

Impact of assertiveness training on the level of assertiveness, self-esteem, stress, psychological well-being and academic achievement of adolescents

Waqar Maqbool Parray and Sanjay Kumar

Department of Psychology, Dr. Hari Singh Gour Central University, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh

This study investigates the impact of assertiveness training (AT) on assertiveness, self-esteem, stress, psychological well-being, and academic achievement among adolescents. Pre and Post-test quasi-experimental design. In this study 13 students were selected by purposive sampling within the age range of 16 to 19 years. They were administered by Rathus assertiveness schedule (RAS), Rosenberg self-esteem (RSE), perceived stress scale (PSS), Psychological well-being (PWB) and Academic achievement scale. All the students after being examined were given (AT) of one month and then again they were examined by using the same questionnaires. The results of the study showed a significant improvement in the students' level of assertiveness and self-esteem in the post-test scores as compared to the pre-test results after being administered the Assertiveness training for a month. The findings also confirmed that the assertiveness training programme has been very effective in increasing psychological well-being, academic achievement and reducing stress level of the adolescents. Based on the findings of the study it is concluded by the researcher that Assertiveness training (AT) helps to improve the level of assertiveness, self-esteem, psychological well-being, and academic achievement among the adolescents along with reducing their level of stress. As we know, Adolescent stage is among the most sensitive stages of one's life, so conducting AT programs in schools would be effective and beneficial for adolescents.

Keywords: adolescents, assertiveness training, self-esteem, psychological well-being, stress, academic achievement

"The only healthy communication style is assertive communication"

- Jim Rohn

WHO (1986) defined adolescence age group as 10-19 years. UNICEF report (2011) highlighted that 1.2 billion adolescence stands at the crossroads between childhood and the adult world and around 234 million of them live in India. About one-quarter of India's population is adolescence. Hence, this age group is considered very important, because many more significant changes taking place during this period of time. It is characterized by rapid physical growth, significant emotional, psychological and spiritual change and it is the wonder years in human life because they are the future source (power) of any development nation. It is characterized by marked changes. Infact, it is the most sensitive critical periods of life for development of lifelong perceptions, beliefs, values, and practices. The adolescent struggles with the developmental tasks of establishing an identity, becoming a contributing member of society, and selecting a vocation (Ansari & Stock, 2010).

Assertiveness during adolescence plays a key role in the future social relationships and interactions of an individual. It is the heart of interpersonal behavior and the key to human relations (Landazabal, 2001). It also plays an effective role in flourishing students' talents and growth of their creativity (Hekmati, 2002). Highlighting the benefits of assertiveness as a communicative device and ability of self-assertion, Sue Bishop (2010) stressed that they were not acquired at birth but absorbed over time with individual experience. Many authors accepted the assertive behavior as the most

constructive method of communication in the teaching process and its application in the teaching practice not only increased the effectiveness of training activities, but it also had a positive educational impact on young people, facilitating the development of valuable personal qualities in them (Edwards, 2005).

Adolescents enter their peer groups through important assertiveness skills such as cooperation, compromise, communication and reciprocal friendship and form the basis of their social life (Stuart & Sundeen, 1995). Assertiveness training (AT) program is designed to improve individuals' assertive beliefs and behaviors so that they can feel good about themselves, gain self-esteem and show their personal emotions and thoughts appropriately and, as a result are able to develop more effective interpersonal relationships with others (Alberti & Emmons, 2001). The use of AT as a part of program to enhance social skills has been shown to have positive benefits for adolescents' self concept (Stake, Deville, & Pennel, 1983) lowered self-abasement and improved locus of control (Jackson, 1979; Waksman, 1984). Assertiveness training which emphasizes self-expression in socially acceptable ways is particularly appropriate at the beginning of adolescence (Bundy, Bundy, & Wise, 1991). It was found to be effective in improving the social coping skills of general populations of adolescents (Rotheram & Armstrong, 1980; Howing, Wodarski, Kurtz, & Gaudin, 1990); and unassertive adolescents (McNeilly & Yorke, 1990); modifying adolescents' aggressive behavior (Huey, 1988); and preventing adolescents from using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (Brown, 2006). Eskin (2003) characterized assertiveness as an important social skill that promotes personal well-being.

