstrated increased awareness of the importance of remembering information to follow conversations with others. Their attempts to remember information were evident from feedback provided by their roleplay partners, who evaluated the conversation as enjoyable, feeling listened to and understood
	Understanding	Participants acknowledged that, in romantic relationships, they sometimes struggled to understand information, particularly in conflict situations. This led participants to make a greater effort to understand more information from others
Responding	Nonverbal and verbal minimal response	Participants learned that excessive respond with minimal encourager (e.g., “hmmm”, “okay”, “yeah”) and head nod often made others felt unheard. This realization led to the insight that minimal encouragers should be used with moderate frequency
	Complex verbal response	Participants reflected that paraphrasing was challenging because it required significant effort to avoid repeating the same sentences. This prompted them to practice the technique more during roleplay activities despite its challenges.
Prior knowledge and previous training	-	Participants were familiar with empathy and active listening theories, but found it difficult to apply these concepts in romantic relationships. This difficulty encouraged them to actively engage in learning and self-evaluation during the training sessions, ultimately leading to increased confidence in using active-empathic listening skills in their romantic relationships Participants reported greater efficacy in responding others because they had previously learned and applied active listening skills in other contexts such as education and organization. This led to more confidence in using active-empathic listening skills in their romantic relationships

Discussion

Result showed that healthy romantic relationship training was effective in enhancing active-empathic listening skills. This findings align with previous study indicating that teaching knowledge and skills to support healthy romantic relationship (e.g., self-concept, adaptive coping strategies, and active-empathic listening skills) can improve knowledge and behavior related to effective communication (Joppa et al., 2016; Kerpelman et al., 2009), particularly active-empathic listening skills (Lachica et al., 2023; Long et al., 1999). According to Comer and Drollinger (2013) and Long et al. (1999), observing nonverbal signals enhanced empathic sensitivity, while demonstrating attending behaviors and providing active responses facilitated the listening process to become active and empathic. Furthermore, positive self-concept allowed individuals to focus attention on others rather than negative evaluations of themselves, while adaptive coping skills helped self-regulation which makes it easier to gained insight into information (Falanga et al., 2012; Levitt, 2008; Manusov et al., 2020). Having knowledge about healthy romantic relationship, positive self-concept, adaptive coping strategy, and the ability to apply active-empathic listening techniques contributed to greater active-empathic listening skills. Although there was significant a mean difference in pre-test and follow-up, the mean difference between pre-test and post-test was not significant. It showed that participants need more time to apply their skills in everyday situations, indicated that having knowledge did not mean being able to apply it immediately during training (Frey & Rogers, 2014; Gower & Baldwin-White, 2021).

The qualitative analysis showed similar results, indicating that healthy romantic relationships training enhanced active-empathic listening skills. Several themes emerged from the analysis that supported this significant finding. The first theme was receiving all information cues (Sensing). Participants demonstrated a heightened awareness of the importance of observing nonverbal cues and verbal messages, which they found helpful in increasing understanding, avoiding misunderstandings, and reducing conflict. Similarly, sensing in active and empathic listening required the ability to receive both verbal and nonverbal messages, which was important in romantic relationship interactions (Comer & Drollinger, 2013; Gower & Baldwin-White, 2021; Pence & Vickery, 2012). Observing nonverbal signals facilitated understanding implicit messages (Pence & Vickery, 2012). However, the ambiguous and difficult-to-read nature of nonverbal can led to misinterpretations, resulting in conflict and unhealthy relationships (Gower & Baldwin-White, 2021). Being able to receive both verbal and nonverbal cues simultaneously promoted better understanding and reduced misinterpretation of messages, thus promoting healthy romantic relationships (Drollinger et al., 2005; Gower & Baldwin-White, 2021).

The ability to process information (Processing) emerged as second theme, with two sub-themes discussed. The first sub-theme was remembering, where participants demonstrated a higher awareness of the importance of remembering information to effectively follow conversations. The second sub-theme was understanding. Participants made efforts to better understand information from others, as they identified challenges in comprehending information within their relationships, particularly during conflict situations. Understanding information in the Processing stage of listening considered as a cognitive and affective process (Drollinger et al., 2005). Difficulties in applying this process in romantic relationships can be influenced by relational factors such as conflict situations (Korobov, 2023), as well as individual factors such as gender, personality, emotional intelligence, self-concept, coping skills, and previous training (Falanga et al., 2012; Kourmoussi et al., 2017; Levitt, 2008; Manusov et al., 2020; Pence & Vickery, 2012). Participants' effort to recall and comprehend information were met with positive feedback from others, who evaluated the conversation as engaging, feeling heard and understood.

