

Research Paper

## Prosocialness and Assertiveness: A Comparative Study of College Students Involved in Campus Activism and Those not Involved

Anamika Jyothis<sup>1\*</sup>, Kochuthressia Sebastian<sup>1</sup>, Alka Krishna<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This study sets out to measure the Prosocialness and Assertiveness among students in campus activism and other students in college and the problem of the study is stated as “Prosocialness and Assertiveness Among Students involved in campus activism and those who are not involved”. The sample was determined by a convenient sampling method (n=80). In this study two standard questionnaires, Prosocialness Scale for Adults (PSA) and Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS) were used. The findings indicated that there is no significant correlation between prosocialness and assertiveness among students who are involved and those who are not involved in campus activism. There is a significant difference in prosocialness and assertiveness among students who are involved and those who are not involved in campus activism.

**Keywords:** *Prosocialness, Assertiveness, Students in Campus Activism, College students*

Young adulthood presents numerous chances for supporting students' purpose development in the college setting, in addition to being an excellent period for purpose inquiry and purpose commitment.(Pfund ,Bono and Hill,2020, Liang and Klein,2022 & Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib and Finch,2009)Attending college is a crucial protective and promotional setting for young adults to cultivate developmental advantages, cement career objectives, and develop meaningful relationships .The new experiences, relationships, and possibilities that college offers make it a special place for purpose growth.(Pfund ,Bono and Hill,2020) .Colleges and Universities have long been urged by society to generate more involved citizens .To address this demand, institutional civic engagement initiatives have centered on community involvement and service-learning programs(Rosas and Marisela,2010). Being part of a trusted group provides help in various aspects of life. This is because the social environment has a major role in shaping personality development and behavior patterns. Campus activism plays a special role in this development of young adulthood. According to Rhoads (2000) ‘campus activism is a form of participatory democracy’.

Assertiveness plays a major role in building up of social skills .Assertiveness is a key social trait that improves wellbeing of an individual .Various definitions of assertive behaviors

<sup>1</sup>UG Student, Integrated M.Sc. Psychology, St. Thomas College (Autonomous), Thrissur, Kerala

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, St. Thomas College (Autonomous), Thrissur, Kerala

\*Corresponding Author

Received: April 05, 2025; Revision Received: July 13, 2025; Accepted: July 17, 2025

## **Prosocialness and Assertiveness: A Comparative Study of College Students Involved in Campus Activism and Those not Involved**

highlights the importance of individual rights (Parry and Kumar, 2016). Alberti and Emmons (1990) stated that “ assertive behaviors 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. According to Farag ,2003 Assertiveness is “the individual’s skill in expressing various opinions and positive (praise) or negative (anger) feelings, defending their own rights and continuing to end social interactions, and resisting the stress from others”. Several education methods can help in fostering assertive behaviors. Assertiveness involves various components like balancing relationships, improving happiness and promoting understanding (Sreelakshmi and John,2023).

Prosocial behaviors is an important aspect in social behavior of human beings. It involves voluntary actions to benefit other individuals like sharing, comforting, helping and cooperating. The same concept was introduced by Daniel Batson (1998) in ‘The handbook of social psychology’. This in turn leads to improved interpersonal relationships, better social support, individual wellbeing and creates an overall positive impact. It helps in building an integrated and compassionate society (Monga and Waraich, 2023 & Batson, 1998). Coming to the case of young adults (18 -25), the trait of Prosocial behavior not only benefits the people around them. It also helps them to connect with their surrounding world and maintain their self-esteem. This adds depth and meaning to their phase of life (Arora and Rastogi,2018).This is significantly evident from various studies conducted by the researchers .A study published in Journal of Positive Psychology by Nadav Klein in 2016 indicates that People who engage in prosocial activities trends to feel more sense of meaning in their life .A correlation study by Arora and Rastogi(2018) indicates that there is a positive correlation between prosocial behaviors and self-esteem ,with egress of correlation being 0.31(Arora and Rastogi, 2018). Prosocial behaviors being a positive social phenomenon, it is important to enhance this positive culture. This helps the society as well as provides an apt condition for promoting progressive to society (Bar-Tal,1982).

