

## Assertiveness and self-esteem among adolescents - a correlational study

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### ABSTRACT

The present study was accomplished to correlate a relation between assertive behavior and self-esteem among adolescents. Assertiveness plays an important role in building self-esteem. Assertiveness if developed in the adolescence stage helps in handling bullies as assertive people are less likely to be bullied and are less aggressive because of their nature. They are communicative about their needs to parents, peers and authority. They have healthier relationships and are able to resist peer pressure and manage stress. Assertiveness helps in being emotionally stable and independent. The hypothesis states that there is a significant correlation between assertive behavior and self-esteem in adolescents. The results depict that the correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem is positive. It is concluded that with proper mentoring and training; assertive behavior and self-esteem can be accelerated among adolescents.

**Keywords:** *Assertiveness, Self-esteem, Aggressive behavior, Adolescence*

In life, we find ourselves experiencing joy, sorrow, success or failure, health and sickness, wealth and poverty in different stages and there's no certainty when and in which stage of life it takes place. But when change does make an entrance, we find it difficult to adjust and it creates a problem. The finest change of all is the technological advancements and change of socio-economic and political situation in the countries. The youth, the adolescents and the ones in transition to adulthood are the ones that are responsible for the next change but the irony of it is this group of adolescents is highly and negatively influenced by these changes. Everyone can name a few examples in their head where parents and elders have compared their generations and the present generations. Out of the five divided stages of life i.e., infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age; adolescence is the most crucial stage of transition an individual finds himself in. It is a time of physical, cognitive, social and emotional growth that matures a boy for manhood and a girl for womanhood.

Adolescence can start from age nine to age eighteen or can start from 14 to 25. The word 'Adolescere' in latin suggests 'to grow to maturity' and this does not limit to physical

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growth but to mental growth as well. It is a period of time in which a person's long term and immediate behavior and attitude are important and are established. Adolescence is a time when they feel pride and joy while growing up but there are also scenarios where they are kept under control. These pressures are usually built up from home and society that impose them to behave in a right way that they feel is perfect.

Giving in into these pressures has its own demerits. It makes you an non- assertive person with low self-esteem and passive aggressive behavior. Your self-confidence decreases which leads to many behavioral and emotional disorders. Assertiveness is being confident in stating a position or personal rights and expressing thoughts in a way as needed. Erikson suggested eight transitional/ maturational crises an individual goes through during adolescence. If a crisis gets resolved in early stages, the person overcomes and develops healthy coping strategies. Though there are situations where an individual is unable to achieve a goal that he/she wanted to achieve, in that case emotional growth is inhibited. As this behavior is modified; individual can either indulge in passive behavior, manipulative behavior or aggressive behavior or *if and when* the crisis is resolved he/she will develop assertive behavior.

Aggressiveness is a self-centred behavior which is aimed to win regardless of others rights, dignity and feelings. This victory is achieved by holding hands with pain and loss of self-esteem. It can be referred to as indirect behavior as it takes the form of passive non-confrontive action, expressing resistance to social and occupational demands, are manipulative, shy and not straightforward. Their loss comes when they allow others to make choices for them. Assertive people stand up for their rights while protecting others. They are responsible for their actions and choices they make for themselves. They have self-respect and treat everyone with dignity and respect. Self-esteem is linked to personal beliefs about skills, abilities and social relationships.

Self-esteem, according to Rosenberg (1965) refers to an individual's overall positive evaluation of oneself. High self-esteem constitutes the respect and worthiness one has for himself.

Some of the factors that influence self-esteem in an adolescent are generic factors that help in shaping the overall personality, thought process, any potential illness, disabilities or physical limitations, environmental factors i.e., Personal, social and cultural and most importantly those teenagers that continuously receive over critical, negative assessments from their guardians, parents, elders, friends and family members are more likely to experience problems with low self-esteem. Self-esteem can be broadly divided into three types: Inflated self-esteem, High self-esteem and Low self-esteem. Inflated Self-esteem individuals consider themselves better than others, they are competitive, always underestimating others, want to be on top, inability to listen to others, unaccepting of errors caused by them or correcting them, tend to undervalue others. Because of these qualities and characteristics, it is difficult for them to establish a healthy relationship with others. High self-esteem individuals are the ones that accept and value others. This is known as positive self-esteem, as it achieves the ultimate goal of an individual, i.e. *Satisfaction*. They believe in themselves and trust others, they are not arrogant and do not think of themselves before others. Low self-esteem individuals are exactly opposite to that of high esteem individuals. They do not value themselves, they are sensitive and are easily influenced, they do not defend themselves for their own rights, the fear constantly hangs and does not make them a good judge of the circumstances of the situations.