Huppert (2009) described psychological well-being as living a continuous life combined with feeling good and functioning efficiently which helped to cope with these negative life experiences and as a result maintain the well being. Ryff (1989) has described six

Correspondence should be sent to Waqar Maqbool Parray
Research Scholar, Department of Psychology
Dr. Hari Singh Gour Central University, Sagar,
Madhya Pradesh

dimensions of psychological well-being. Self-acceptance is the first dimension which entailed positive and accepting attitude of a person toward his or her own self. Personal growth referred to a continuous grooming process which broadened human experiences and knowledge. The third dimension is known as purpose in life which denoted to the inspiration for achievement of goals and objectives one has set for him- or herself. Environmental mastery is one's sense of self-efficacy to overcome environmental problems by constructing personally suitable contexts and situations. Autonomy is self-independence by having a strong command on self-regulatory and self-monitoring processes as he or she strive against social norms and assessed himself by personal values and ethical standards. The last one is positive relations with others exhibited by warmth, satisfaction, trusted relations, to care for others by exhibiting love, regard, and tenderness. Therefore, main objective of assertive communication is not only to be aware of needs and problems but also the effort to solve the problems and get utmost success (Pipa & Jaradat, 2010). This implied an existence of a deep relationship between assertive behavior and wellness.

Another concept covered in this study is self esteem, which is defined as an overall evaluation of your worth as a person, high or low, based on all the positive and negative self perceptions that make up your self-concept (Bailey, 2003). Lack of self esteem may lead to poor acquirement of the skills and abilities that are needed to achieve objectives and thus it in turn affect one's successful way of life. Low-self-esteem is also associated with feelings of being weak, helpless, hopeless, frightened, fragile, in-complete, worthless and inadequate. They suffer from negative thoughts and fail to recognize their potential, they fear criticism and take compliments negatively and are afraid to take up responsibilities, and afraid of forming their own opinion. Assertiveness training is the best way to deal with those situations, both in and out of work, where you feel you lack confidence. It is a way of un-hooking yourself from the learned behaviors of the past and re-programming yourself to be more assertive.

Assertiveness has emerged as an effective moderator of stress for both the general female population and the student population (Tomaka et al., 1999). Assertiveness can help students to control stress and anger and improve coping skills. Stress is a state of mental tension and worry caused by problems in one's life, work, etc. Stress is a general term applied to various psychological (mental) and physiological (bodily) pressures experienced or felt by people throughout their lives. Hans Selye, one of the leading authorities on the concept of stress, described stress as "the rate of all wear and tear caused by life." The present life is full of stress and strain due to rapid advancement and competition among adolescents. Thus, they should enhance their stress management abilities so as to live a healthy life after entering the society.

Academic assertiveness is an essential capability that is required of students who wish to achieve academic and professional success. Academic achievement refers to a student's success in meeting short or long term goals in education. Learning to be more assertive in an academic environment is about learning to manage better in the various relevant interactions, situations, and activities in higher education. Education for assertiveness should be considered an urgent imperative; that is why it is necessary to promote systematic and rational assertive teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of assertiveness.

The destiny of a nation lies in its classroom. The urgent need in education is with the view to prepare the students to enter into the career with proper understanding and also physically, socially and emotionally equipped.

Rationale of the study

The present scenario of adolescents evidently reflects that the condition of our youth has significantly deteriorated. When one individual is going through a transition phase, especially adolescence, the world around them changes in a significant manner. It is very important to cope this change in a positive and an effective manner. Assertiveness training is one such skill which helps an adolescent to stand up for their rights without being aggressive and violating the rights of others.