### ***Need and significance***

The present study focuses on Prosocialness and Assertiveness among students who are active in campus activism and other college students. The period of young adulthood is a very crucial stage in the development of an individual and includes development in social, physical and psychological dimensions. It is also a stage of self-reflection, discovery and exploration. Activities, responsibilities, involvement in almost all socially relevant matters are immense in campus activism and thereby nurturing this developmental period and provides a unique environment for students to engage in social and political issues, fostering a sense of community and a commitment to social change. And it's necessary to enhance the prosocialness among the students nowadays. This in turn fosters values like compassion, empathy and social responsibilities, which plays a key role in prosocial behavior of an individual and promotes assertiveness that enables the students to express their own views, dialogues and confront opposition. This leads to development of individual skills as well as social betterment. And for the other students, prosocialness leads to sharing, comforting or cooperating and wish to keep a good interpersonal relationship among their friends within the class and neighboring college mates. And in order to keep this it is very relevant to have assertiveness, which enables students to advocate for themselves while respecting others.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Sreelakshmi and John (2023) conducted a study on assertiveness, grit and prosocial behavior among nursing students. The sample included 200 nursing students. Rathus assertiveness scale (Rathus,1973), short grit scale (Duckworth ,2007) and the prosocial scale for adults (Caprara et al.,2005) was used in the study. The study revealed that there is a weak positive correlation between grit and prosocial behavior. It also concluded that there is no correlation between assertiveness and grit and also prosocial behavior and assertiveness.

Monga and Waraich (2023) conducted research on the effect of self-efficacy and emotional maturity on prosocial behavior of young adults. The sample was collected using a purposive sampling method and had a total sample of 150 individuals. The helping attitude (Garry S. Nickken ,1998) was used in the study. The result showed that there is minimal correlation between self-efficacy and helping others.

Nair (2021) conducted a study to understand about relationship between perceived stress and assertiveness among young adults. The study was conducted across various colleges in India. A sample of 104 college students within an age group of 18 to 23 was selected for the study. The tools used in the study were Perceived stress scale and Rathus Assertiveness scale for adults. The result of the study indicated that there was no significant relationship between perceived stress and assertiveness and also no significant gender difference was found in both variables-perceived stress and assertiveness.

Situmorang et al., (2021) conducted quantitative research to study the effect of assertiveness and empathy on Prosocial Behavior at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences. The sample size of the study was 100 students and they were selected using Accidental sampling method (Non probability sampling method). The scale of Prosocial Behavior, Assertiveness and empathy is used for the data collection in the study. Multiple Regression analysis was used for the study. The result of the study indicates that there is positive influence between assertiveness and empathy on prosocial behaviorist is also evident that Assertiveness has a favorable and insignificant effect on prosocial behavior among Mulawarman University students.

Younes (2021) investigated the relationship between assertiveness and social support among university students. The data was randomly collected from 360 university students- 190 males and 170- females. The assertiveness scale for adolescents and youth developed by Baza, 2003 and the social support questionnaire for university students which was developed by the author was used in the study. The result indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between social support and assertiveness.

Arora and Rastogi (2018) conducted a correlation study between prosocial behavior and self-esteem among young adults. The samples included 50 participants in the age group of 18 to 25. The tools used in the study were the helping attitude scale (G. Nickken,1998) and Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenburg, 1956). The result of the study indicated that there exists a positive correlation between prosocial behavior and self-esteem.

Samuel and Chandrasekaran (2018) conducted a study on assertiveness among college students. A sample of 70 under graduate students was used for collecting data. The Assertiveness questionnaire - adopted, modified and validated by the investigator and the supervisor on the basis of questionnaire copyrighted by University of Oxford (2015) was

## **Prosocialness and Assertiveness: A Comparative Study of College Students Involved in Campus Activism and Those not Involved**

used to measure assertiveness in the study. From the result we can conclude that there is significant difference in assertiveness based on criteria of gender, medium of instructions and type of faculties.

