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A STUDY ON ASSERTIVENESS AMONG ADOLESCENTS



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Abstract: The present study was conducted with an aim to study the assertiveness level of adolescents with reference to their gender and locality. The samples were taken from schools in Chennai city for urban sample and schools in Cumbum, Madurai District, and Tamil Nadu for rural samples. A random sample of 100 adolescents was chosen for the study. They were divided as 50 boys and 50 girls. The 50 boys were further divided as 25 from urban area and 25 from rural area. The same division was followed for the 50 girls also. The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (1967) was used to study the assertiveness of the selected adolescents. The data was subjected to statistical analysis and the following results were revealed.

The result of the study showed no significant difference in assertiveness level between the adolescents based on gender. But when assertiveness was studied based on locality it was found that the urban adolescents had better assertiveness scores than the rural adolescents both among boys and girls.

Key words: assertiveness, adolescents, statistical analysis, society.

INTRODUCTION :

Adolescence has been described as a phase of life beginning in biology and ending in society. The period may be defined as a time when most of a person's biological, cognitive, psychological and social characteristics change from being childlike to adult like. Hurlock (1981) says that it is customary to regard adolescence as beginning when children become sexually mature and ending when they reach the age of legal maturity. Stanley Hall, an American psychologist saw adolescence as a period of upheaval, a disruption of peaceful growth. Adolescents face a lot of psychological problems ranging from depression, feelings of guilt, loss of interest in activities, sleep problems and have an escalating sense of confusion about things as well as distortions in thinking. For adolescents to fight through all these they need to cultivate assertive behavior.

Assertiveness was initially described as a personality trait by Andrew Salter (1949). Later researchers redefined assertiveness as "expressing personal rights and feelings". Smith (1975) explains that a person is assertive when he can stand up for his rights in such a way that rights of others are not violated. Beyond just demanding his rights, he can express his personal likes and interests spontaneously. An assertive person can be more relaxed in interpersonal situations. The assertive approach attempts to tap into one's unconditional love and respect for self and others and treat the other person in an understanding and kind way, yet be able to be as direct, firm, persuasive and persistent to accomplish win-win solutions. It is an attempt to find general, lasting solutions to recurring problems as opposed to only finding surface, temporary solutions that cause the

underlying problem to keep recurring. (2)

Today's adolescents face many social related problems. They are highly vulnerable to many evils in the society like alcohol, drugs, terrorism etc. They also need to know how to handle peer pressure. For them to handle these smoothly and become mature and successful adults they need to learn certain coping strategies. One of the most important and essential of all coping strategies is the assertiveness skill. By being assertive they learn to say "No" to drugs, alcohol, sexual advances and many other things they really do not want to do.

Fortunately assertiveness is a skill that can be learnt. Several studies have demonstrated the usefulness of assertiveness training programme. Assertiveness training makes a major difference in the lives of people. By thinking more assertively and by learning assertion skills, people have become less afraid of speaking up, friendlier and more outgoing, confident and competent in handling difficult interpersonal situations and generally happier.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The present investigation was undertaken with an aim to study the difference in assertiveness level of adolescents with reference to gender and locality.

OBJECTIVES

1. To compare the assertiveness level between adolescent boys and girls.
2. To compare the assertiveness level between adolescent urban boys and girls.

3. To compare the assertiveness level between adolescent rural boys and girls.
4. To compare the assertiveness level between urban and rural adolescents.
5. To compare the assertiveness level between urban and rural adolescent boys.
6. To compare the assertiveness level between urban and rural adolescent girls.

METHODOLOGY

Tools

The Rathus Assertiveness Scale (1967) was used to study the assertiveness of adolescents. It is a standardized tool comprising of 32 statements which has to be rated on a 4-point scale.

The tool was administered individually to each student in the selected schools from urban and rural areas of Tamil Nadu and care was taken to see that the adolescents filled the questionnaire without discussing. There was no time limit for completion of the scale.

Sample Selection

A total sample of 100 adolescents in the age group of 15-17 years was selected for the study. They were equally distributed based on gender i.e. 50 boys and 50 girls. Out of the 50 boys, 25 boys were selected from urban area and the other 25 boys were selected from rural area. The same division was followed for the 50 girls also.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Comparison of assertiveness level between boys and girls.

Table I shows the comparison of assertiveness level between adolescent boys and girls.

**TABLE-I
COMPARISON OF ASSERTIVENESS LEVEL BETWEEN ADOLESCENT BOYS AND GIRLS**

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	't'	Level of Significance
Boys	50	66.94	13.21	0.175	NS
Girls	50	67.38	11.82		

NOTE-NS-Not significant

Table I presents the mean score, standard deviation and "t" value of adolescents boys and girls. The mean score for boys was found to be 66.94 and for girls it was found to be 67.38. Statistically no significant difference was noted as the calculated "t" value 0.175 is less than the table value. This finding is in line with a study by Eskin (2003)³ whose results revealed no significant gender difference in assertiveness.

The comparison of the assertiveness level between urban boys and girls is shown in table – II.