Various researches have shown mixed findings about assertiveness related to self-esteem, stress and academic achievement (Stake, Deville, & Pennell, 1982; Shimizu, Shinya, & Alkhalwaldeh, 2011; Hamoud et al., 2011; Tannous, 2015; Kashani & Bayat, 2010; Pooran et al., 2014) they reported that self-esteem increases through assertiveness training. On the other hand (Gulsah, 2003; Babakhani, (2011) who reported no change on the self-esteem after assertiveness training. While reviewing the literature related to assertiveness and psychological well-being researches shows a positive association between assertiveness and psychological well-being (Shafiq, Naz, & Yousaf, 2015; Maria, 2009; Sarkova et al., 2010; Mahmed & Zaki, 2014; Menon & Edward, 2014; Voitkane & Mieziute, 2006; Ates, 2016). The increasing the level of assertiveness will have significant positive consequences for the psychological well-being and other aspects of healthy development of an adolescent. Some researchers pointed out that there is a positive association between assertiveness and stress (Eldeeb, Eid, & Eldosoky, 2014) but several findings like (Eslami, Afzali, Hamidzadeh, & Masoudi, 2016; Lee & Crockett, 1993) reported that assertiveness training program largely reduces level of stress.

While discussing the studies related to assertiveness and academic achievement, some studies indicated that assertiveness is positively associated with academic achievement (Mahmoud & Hamid, 2013; Ghodrati et al., 2016; Kannan, 2013; Ghobri & Hejazi, 2007) while other studies depicts no significant relation between the two (Sibel et al., 2012; Margarin, 2009). However, few researches (Montserrat et al., 2012; Mousavi et al., 2014) have reported a significant negative association between assertiveness and academic performance of students. In short, the relationship of assertiveness and academic achievement is inconsistent which needs further examination. With this prospective, this study is an endeavor to study the impact of AT on the level of assertiveness, self-esteem, psychological well-being, stress and academic achievement of adolescents.

Objectives of the study

- To measure the impact of AT on the level of assertiveness of adolescents.
- To measure the impact of AT on self-esteem of adolescents.
- To measure the impact of AT on the stress level of adolescents.
- To measure the impact of AT on psychological well-being of adolescents.
- To measure the impact of AT on academic achievement of adolescents.

Hypotheses of the study

- Assertiveness training will improve the level of assertiveness of adolescents.
- Assertiveness training will positively affect the self-esteem of adolescents.
- Assertiveness training will reduce the stress level of adolescents.
- Assertiveness training will positively affect the psychological well-being of adolescents.
- Assertiveness training will positively enhance the academic achievement of adolescents.

Method

Participants

During this study the researcher has taken 13 students ranging between 16-19 years as sample selected through purposive sampling.

Instruments

The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (1978): 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.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES): developed by Rosenberg (1965). It is a 10- item self report measure of self-esteem based upon satisfaction of one's self and life. The scale consists of five positive items and five negative items and need to be scored accordingly by reversing the value of either the positive or negative item responses. Typically, each item is answered on a four point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree. The internal Consistency ranges from .77 to .88 with test retest reliability ranges from 0.82 to 0.85. The scale ranges from 0-30. (0<15 low self esteem), (15: 25 within normal range of self- esteem), (+25 high self esteem).

Perceived Stress Scale: 10 item version developed by Cohen et al. (1983). It is a self-report scale designed to measure the perception of

stress. The scale consists of 10-items; each item is answered on 5-point scale. In each item, students will be asked to indicate by circling how often you felt or thought a certain way. (Response values: 0=never, 1=almost never, 2=sometimes, 3=fairly often; 4=very often). To score this measure, reverse the scores for the positively stated items (items 4, 5, 7, & 8), such that a score of 4 will become a score of 0, a score of 3 will become a score of 1, and so on. Next, sum the reverse-scored items with the remaining 6 items. Scores range from 0 to 40. The Reliability of PSS was .78-.86. This scale has no diagnostic cut-offs. Higher scores correspond to a higher level of perceived stress.