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Although, assertiveness on the other hand plays an important role in building self-esteem. Assertiveness if developed in the adolescence stage helps in handling bullies as assertive people are less likely to be bullied and are less aggressive because of their nature. They are communicative about their needs to parents, peers and authority. They have healthier relationships and are able to handle hurt and speak about it. They are able to resist peer pressure and are able to manage stress. Assertiveness helps in being emotionally stable and independent. They exhibit problem solving behavior and can disagree respectfully. They are not ashamed to ask for help and can say 'NO' without any guilt.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study was conducted on 30 nurses at Psychiatric and addiction treatment hospital in Egypt by Abed G., Amrosy S, Atia M. (2015) where data was collected by using two tools of Garas Ahmed Bader Arabic version of Rosenberg's Global self-esteem scale and assertive behavior inventory tools. The study showed that there is a positive significance correlation between total assertiveness skills and total self-esteem score level. Age and experience and total assertiveness skill also showed positive significance. In conclusion, implementation of assertiveness training programs has a positive effect in improving their self-esteem.

Fanaj N. (2014) conducted a study to analyse a research on self-esteem in Kosovo. It discussed the findings that are related to self-esteem and psychological well-being. The sample size varied from 60 to 34684 participants. Rosenberg's scale of self-esteem was used in all cases. The result showed significant correlations with suicidal ideations, emotional difficulties and behavioral problems. The study also showed significant correlations of self-esteem with anxiety, depression and shyness.

A study was conducted by Makinde B. and Akinteye A. (2014) to investigate the effects of mentoring and assertiveness training on adolescents' self-esteem in Lagos state secondary schools. 48 males and 48 females with a total of 96 adolescents were randomly selected with a group design. Rosenberg self-esteem scale and Adolescent Personal Data Questionnaire (APDQ) scale was used. The results showed that mentoring and assertiveness training produce the desired results in raising adolescent's self-esteem.

Ozsaker (2013) examined the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem in adolescents including athletes and non-athletes. 1006 adolescents participants took part in this study from ages 12 to 14. The result showed that assertiveness and self-esteem among athletic adolescents is stronger than that of non-athletic.

#### *Objective of this study*

1. To assess the level of assertiveness behavior among adolescents
2. To assess the level of self-esteem among adolescents
3. To study the correlation between assertive behavior and self-esteem among adolescents.

#### *Hypothesis*

There is a significant correlation between assertive behavior and self-esteem in adolescents.

### METHODOLOGY

100 adolescents from age 16 to 18 years consisting of 50 girls and 50 boys were randomly selected from schools for data collection from Nagpur, India. They were assured of the confidentiality of the data. Two scales were used to measure the level of assertiveness and

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self-esteem in adolescents, the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule.

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSES) is a self-reporting measure consisting of 10 statements related to overall feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. It was based on a likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Internal consistency ranged from 0.77 to 0.88 and test-retest reliability ranged from 0.82 to 0.85 and the validity came out to be 0.55

Simple Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (SRAS-SF) consists of 19 items that tells us the level of assertiveness of a person. The accepted reliability was 0.81 and construct validity of  $r=0.98$  and of  $p=0.01$

### RESULTS

The first objective of this study is to assess the levels of self-esteem in adolescents. The statistical analysis shows the following results.

*Table - 1 Frequency and Percentage of level of self-esteem*

Frequency	Self-Esteem	
	Boys	Girls
Low	12 (24%)	13(26%)
Average	28(56%)	27(54)
High	5(10%)	8(16%)
Good	5(10%)	2(4%)
Overconfidence	NIL	NIL

Table -1 shows that 55% boys and 54% girls have average levels of self-esteem however, almost 13% of adolescents have revealed low self-esteem. 8% of the girls show high self-esteem.

The second objective of this study was to assess the levels of assertiveness among adolescents. The statistical analysis shows the following results.

*Table - 2 Frequency and Percentage of level of assertiveness*

Frequency	Assertiveness	
	Boys	Girls
Low	10(20%)	12(24%)
Average	16(32%)	13(26%)
High	24(48%)	25(50%)

Table 2 shows that 10 out of 50 boys & 12 out of 50 girls have low levels of assertiveness. However 16% boys and 13% girls showed average levels of assertiveness. High levels of assertiveness was shown by 25% of adolescents altogether.

