

Assertiveness among Undergraduate Students of the University

W. M. Parray^{1*}, Sanjay Kumar²

ABSTRACT

Assertiveness is a mode of personal behavior and communication characterized by a willingness to stand up for one's needs and interests in an open and direct way. When an individual stands for his/her rights without violating the rights of others, he/she is being assertive (Smith 1975). When you adopt assertive behaviour you get more of what you want, but only when you acknowledge and give consideration to what the other person wants or needs. It's the paradox of win-win that makes it possible (Conrad & Suzanne Potts). The present study is an attempt by the researcher to examine the assertiveness level of undergraduate students with reference to their gender, residence and stream of study. The sample of the present study is comprised of 100 undergraduate students (50 males and 50 females) within the age group between 16 to 22 years and has been the students of following courses; Bachelor of Arts, Science and Commerce. The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (1978) was used to study the level of assertiveness among the selected students. The results of the study revealed no significant difference between students in their level of assertiveness with respect to gender,

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Doctor Harisingh Gour University, Sagar, M. P. India

² Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Doctor Harisingh Gour University, Sagar, M. P. India

**Responding Author*

residence and Stream of study. During the analysis it was ascertained by the researcher that among 100 (students) respondents, 11 were 'situationally non assertive', 35 'Somewhat assertive', 45 'Assertive', and 9 were 'probably aggressive', irrespective of their gender, residence and education. Based on the findings of the study it is recommended by the researcher that a programme regarding assertiveness training should be conducted in the future.

Keywords: *Assertiveness; Undergraduate Students*

Assertiveness is an important social skill which promotes personal well-being. Most definitions of assertiveness emphasize direct expression of feelings, desires and thoughts in interpersonal contexts. Definitions of assertive behavior put an emphasis on individual rights. Alberti and Emmons (1990) stated that "assertive behavior promotes equality in human relationships, enabling us to act in our own best interests, to stand up for ourselves without undue anxiety, to express honest feelings comfortably, to exercise personal rights without denying the rights of others. Assertiveness is a mode of personal behavior and communication characterized by a willingness to stand up for one's needs and interests in an open and direct way. The assertive person stands up for things that matter to him or her while at the same time respecting the things that matter to others (Zimmerman and Luecke, 2010). Assertiveness has also been defined as the process of direct and appropriate communication of a person's needs, wants and opinions without punishing or putting down others (Arrindell and Ende, 1985). It can be used as an instrument for initiating and maintaining socially supportive relationships and hence enjoying better emotional wellbeing (Eskin, 2003). Assertiveness was considered to be a mean of self-development and achievement of maximum personal fulfillment and assertive skills in various communication fields in conjunction with the increased demands on social competence of the individual (Ivelina and Mavrodiiev, 2013).

Assertiveness as a social skill is a construct which has a number of different dimensions, including the ability to express oneself without anxiety or aggression in different situations (M. Bouvard, et al., 1999). Assertiveness is about effective communication and this does not just mean choosing the right words to say in a given situation. Tone of voice, intonation, volume, facial expression, gesture and body language all play a part in the message you are sending to the other person, and unless all parts of the equation match, you will be sending a garbled message (Bishop, 2000). According to Galassi and Galassi (1978), “assertion is the direct and appropriate communication of a person’s needs, wants and opinions without punishing, threatening, putting down others, and doing this without fear during the process.”

Statement of the problem:

Today’s adolescents are tomorrow’s leaders and this naturally calls for the shaping of their behaviour. Many adolescents find it difficult to express themselves effectively in social situations. This undermines their significant role in the development of modern India and also in improving and strengthening the society. They are the pillars of a nation and play an important role in contributing much to its social development. So it is important for an adolescent to be assertive, because being assertive can help them in many ways. It helps them in improving self confidence, self-esteem and also helps them to stand up for their rights without being aggressive and without violating the rights of others. Studies in assertiveness among gender have reported contradictory findings like; (Eskin, 2003; Qadir & Sugumar, 2013; Uzaina & Parveen, 2015; Rathee, 2015, & Applebaum, 1976) did not find sex differences in assertiveness among adolescents. While (Prakash & Devi, 2015; Hersen et al, 1973) reported that males were more assertive. Other findings like (Chandler et al, 1978) found that women were significantly more assertive than men in some specific situations. To this end, the conducted study was designed by the researcher to find out the assertiveness level among adolescents with reference to their gender, residence and stream of study. This will be helpful in further identification of the areas of assertiveness to work upon.

