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RESEARCH PAPER

## Assessing the Level of Assertiveness among College Students

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**Key words:** *Level of Assertiveness, Gender Difference, Different Academic Disciplines, Undergraduate College Students etc.*

### Abstract

Assertiveness is defined as the quality of being self-assured, confident without being aggressive. Assertive behaviour includes starting, changing, or ending conversations, refusing others' requests, if they are too demanding, questioning rules or traditions that don't make sense or don't seem fair, addressing problems or things that bother, expressing positive or negative emotions and being firm so that rights are respected. Aim of the present study is to assess the Level of Assertiveness among college students. The main objective of this study is to enhance the Level of Assertiveness among college students so that they can be successful not only in workplace but also in family life. One hundred and twenty healthy and well-motivated Undergraduate College students, sixty Males and sixty Females, studying in B.A., (forty students; 20 Males and 20 Females), B.Sc., (forty students; 20 Males and 20 Females) and B.Com., (forty students; 20 Males and 20 Females) from Government First Grade College, Vijayanagar, Bangaluru, constituted as a sample for the present study. The students were administered with Rathus Assertiveness Scale to assess the Level of Assertiveness among Undergraduate College students and gender difference, if any, existing in the performance of the Male and Female College students. Results clearly indicate that B.A., and B.Sc., College students are more assertive ( $P < .001$ ) than the B. Com., students. Females are better ( $P < .001$ ) than the Males in enhancing the Level of Assertiveness. High level of assertiveness promotes success in the academic, workplace and family life.

## INTRODUCTION

Assertiveness is defined as the quality of being self-assured confident without being aggressive (David Colman, 1996). Assertiveness is defined as a form of behaviour characterized by a confident declaration or affirmation of a statement without need or proof (Patterson, 2000). Assertiveness, the term and concept was popularized to the general public by books, such as “Your Perfect Right: A Guide to Assertive Behaviour” by Robert and Emmons (2001). When I say No I feels guilty by Smith (1975), how to cope using the skills of systematic assertiveness therapy as suggested by Manuel (1975). Assertiveness includes behaviours such as starting, changing, or ending conversations, sharing feelings, opinions, and experiences with others, making requests and asking for favours, refusing others' requests if they are too demanding, questioning rules or traditions that don't make sense or don't seem addressing problems or things that bother, being firm so that rights are respected, expressing positive and negative emotions.

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 an important part in the message. One is sending any message to the other person, and unless all parts of the equation match, one 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 any fear during the process.” Culha and Dereli (1987) conducted a 7-week assertiveness training for elementary school students, who were identified as non-assertive based on Rathus Assertiveness Inventory. Pre-test, Post-test and Control group design was used and results showed significant improvement with respect to the Experimental Group on the assertiveness level of the students. Undergraduate students, who report high levels of social anxiety, have been shown to be less assertive (Creed and Funder, 1998; LeSure – Lester, 2001). College students, who report high levels of social anxiety are viewed by their peers as being vulnerable to threat, while those lower in social anxiety are not viewed in this way (Creed and Funder, 1998). Low levels of assertiveness and high social anxiety may increase the risk of sexual victimization among college women (Schry, 2011). Assertiveness plays a pivotal role in the life of the college students. Developing Assertiveness promotes

psychological well-being, leading to success in academic, workplace and family life. Nowadays, corporate selection looks for the Assertiveness in the selection of candidates for their concern. Hence, the present study is important and has been undertaken.

### **AIM**

The main aim of the present study is to assess the level of Assertiveness among college students

### **OBJECTIVES**

Assertiveness plays a major role in the life of the college students. Once the level of assertiveness is identified at an early stage among college students, students can be trained to enhance the Level of Assertiveness so that they can be successful not only in academics and at workplace but also in the family life. This reduces attrition rate in the colleges. The study has two specific objectives:

1. To assess Level of Assertiveness among Undergraduate College students from Arts, Science, Commerce discipline.
2. To find out gender differences, if any, among Male and Female Undergraduate College students in the Level of Assertiveness

### **VARIABLES**

Independent Variables studied are College Students and Gender differences

Dependent Variable studied is Level of Assertiveness

### **HYPOTHESIS**

1. There is no significant difference in the level of Assertiveness among different academic disciplines of Undergraduate College students ( $H_0$ )
2. There is no significant Gender difference existing in the level of assertiveness among male and female students ( $H_0$ )