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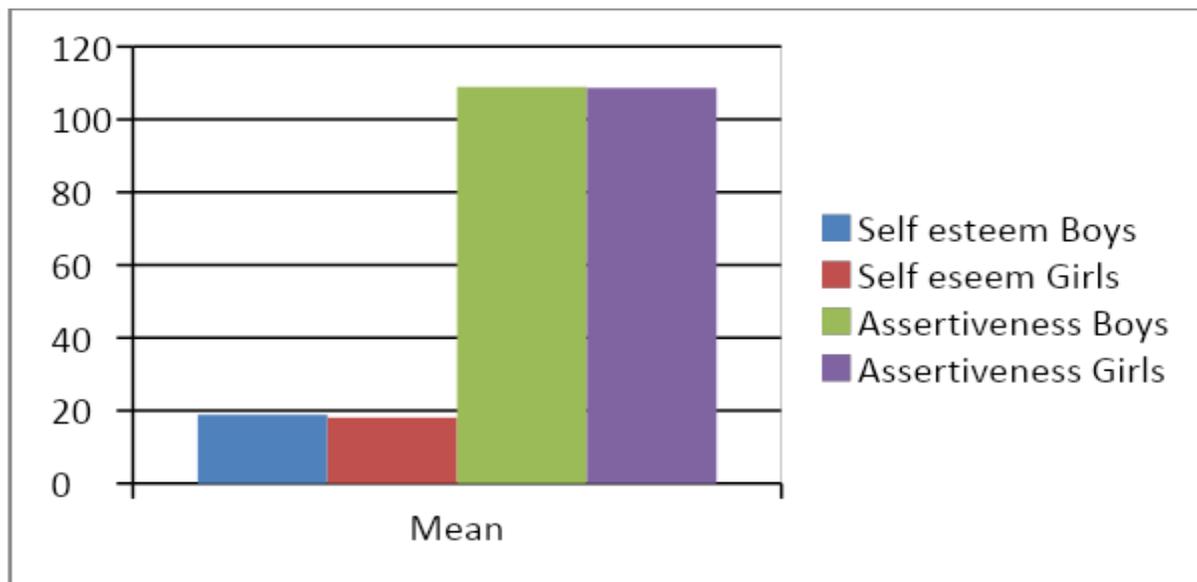
The mean and standard deviation for the given hypothesis above is given in Table-3.

**Table -3 Mean and SD of self-esteem and assertiveness in adolescents**

	Self-esteem		Assertiveness	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
<b>Mean</b>	18.9	18.1	109.0	108.7
<b>SD</b>	3.2	3.3	14.3	14.9

The data is normally distributed as seen in Graph-1

**Graph-1 Mean of self-esteem and assertiveness among adolescents**



However, it cannot be asserted that there exists significant correlation between self-esteem and assertiveness of adolescents only on the basis of descriptive statistics and hence the data was subjected to Pearson Correlation moment.

**Table 4. Coefficient of Correlation between Self-esteem and Assertiveness**

Sr. No.	Category	r	Correlation	Significance
1.	Boys and Girls	0.14	Positive	p-value is 0.17 Not significant at $p < .05$

*Not significant at  $p < .05$*

Table- 4 shows the value of r to be 0.14. The p value is 0.17. The correlation found between assertiveness and self-esteem is positive but is weak. Hence, the correlation is not significant at  $p < .05$ .

## **DISCUSSION**

Who am I? What is my purpose? This is the question that haunts teenagers the most and the answer of these is what makes them whole. A person that they are, a person that they want people to see. This is important as the opinion of any individual about his/her own character determines his perception of environment and society. An adolescent's self-esteem can be roughly calculated by his cultural and social life background. It plays a significant role in

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boosting motivation and being successful throughout life. This helps them in taking risks and solving problems.

Factors of effective and healthy relationships depend on one's ability or inability to be assertive. Assertiveness enables a person to deal with stress effectively. With assertiveness and high self-esteem one is able to be self-confident, ready to face emotional tribulations, anxiety, respect for others right, improve community relations etc.

The study has its own limitations. A larger sample size with a broader age group might have given reliable results. A similar study can be taken as a comparative study with government schools and private schools with broader age groups to find better results.

To understand more about assertiveness and self-esteem and to inculcate these qualities in adolescence stage if the study takes follow up with the participants and gives them training and mentoring the desired results can be produced as communication can hugely enhance students self-esteem thus resulting in assertiveness of the person.

Until the 1980s, assertiveness and social skills were used in a sense but today assertiveness is more an Interpersonal ability that during the past two decades has attracted lots of attention. Bahrini (1997) study aimed to examine the impact of Assertiveness training on self-determination and self-confidence of female nursing students indicated that the Assertiveness training has increased self-confidence and decisiveness.

Some of the recommendations that can be concluded from the above discussion are that workshops and seminars should be organised by schools giving specific emphasis on developing self-esteem. Every school and organisation should have counselors that help people that are struggling with identity crises. From personality development classes, healthy lifestyle; parents, guardians, elders should take the responsibility to provide an environment that is safe, full of love and security.

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***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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