Parray and Kumar (2016) conducted a study among undergraduate students of the university to assess their assertiveness. The sample included 100 UG students (50 males and 50 females) with age ranging from 16 to 22. The Rathus Assertiveness schedule (Rathus,1978) was used to assess assertiveness. The result of the study showed that there is no significant difference in assertiveness with respect to gender (male and female).

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### ***Objectives***

- To find out whether there is any relationship between prosocialness and assertiveness among students involved in campus activism.
- To find out whether there is any relationship between prosocialness and assertiveness among college students who are not involved in campus activism.
- To find out whether there is any significant difference in prosocialness among students who are active in campus activism and those who are not.
- To find out whether there is any significant difference in assertiveness among students who are active in campus activism and those who are not.

#### ***Hypotheses***

- There will be no significant relationship between prosocialness and assertiveness among students involved in campus activism.
- There will be no significant relationship between prosocialness and assertiveness who are not involved in campus activism.
- There will be no significant difference in prosocialness among students who are involved in campus activism and those who are not.
- There will be no significant difference in assertiveness among students who are involved in campus activism and those who are not.

#### ***Participants***

The sample includes 80 college students, adults within the age range of 18-25 years ,40 who were involved in campus activism and 40 those who were not involved in campus activism. The samples were selected through convenient sampling from different colleges across Kerala.

#### ***Instruments***

##### **Personal data sheet**

A personal data sheet was prepared for use in the present study. The personal details consist of Name, Age, Gender, place of residence, socio-economic status, name of college or institution, educational qualification and category to which the students belonged (students who are active in campus activism and students who are not active in campus activism)

##### **Scale-1: The Prosocialness Scale for Adults (PSA)-Caprara et al., (2005)**

The Prosocialness scale for adults was developed by Gian Vittorio Caprara and his colleagues in 2005. This is a 16-item scale that measure an individual's prosocial behavior for each prosocialness item, participants indicate on a 5-point Likert scale whether the

**Prosocialness and Assertiveness: A Comparative Study of College Students Involved in Campus Activism and Those not Involved**

statement was never/almost never true (coded as 1), occasionally true (coded as 2), sometimes true (coded as 3), often true (coded as 4) and almost always/ always true (coded as 5). Scores were assigned for each question based on the response from the participant and were added. Scoring was done as per the norms in the manual. Score from 16-32 is considered as very low, 32-48 is considered as low, 49-64 is considered as high and 65-80 is considered as very high. The average reliability coefficient for the scale is 0.903 for Cronbach’s alpha, 0.896 for McDonald’s omega and 0.674 for test -retest. The scale is having construct validity.

**Scale-2: Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS)- Rathus (1973)**

This instrument was designed to measure assertiveness or what the author called social boldness. Rathus assertiveness scale is developed by Spencer A. Rathus (1973). The scale consists of 30 items. The items were rated from +3 to -3 and 17 items, indicated by an asterisk on this scale are reverse scored. Scores are determined by summing up, that can range from -90 to +90. Negative scores indicate non assertiveness and positive scores indicate assertiveness. The RAS has evidence of good internal consistency and stability. Split half reliability was 0.77 and retest reliability over an 8-week period was 0.78. The RAS has good concurrent validity and construct validity. Strong concurrent validity is also seen in the correlation between RAS scores and trained rater’s rankings of assertiveness. Scores on the instrument have been shown to correlate with measures of boldness, outspokenness, assertiveness, aggressiveness and confidence.

**Procedure**

This study is comparative- correlative. The statistical sample includes 80 college students, adults within the age range of 18-25 years ,40 who were involved in campus activism and 40 those who were not involved in campus activism. The samples were selected through convenient sampling from different colleges in Kerala. The prosocialness scale for adults (PSA)-Caprara et al., (2005) and Rathus Assertiveness scale (RAS)- Rathus (1973), were administered to the college students by providing google form online and were asked not to omit any item. The collected response was scored according to the scoring procedures provided for each tool. The data collected were analyzed using statistical techniques of Spearman rank correlation method and Mann Whitney U test. The data’s confidentiality has been guaranteed so that the participant won't be reluctant to provide true truthful and patient responses.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