Psychological Well-Being (PWB) developed by Ryff's (1989). The scale had 42 items which comprises of six psychological dimensions. These dimensions include Self-Acceptance, Positive Relations with Others, Environmental Mastery, Autonomy, Purpose in Life, and Personal Growth.

Academic Achievement: This scale developed by Anderson et al., 2016, measures academic adjustment of the student. This scale represents three components/ three dimensional construct of academic adjustment which is academic life style, academic achievement and academic motivation and it comprises 9 items. Responses are elicited on 5 point scale. The test-r test reliability of the academic adjustment is .84. With regard to the study, the researcher will apply the academic achievement dimension of the above said scale.

Statistical analysis

In the present study the Researcher used the following statistical techniques:

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

Procedure

Pre and post-test quasi experimental design used for this study. Initially all the students were examined by providing various questionnaires in order to measure their pre-test scores before the assertiveness training. All the students after being examined were given AT of one month and then again they were examined by using the same questionnaires.

Results

Table 1: Comparison of assertiveness between pre-test and post-test

Variable	Condition	Mean	SD	't' value	df	P	Sig.
Assertiveness	Pre-test	19.46	14.63	2.44	12	0.05	S
	Post-test	29.84	06.87				

Table 2: Comparison of self-esteem between pre-test and post-test

Variable	Condition	Mean	SD	't' value	df	P	Sig.
Self-esteem	Pre-test	21.15	3.81	3.20	12	0.05	S
	Post-test	24.85	1.62				

The result presented in Table-1 depicted that there is significant difference in pre-test and post-test on assertiveness level after training. Therefore, the finding supports that assertiveness training increases assertiveness level of adolescents and in this way, our first hypothesis is confirmed.

As indicated in table-2, showed that the increase in self-esteem in the post-test is significantly greater than pre-test condition. Hence, it proves that assertiveness training increase the self-esteem of adolescents and therefore our second hypothesis is retained.

Table 3: Comparison of Perceived stress level between Pre-test and Post-test

Variable	Condition	Mean	SD	't' value	df	P	Sig.
Perceived Stress scale	Pre-test	18.77	8.50	1.98	12	0.05	NS
	Post-test	14.85	4.58				

From the above table-3, it shows that there is difference in stress level of adolescents in pre-test and post-test. In this way it may be inferred that though not significantly but, the assertiveness training is helpful

in reducing the stress level of adolescents as shown in the above findings.

Table 4: Comparison of Psychological Well-being (PWB) between Pre-test and Post-test

Dimensions of PWB	Condition	N	Mean	SD	't' value	df	p	Sig.
Autonomy	Pre-test	13	27.08	4.46	2.03	12	0.1	NS
	Post-test	13	31.23	5.23				
Environment mastery	Pre-test	13	29.00	4.20	0.58	12	0.1	NS
	Post-test	13	30.07	4.38				
Personal growth	Pre-test	13	30.92	3.52	1.56	12	0.1	NS
	Post-test	13	33.38	5.23				
Personal relations	Pre-test	13	31.38	6.82	0.29	12	0.1	NS
	Post-test	13	30.92	5.96				
Personal life	Pre-test	13	31.46	5.07	0.51	12	0.1	NS
	Post-test	13	30.69	3.77				
Self-Acceptance	Pre-test	13	30.15	4.93	0.99	12	0.1	NS
	Post-test	13	31.69	3.47				

It was also observed from the above table-4 that the PWB scores showed no significant difference in the pre and post-test scores on

any dimension of well-being.

Table 5: Comparison of Academic achievement between Pre-test and Post-test

Variable	Condition	Mean	SD	't' value	df	P	Sig.
Academic Achievement	Pre-test	11.62	2.06	3.29	12	0.05	S
	Post-test	12.92	1.60				

The table-5, revealed that there was upgrading in level of academic achievement after Assertiveness training with highly statistically significant difference in comparison to the pre-test scores. Hence our fifth hypothesis is retained.