The third theme was responding to information (Responding). The first sub-theme was nonverbal and verbal minimal response. Participants learned to use minimal encourager and head nod in moderation frequencies, as excessive use of these responses made others feel unheard. In line

with that, Sommers-Flanagan and Sommers-Flanagan (2016) explained that responses such as head nods and minimal encouragers could make others interested in the conversation. However, excessive responses, may appeared unnatural and lead to negative reactions, such as feeling unheard (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2016). The second sub-theme was complex verbal responses. Participants attempted to provide complex responses including paraphrasing, supportive statements and clarifying questions, despite finding paraphrasing challenging. They reflected that this difficulty arose from the effort required to respond using different phrases without altering the intended meaning. Paraphrasing was recognized as a complex task, as it demanded careful articulation to avoid adding or subtracting meaning while maintaining full engagement in the conversation (Jones, 2011; Lachica et al., 2023). This made paraphrasing responses especially difficult at the beginning (Glenn, 2022). Despite its difficulty, participants reported improvements in their paraphrasing skills through roleplaying and evaluated the responses from their roleplay partners.

The final theme was the role of prior knowledge and training. Participants felt struggled to use active-empathic listening skills in their romantic relationship, despite had learned it in other contexts. This challenge motivated them to engage in further practice, which enhanced their ability and confidence. One study found that active-empathic listening skills are significantly influenced by prior training, with greater exposure to training associated with improved active-empathic listening skills (Kourmoussi et al., 2017).

This study successfully demonstrated that healthy romantic relationship training enhanced active-empathic listening skills among participants. The main strengths of presented study were the comprehensive module and interactive methods that facilitated participants' improvement in knowledge and skills. Additionally, participants showed a strong willingness to learn and actively engage in the sessions. Factors such as interactive training methods, participants' motivation to change their behavior, and active involvement in the training process are known to support the effectiveness of group training in promoting changes in knowledge and behavior (Frey & Rogers, 2014; Yalom & Leszcz, 2020). Furthermore, this study provided valuable insights into training programs that promote general healthy romantic relationship knowledge and skills to enhance active-empathic listening for emerging adults, which this topic has been limited in previous research.

Implications

This study highlighted the significant impact of healthy relationship training on enhancing active-empathic listening skill in emerging adults. It implied the importance of involving active-empathic skill in training program that promotes healthy romantic relationship. The characteristic instability of emerging adults often predisposes individuals to conflict and unstable romantic relationships (Arnett, 2023), which led to decrease psychological well-being and perpetuate unhealthy relationship patterns into adulthood (Campbell, 2002; Kerpelman et al., 2009; Whitton et al., 2013). Active-empathic listening skills known to facilitate effective communication between couples (Comer & Drollinger, 2013). It founded to play critical role in unravelling conflict, providing emotional support, and maintaining stable relationships (Angera & Long, 2006; Gower & Baldwin-White, 2021; Pence & Vickery, 2012). Findings of this study offered insights for psychologists, counsellors, and other clinicians to assist emerging adults in improving and building healthier romantic relationship outcome.

Limitations and Further Research

This current study is not without limitations. This study was an initial study that focused on healthy romantic relationship and active-empathic listening skills in romantic relationship context. It required more development in module, the duration of training, and delivery methods. Active-empathic listening skills is a relational construct. However, this study primarily focused on individual participants, most of whom were not currently in romantic relationships. The training might be more

effective if conducted with individuals who are currently in romantic relationship, particularly if both partners are involved. Additionally, this study was limited to university students. Future research can replicate the training module for adolescent population, as adolescent marks the beginning of interest in romantic relationships. Early intervention in this domain could have a more positive impact on identity formation and development into adulthood.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that healthy romantic relationship training is effective in enhancing active-empathic listening skills. The findings contribute to the development of future research and provide valuable insights for policymakers focusing on romantic relationships. Additionally, the study offers guidance for psychologists, counsellors, and other clinical practitioners in assisting emerging adults in building healthier romantic relationship outcomes.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

All authors agree to the final version of this article.

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