Objectives of the study:

- To find out the level of assertiveness among students.
- To find out whether there is any significant difference in their assertiveness based on the following demographic variables:
 - (1) Gender
 - (2) Residence
 - (3) Stream of study

Hypothesis:

H1: Students will significantly differ in their assertiveness score.

H2: Students will significantly differ in their assertiveness with reference to Gender.

H3: Students will significantly differ in their assertiveness with reference to Residence.

H4: Students will significantly differ in their assertiveness with reference to Stream of study.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Sample:

The sample of the present study comprised of 100 adolescents both urban and rural (50 males and 50 females). They belong to age range of 16 to 22 years and were undergraduate students of following courses- Bachelor of Arts, Science and Commerce.

Tool used in the Study:

The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (1978) was used to study the assertiveness of adolescents. It is a standardized tool comprising 30 situational statements for which the subject is asked to rank the degree to which each statement is characteristic and descriptive of his/her behaviour (—3 to +3) yielding a total assertiveness score between — 90 (least assertive) and + 90 (most assertive). The tool was administered individually to each student and care was taken to see that the adolescents filled the questionnaire without discussing. There was no time limit for completion of the scale.

Scoring:

The Researcher used the six-point rating scale to score the responses. Here, the subjects were asked to rate their responses by mentioning a number between 1 and 6 which described them most accurately, against each item. Where 1 stood for once in a great while & 6 stood for always. The information provided by the respondents in the personal data sheet was numerically coded to suit the computer analysis. Their responses were further weighed on a scale ranging from +3 to -3 which on being summated for each item yielded a final score falling anywhere between +90 and -90. On the basis of this final score, it was convenient for the researcher to categorise the respondents on the basis of their level of assertiveness.

Statistical Techniques Used: In the present study the Researcher used the following statistical techniques:

1. Descriptive Analysis (Mean, Standard Deviation)
2. Differential Analysis (t-value, F-ratio)

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Group difference on Assertiveness with respect to their Category

Variable	Background Variables	Sources of Variation	Df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-ratio	Level of significance
Assertiveness	Category	Between Group	3	21353.631	7117.877	209.663	S
		Within Group	96	3259.119	33.949		
		Total	99	24612.750			

The result presented in table 1 indicated that there is significant difference in assertiveness with respect to their category. In this way, the first finding of the study supports our hypothesis. According to the result there is significant difference on assertiveness score between students.

Table 2: Showing the ‘t’ - value on Assertiveness with respect to Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Female	28	29.0357	5.87198	.283	NS
Male	17	29.5294	5.31646		

The above findings revealed that no significant difference found in assertiveness with respect to gender. In this way our second hypothesis was rejected and the null hypothesis retained as the t- value indicated no significant difference between boys and girls.

Table 3: Showing the ‘t’ - value on Assertiveness with respect to Residence

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Rural	20	29.5500	6.03041	.347	NS
Urban	25	28.9600	5.36563		

The results presented in Table- 3 reveals that no significant differences in assertiveness exist between rural and urban students. The third hypothesis was also rejected and the null hypothesis retained as the t-value indicated no significant difference with respect to residence.

Table 4: Group difference on Assertiveness with respect to Stream of study

Level of significant	F-ratio	Mean Squares	Sum of Squares	Df	Sources of Variation	Background Variables	Variable
NS	.314	10.217	20.443	2	Between Group	Education	Assertiveness
		32.508	1365.344	42	Within Group		
			1385.778	44	Total		

From the above findings the result revealed that there is no significant difference between arts, science and commerce students in

their assertiveness with respect to their Stream of study. But the findings also revealed that commerce students have better assertiveness score than arts and science students. Hence our fourth hypothesis was also rejected and null hypothesis retained as the analysis of variance shows no significant difference in their assertiveness with respect to their stream of study.