*Table 1 Correlation coefficient between Prosocialness and Assertiveness among students involved in campus activism (N=40)*

Variables		Prosocialness	Assertiveness
Prosocialness	Spearman’s Rho	–	
	P value	–	
Assertiveness	Spearman’s Rho	0.315	–
	P value	0.051	–

*\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001*

**Prosocialness and Assertiveness: A Comparative Study of College Students Involved in Campus Activism and Those not Involved**

**Table 2 Correlation coefficient between Prosocialness and Assertiveness among students those who are not involved in campus activism (N=40)**

Variables		Prosocialness	Assertiveness
Prosocialness	Spearman's Rho	–	
	P value	–	
Assertiveness	Spearman's Rho	0.045	–
	P value	0.788	–

*\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001*

**Table 3 Mean and standard deviation of the scores in Prosocialness among students who are involved in campus activism and those who are not.**

Variable	Students who are active in campus activism		Students who are not active in campus activism		U	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Prosocialness	65.275	12.430	57.775	11.606	487*	0.003

**Table 4 Mean and standard deviation of the scores in Assertiveness among students who are involved in campus activism and those who are not.**

Variable	Students who are active in campus activism		Students who are not active in campus activism		U	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Assertiveness	0.075	12.367	7.175	20.028	589*	0.042

From table 1, the results revealed that there is no significant correlation between prosocialness and assertiveness among students involved in campus activism but have a positive correlation which indicates when prosocialness increases assertiveness also increases and vice versa. This may be because students who are involved in activities are naturally inclined toward prosocial behavior as they work toward benefiting others and also such environments encourage students to speak up and assert their viewpoints to influence decisions. Prosocialness and assertiveness can also reinforce each other by expressing their opinions more confidently to protect the interest of others. Similarly assertive students may take on leadership roles, further motivating them to support their team or community.

The results from table 2 revealed that there is no significant correlation between prosocialness and assertiveness among students who are not involved in campus activism but have a positive correlation which shows as prosocialness increases assertiveness also increases and vice versa. This may be because colleges often involve group projects, combined study groups and extra-curricular activities where students support peers and contribute ideas in an assertive manner. It's necessary to keep a good interpersonal

## **Prosocialness and Assertiveness: A Comparative Study of College Students Involved in Campus Activism and Those not Involved**

relationship with the class and college mates for the advancement of studies and overall activities.

From Table 3 the obtained results reveal that there is significant difference in prosocialness among students who are involved in campus activism and those who are not. The mean value of students who are involved in campus activism ( $M=65.275$ ) is higher than the mean value of ( $M= 57.775$ ) Students who are not involved in campus activism. This may be because while compare to the students who are not involved in campus activism, active students share their goals like justice, equality and environmental sustainability and this collective mindset encourages behaviors such as cooperation, helping others and prioritizing the greater good, hallmarks of prosocialness. Also, they engage with individuals from various backgrounds and communities, increasing their awareness of different struggles and needs. This enhances willingness to help others and form the trait prosocialness.

Table 4 shows there is significant difference in assertiveness among students who are involved in campus activism and those who are not. The mean value of students who are not involved in campus activism ( $M=0.075$ ) is lower than the mean value of ( $M= 7.175$ ) Students who are involved in campus activism. This may be because college students are often encouraged to prioritize their personal goals, such as academic success, career development and self-development. Assertiveness is critical for expressing their needs, opinions, and ambitions in competitive and self-driven environments and is more universally encouraged as a skill for personal advancement.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The study assesses Prosocialness and Assertiveness among student who are involved in campus activism and those who are not. The study reveals that there is no significant correlation between Prosocialness and Assertiveness among student who are involved in campus activism and those who are not. But still there exist a positive correlation among the variables across both the samples. The result also indicates that there is a significant difference in Prosocialness and Assertiveness among students who are involved in campus activism and those students who are not involved.