### **SAMPLE**

One hundred and twenty healthy and well-motivated Undergraduate college students, sixty Males and sixty Females studying in B.A., (forty students; 20 Males and 20 Females), B.Sc., (forty students; 20 Males and 20 Females) and B.Com., (forty students; 20 Males and 20 Females) from Government First Grade College, Vijayanagar, Bangaluru, age ranging from 16 to 19 years, with the mean age of 17 years, constituted as the sample for the present study (Table 1 and Figure 2),

Table: 2 Sample characteristics

PARAMETERS	B.A.,		B.Sc.,		B.Com.,	
	CONTROL	EXPTL.	CONTROL	EXPTL.	CONTROL	EXPTL.
MALES	10	10	10	10	10	10
FEMALES	10	10	10	10	10	10

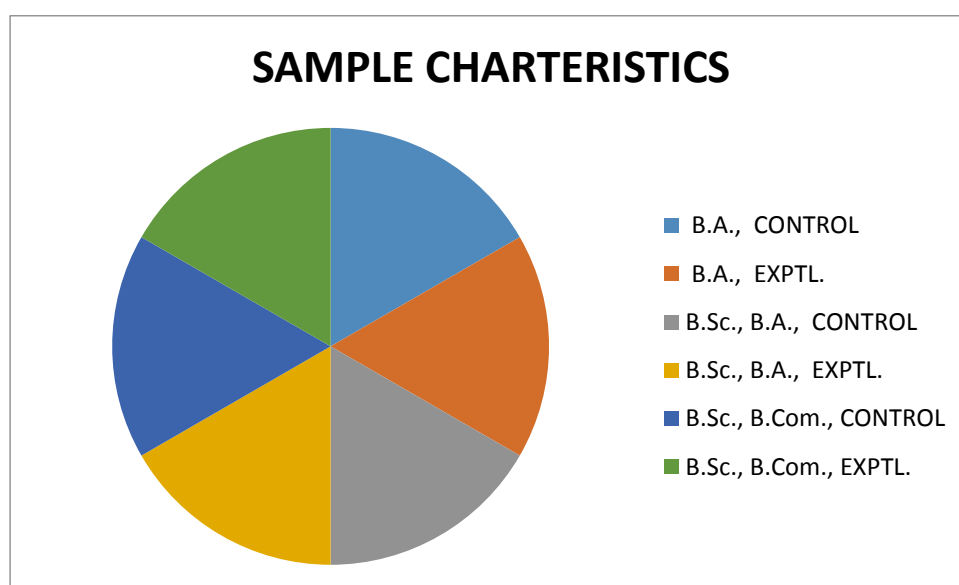


Figure 1: Sample Characteristics

The group, made up of 40: ten Males and ten Females in the Control group are matched with ten Males and ten Females in the Experimental group

(Table 1 and Figure 2).

The students were administered with Rathus Assertiveness Scale to assess the Level of Assertiveness among Undergraduate College students and to find out gender differences, if any, among Male and Female college students, existing in the Level of Assertiveness. Short details of the psychology test are given below:

**Rathus Assertiveness Scale:** This scale has been developed by Rathus (1973) to assess the Level of Assertiveness of the college students. This is a self-report test to find out Assertive Behavior. The scale contains thirty statements. The statements are to be responded in terms of agreement or disagreement and the scoring is done as per the following scheme.

-1 Once in a while

-2 rarely

-3 Never

**Statistical Techniques Used:** Data thus collected are subjected to the following statistical techniques to assess the level of Assertiveness among Undergraduate College students::

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

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study are given in Tables 2 and 3 and Figures 2 and 3.

Table 2: Comparison of Mean Assertiveness scores of the B.A., (n=40), B.Sc., (n=40) and B.Com., (n=40) College students

Group	N	M	S. D	t-value	Interpretation
B A	40	15.68	3.21	<.001	Not significant
B Sc	40	15.39	3.45		
B A	40	15.68	3.21	<.01	Significant
B Com	40	19.65	3.98		
B Sc	40	15.39	3.45	<.01	Significant
B Com	40	19.65	3.98		

Comparison of Mean Assertiveness scores of the Undergraduate College students of different discipline (Table 2). There is a significant difference ( $P < .001$ ) existing in the Level of Assertiveness among Undergraduate College students. B. Com., students are better ( $P < .001$ ) than the B.A., and B.Sc., students in enhancing the Level of Assertiveness. B. Com., students are better than the B.A., and B.Sc., students in enhancing the Level of Assertiveness. Hence, we reject the hypothesis 1, i.e., There is no significant difference in the Level of Assertiveness among different discipline Undergraduate College students. In fact, there is a significant difference ( $P < .001$ ) existing among Undergraduate College students. The results of the present study are corroborated with the research findings of Bouvafid et al (1999),

Culha and Dereli (1987) and Creed and Funder (1998). High level of Assertiveness brings success in academic, workplace and family life.