**TABLE-II
COMPARISON OF ASSERTIVENESS LEVEL BETWEEN URBAN BOYS AND GIRLS**

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	't'	Level of Significance
Boys	25	73.08	10.73	0.133	NS
Girls	25	72.68	10.47		

NOTE-NS-Not significant

The results presented in Table-2 reveals that no significant difference in assertiveness exist between the urban boys and girls as the calculated 't' value (0.133) is lesser than the table value. It is also seen that the mean score of assertiveness among urban boys is 73.08 and among urban girls it is 72.68. This clearly showed that though the urban boys had better assertive scores than the urban girls the difference was not significant.

The comparison of the assertiveness level between rural boys and girls is shown in table – III

**TABLE-III
COMPARISON OF ASSERTIVENESS LEVEL BETWEEN RURAL BOYS AND GIRLS**

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	't'	Level of Significance
Boys	25	60.80	12.77	0.382	NS
Girls	25	62.08	10.82		

NOTE-NS-Not significant

From the results presented in Table-III, it is found that there is no significant difference in the level of assertiveness between boys and girls living in rural areas as the calculated't' value (0.382) is lesser than the table value. This result is substantiated by a study done by Bassen & Lamb (2006)⁴ who examined the assertiveness level of boys and girls and found that gender difference in assertiveness was not significant.

From the results presented in this section it can be clearly inferred that both boys and girls have similar assertiveness levels both in the urban areas as well as in the rural areas. This can be attributed to the fact that in today's world the status of a girl child has changed considerably and now girls are given opportunities equally as the boys and hence they are able to achieve many things equivalent or sometimes better than their opposite sex.

B. Comparison of assertiveness level between urban and rural adolescents.

The comparison of assertiveness level between

urban and rural adolescents is shown in table-IV

**TABLE-IV
COMPARISON OF ASSERTIVENESS LEVEL
BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL ADOLESCENTS**

Locality	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	't'	Level of Significance
Urban	50	72.88	10.49	5.138	1%
Rural	50	61.44	11.73		

The result presented in Table IV indicates that there is a significant difference in the level of assertiveness between urban and rural adolescents as the 't' value 5.138 is greater than the table value at 1% level of significance. The table further shows that the mean value of assertiveness score for urban adolescents is 72.88 and for the rural adolescents it is 61.44. This clearly indicates that the urban adolescents have better assertive skills when compared with their rural counterparts.

Locality is known to be a strong factor in contributing to the level of assertiveness in adolescents. The result of this finding can be due to the fact that though today, most of the rural areas are well developed the adolescents studying in rural areas have lesser exposure when compared with the urban adolescents. Their social circle is comparatively smaller as a result of which they have lesser chances of improving their coping and social skills.

The comparison of assertiveness level between urban boys and rural boys is shown in Table-V

**TABLE-V
COMPARISON OF ASSERTIVENESS LEVEL
BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL BOYS**

Locality	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	't'	Level of Significance
Urban	25	73.08	10.72	3.681	1%
Rural	25	60.80	12.77		

The result presented in Table-V indicates that there is a significant difference in the level of assertiveness between the urban and rural boys as the calculated 't' value (3.681) is greater than the table value at 1% level of significance. A further perusal of the table reveals that the mean assertiveness score of urban boys is 73.08 and for rural boys it is 60.80. Through this it can be concluded that the urban boys are more assertive than the rural boys.

The findings of the present study indicate that urban boys are more assertive than the rural boys. This can be credited to the exposure that the urban boys get through their school, family and social setups that gives the urban boys the freedom of choice and hence better assertiveness skills.

The comparison of assertiveness level between urban girls and rural girls is shown in Table-VI

**TABLE-VI
COMPARISON OF ASSERTIVENESS LEVEL
BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL GIRLS**

Locality	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	't'	Level of Significance
Urban	25	72.68	10.47	3.519	1%
Rural	25	62.08	10.82		

Table VI presents the mean score, standard deviation and 't' value of the assertiveness scores of urban and rural girls. The mean score for the urban girls was found to be 72.68 and for the rural girls it was found to be 62.08. As the calculated 't' value (t=3.519) is greater than the table value at 1% level of significance it can be inferred that a significant difference exist in the assertiveness levels between urban and rural girls. The results further reveal that the urban girls are more assertive than the rural girls.

A study conducted by Spoth et.al. (2005)⁵ is in line with this result. The study revealed that the rural adolescents were less assertive and benefitted more from assertiveness skill development programme.

CONCLUSION

The present study revealed that gender does not affect the level of assertiveness among adolescents. Though we generally think that girls are less assertive than boys because of cultural taboos and inhibitions, this study revealed that girls are equally assertive as the boys.

Locality does have a considerable impact on the level of assertiveness among adolescents. The present study revealed that the level of assertiveness is significantly different for the urban and rural adolescents. The urban adolescents were found to be more assertive than their rural counterparts irrespective of the gender.

The need of the community at this hour is the proper guidance of its citizens especially that of its young citizens who are the pillars of future India. Over the years it is observed that adolescent crime rates, suicides and problematic behavior are on increase. The negative impact of mass media and peer pressure greatly contributes to this condition. 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. Assertiveness is a trait taught by many personality development experts and psychotherapists and the subject of many popular self-help books. By inculcating this skill an adolescent will be able to mature into a well balanced, mentally stable adult capable of respecting himself as well as others around him.

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