#### ***Implications of the study***

The study can be used in making policy implications for youth development programs and even helps in formulation of higher education policies that promotes campus activism and its benefits. The study also highlights a need to create supportive campus climate that provides scope for a safe environment for dialogues, exchange of ideas and so on.

#### ***Limitations of the study***

The sample size of the study was limited and samples was selected using convenience sampling method. The majority of the data was collected using online google forms. The study also fails to consider various socio demographic variables. The number of relevant studies related to the current samples were also very limited.

#### ***Scope for further research***

- The study can be conducted in a more elaborative way by considering more variables (e.g. grit).
- The variables can be studied among other samples like students in professional colleges.

## Prosocialness and Assertiveness: A Comparative Study of College Students Involved in Campus Activism and Those not Involved

- Comparative studies can be conducted across various genders, different age groups etc.

### REFERENCES

- Alberti, R. E., & Emmons, M. L. (1990). *Your perfect right: a guide to assertive living* (6th ed.). Impact Publishers.
- Arora, M., & Rastogi, K. (2018). Correlation between prosocial behaviour and self esteem among young adult. *International Journal of Creative research thoughts*, 6 (1)
- Bar-Tal, D. (1982). Sequential development of helping behaviour: a cognitive-learning approach. *Developmental Review*, 2(2), 101–124
- Batson, D. (1998). *The handbook of social psychology* (4th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Bronk, K. C., Hill, P. L., Lapsley, D. K., Talib, T. L., & Finch, H. (2009). Purpose, hope and life satisfaction in three age groups. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4(6), 500–510.
- Caprara, G.V., Steca, P., Zelli, A., & Capanna, C. (2005). Prosocialness scale for adults. PsycTESTS Dataset. <https://doi.org/10.1037/t10623-000>
- Farag, T. (2003). *Social and economic skills*. Dar Gharib for Printing and Publishing.
- Liang, B., & Klein, T. (2022). *How to navigate life: the new science of finding your way in school, career, and beyond*. St. Martin's Press.
- Monga, S. K., & Waraich, S. B. (2023). Effect of self-efficacy and emotional maturity on prosocial behaviour of young adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(2), 2106–2116.
- Nadav Klien's study in *Journal of positive psychology* (2016).
- Nair R. (2021). Perceived stress and assertiveness among young adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(2), 2126-2135.
- Parry, W., & Kumar, S. (2016). Assertiveness among undergraduate students of the University. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 4(8).
- Pfund, G. N., Bono, T. J., & Hill, P. L. (2020). A higher goal during higher education: The power of purpose in life during university. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, 6(2), 97–106.
- Rathus, S. A. (1973). A 30-item schedule for assessing assertive behavior. *Behavior Therapy*, 4(3), 398-406. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0005-7894\(73\)80120-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0005-7894(73)80120-0).
- Rhoads, R. A. (2000). *Freedom's web: Student activism in an age of cultural diversity*. The Johns Hopkins University Press
- Rosas, Marisela. (2010). *College Student Activism: an exploration of learning outcomes*. Theses and Dissertations.
- Samuel, P., & Chandrasekaran, P. (2018). A study on assertiveness of college students. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 6(2).
- Situmorang et al., (2021). Assertiveness and empathy toward prosocial behaviour. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies*, 3(9).
- Sreelakshmi, P.M. & John, J. (2023). Assertiveness, grit, and prosocial behaviour among nursing Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(2), 1300-1308.
- Younes, A., (2021). The relationship between social support and assertiveness among university students. *Egyptian Journal of Social Work*, 11, 41-60.

### Acknowledgment

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to our research guide who provided us with immense support throughout this research journey. We would also like to thank all the participants for giving us their time and effort, without which we wouldn't have been able to complete this study.

**Prosocialness and Assertiveness: A Comparative Study of College Students Involved in Campus Activism and Those not Involved**

***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

***How to cite this article:*** Jyothis, A., Sebastian, K. & Krishna, A. (2025). Prosocialness and Assertiveness: A Comparative Study of College Students Involved in Campus Activism and Those not Involved. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(3), 432-440. DIP:18.01.039.20251303, DOI:10.25215/1303.039