Discussion

Present research was done to investigate the impact of assertiveness training on level of assertiveness, self-esteem, psychological well-

being, perceived stress level and academic achievement of adolescents. The first hypothesis of the study was retained which shows that AT significantly improves the assertiveness level of adolescents. This result is in accordance with the studies like (Galassi et al., 1974; Perkins & Kemmerling, 1983; Leone & Gumaer, 1979; Nadim, 1995) who reported that (AT) increases assertive behavior and understanding of assertiveness among students. A probable reason for assertiveness increase may be the

fact that participating in assertiveness training programmed has helped the less assertive students to reach to the necessary self-analysis and practice assertive behaviors in communicative conditions with others in a real and natural way and apply it practically.

The second hypothesis of the study also retained which depicted that assertiveness training increases the self-esteem of adolescents and its clear message is that less assertive students' self-esteem increase may be attributed to their participation in assertiveness training programmed. Since the students can be aware of their emotions and feelings and learn how to confront. Some studies supported this findings like (Stake, Deville, Pennell, 1982; Shimizu, Shinya, Mishima, & Nagata, 2004; Alkhawaldeh, 2011; Akbari et al., 2012; Hamoud et al., 2011; Tannous, 2015; Kashani & Bayat, 2010; Pooran et al., 2014; Yadav & Iqbal, 2009; Somaieh et al., & Neisi & Shahni Yeylagh, 2003) who reported that self-esteem increases through assertiveness training. But (Gulsah, 2003; Babakhani, 2011) who reported no change on the self-esteem scores after intervention.

The results also showed that the assertiveness training program largely reduces stress level of adolescents. The findings of the study is similar with some studies like (Eslami et al., 2016; Lee & Crockett, 1993) who reported that assertiveness training largely reduces stress level. As it was discussed, assertiveness is a technique that is used to remove the stress, anxiety resulted from social mutual communication and social fear. During assertiveness training programmed, presenting necessary information and performing proper assignments such as proper social communication, voice tone, practice, physical activities and communication using eyes, decrease stress and fight with non-logical expectations. Therefore it clearly means that AT helps students manage and to solve their problems and difficulties.

In addition to the above findings related to psychological well-being results depicted that there was no significant difference in psychological well-being in the post-test. But there were some dimensions like Autonomy, Environmental mastery, Personal growth and Self-acceptance which shows an increase after the assertiveness training. The possible reason behind such results is that the well-being is a lifelong process so it need time to apply the skills they have learned and it may be necessary to lengthen the duration of the training.

The fifth hypothesis was related to the investigation of impact of assertiveness training on academic achievement scores of adolescents. It was assumed that adolescents in post-test would show significant changes in academic achievement after training. Results indicate that there is significant difference between pre-test and post-test findings. Thus, on the strength of research findings hypothesis gets retained. The present findings supported previous researches like (Mahmoud & Hamid, 2013; Ghodrati et al., 2016; Kannan, 2013; Ghobri & Hejazi, 2007) who reported that assertiveness training (AT) program, had a significant positive effect on adolescents' academic achievement. Thus, it can be concluded that assertiveness training programme is effective on academic achievement of adolescents.

Conclusion

Evidence abounds in this study that Assertiveness training program is effective on assertiveness, self-esteem, stress, psychological well-

being and academic achievement of adolescents. It can be concluded that assertiveness training is an effective and useful way for less assertive adolescents to state their positive or negative emotions easily and express themselves and get the required self-esteem, psychological well-being, reducing their stress level and increase academic achievement. Therefore, it is crucially important to gain and promote the level of assertiveness among adolescents to protect them against the factors threatening their health. As a conclusion an assertiveness training could be beneficial for developing adolescents' assertive behaviors and this enhancing program could be incorporated into everyday curriculum in schools, colleges and universities (Parray & Kumar, 2016). Further researches are needed to investigate the socio cultural circumstances that may hinder or enhance the individual to be assertive.

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