Figure 2: Mean Assertiveness scores of the Undergraduate College students

Table 3: Gender Difference: Mean Assertiveness scores of Male (n=60) and Female (n=60)  
Undergraduate College students

PARAMETERS	Total Score	Mean	SD	"t" Value	Interpretation
Male	856	14.03	1.37	<.001	Significant
Female	1107	18.14	1.50		

Comparison of Mean Assertiveness scores of the Undergraduate Male and Female College students of different discipline. The result shows that Female students are better ( $P < .001$ ) than the Males in enhancing the Level of Assertiveness. Hence, we reject the hypothesis 2. i.e., there is no significant difference existing in the Levels of Assertiveness among Undergraduate Male and Female College students. In fact, Females are better ( $P < .001$ ) than Males in enhancing the Level of Assertiveness in all the three disciplines. Findings of the present study are corroborated with the research conducted by Creed and Funder (1998) and LeSure Lester (2001). High level of Assertiveness brings success in academic, workplace and family life.

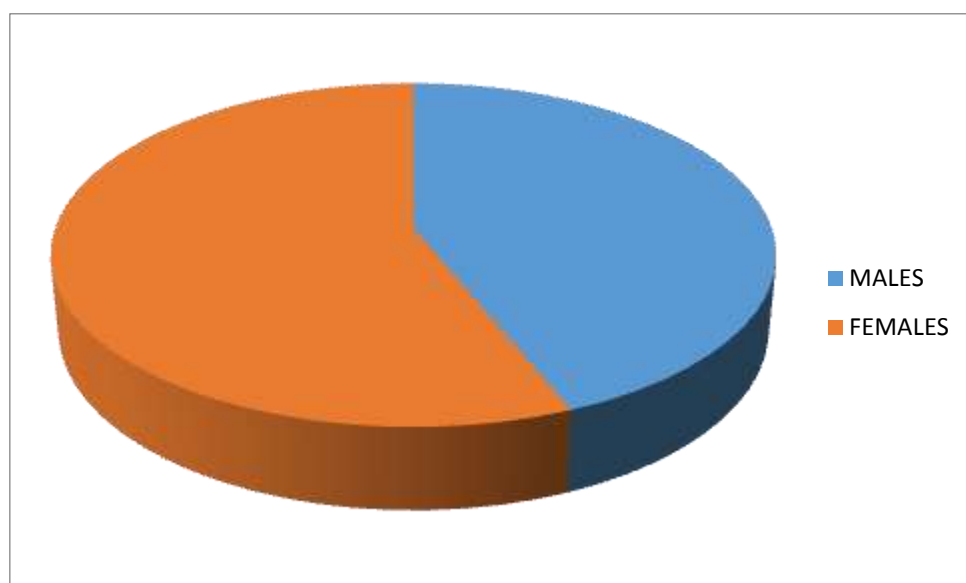


Table-3: Gender Difference: Mean Assertiveness scores of Male (n=60) and Female (n=60)  
Undergraduate College students

Therefore undergraduate students of present study were taken into confidence and trained for healthy assertiveness training session by the Department of Psychology, in order to facilitate their coping skills and to prevent further psychological issues. The concern was appreciated by the students who were participants of the study, as well as the other Departments in the college.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Assertiveness plays a major role in the life of the college students. Once the level of assertiveness is identified at an early stage among college students, they can be trained to enhance the Level of Assertiveness so that they can be successful not only in academic and workplace but also in the family life. This reduces attrition rate in the colleges. The present study was carried out to study the level of assertiveness among Undergraduate College students from different academic disciplines. The following conclusions are drawn from the study:

1. Commerce students performed well in enhancing the Levels of Assertiveness
2. Female Undergraduate College students performed well in enhancing the Levels of Assertiveness
3. Assertiveness brings success in academic, workplace and family life.

### Suggestions for further Study

1. In order to apply representative and comparative study, students drawn from other colleges of the Bengaluru University and rural background may be included in future studies.
2. In order to get more meaningful and comparative study, one or more independent variables may be included in future studies.

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