DISCUSSION

Present research was done to investigate the assertiveness among undergraduate students with respect to their gender, residence and stream of study. The first hypothesis of the present study was retained which shows a significant difference on assertiveness score among students. In addition to that the findings also revealed that no significant difference was found in assertiveness with respect to gender. Though we generally assumed that girls are less assertive than boys because of cultural taboos and inhibitions. Men tend to be more assertive because they are considered to be having a strong and thoughtful personality. Some studies with college students have supported this assumption like Chandler, Cook and Dugovics (1978), Kimble, Marsh and Kiska (1984), and Adejumo (1981) with Nigerian university students found men to be more assertive than women. But, this study revealed that girls are equally assertive as the boys. The finding of this study are supported by previous researchers, Eskin (2003), Qadir and Sugumar (2013) and Uzaina & Parveen (2015) whose results revealed no significant gender difference in assertiveness. The third finding of the study revealed that no significant differences in assertiveness exist between rural and urban students. Infact we generally assume that locality is known to be a strong factor in contributing to the level of assertiveness in adolescents. But this study revealed no significant difference between boys and girls with respective to their residence. The study also revealed that there is no significant difference between arts, science and commerce students in their assertiveness with respect to their Stream of study. But the findings revealed that commerce students have better assertiveness score than arts and science students. Hence our fourth hypothesis was

also rejected and null hypothesis retained as the analysis of variance shows no significant difference in their assertiveness with respect to their stream of study.

CONCLUSION

The present study revealed that there is no significant difference among students with respect to their gender, residence and stream of study. But it is confirmed that there is significant difference among students in their assertiveness score. During the analysis it was found that among 100 (students) respondents, 11 were 'Situationally non assertive', 35 'Somewhat assertive', 45 'Assertive', and 9 were 'probably aggressive'. Based on the above findings it is clearly indicated that there is lack of assertiveness among students. So, for an adolescent to develop into a complete adult it is highly imperative to teach him some coping strategies and one of the most important and useful skill is assertiveness. By inculcating this skill an adolescent will be able to express both positive and negative feelings honestly and straightforwardly, without anxiety or intimidation. As a conclusion an assertiveness training could be beneficial for developing adolescents' assertive behaviours and this enhancing program could be incorporated into everyday curriculum in schools, colleges and universities. The study may helpful for the students to understand the level and importance of assertiveness. In addition a programme regarding assertiveness training should be conducted in the future.

REFERENCES

- Alberti, R. E., & Emmons, M. L. (1990). *Your perfect right: A guide to assertive living* (6th edn). San Luis Obispo, CA: Impact Publishers.
- Arrindell, W. A., & Van der Ende, J. (1985). Cross-sample invariance of the structure of selfreported distress and difficulty in assertiveness. *Addictive Behaviour Research and Theory*, 7, 205-243.
- Bouvard, M., Arrindell, W. A., Guerin, J., Bouchard, C., Rion, A. C., Ducottet, E., & Cottraux, J. (1999). Psychometric appraisal of the Scale for Interpersonal Behavior (SIB) in France. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 37, 741-762.

- Bishop, S. (2010). *Develop your Assertiveness*. New Delhi: Replica Press Private Limited.
- Constance, Z., & Richard, L. (2010). *Asserting Yourself at Work*. American Management Association.
- Eskin, M. (2003). Self-reported assertiveness in Swedish and Turkish adolescents: A cross cultural comparison. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 44, 7–12.
- Galassi, M. D. & Galassi, J. P. (1978). *Assertion: A critical review*. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 46, 537–546.
- Peneva, I., & Mavrodiev, S. (2013). *A Historical Approach to Assertiveness*. *Psychological Thought*, 6(1), 3–26.
- Prakash, N. R., & Devi, S. N. (2015). Assertiveness behaviour of undergraduate students. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, 3, (16), 2566, 2575.
- Qadir, A. S., & Sugumar, V. R. (2013). A study on assertiveness among adolescents. *Golden Research Thoughts*, 3, (4), 1, 4.
- Rathee, I. (2015). Assertiveness among degree college students in relation to Gender and level of education. *International Level Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 2 (7), 1-6.
- Uzaina. & Parveen, A. (2015). Study of relationship between Mental Health and Assertiveness among Adolescents. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 3, (1), 98, 103.
- Hersen, M., Eider, R. M., & Miller, P. M. (1973) Development of assertive responses: Clinical, measurement and research consideration. *Behav. Res. and Ther.*, 11, 505-521.
- Apgebaum, A. S. & Ifathus. (1976). Assertiveness Schedule: Sex differences and correlation with social desirability. *Behav Ther*, 7, 699-700.
- Chandler, T. A., Cook, B. & Doguivics, D. A. (1978). Sex differences in self-reported assertiveness. *Psychol. Rep.*, 43, 395-402.