



“Impact of Assertiveness Training on Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents”

Dr. Firdous Ahmad Parray^{1*}, Hemant Kumar Watts², Sneha Grover³, Dr. Shalu Gupta⁴

^{1*}Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Guru Kashi University

^{2*}Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Guru Kashi University

^{3*}Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Guru Kashi University

^{4*}Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Applications, Guru Kashi University

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Adolescents represent a critical segment of the population, particularly in India, which houses the world's largest adolescent demographic. As future stewards of the nation, the behavioral development of adolescents is paramount. Adolescence, marked by universal biological changes and culturally contextual psychosocial manifestations, has been a focal point of scientific inquiry since the late 19th century. Early contributions by psychologists like Hall, who characterized adolescence as a period of "storm and stress," laid the groundwork for contemporary research. This study explores the impact of assertiveness training (AT) on the psychological well-being of adolescents, a relatively under-researched area. Contrary to prior findings that assertiveness training significantly enhances psychological well-being, this study observed no substantial effects on overall well-being except for a notable improvement in self-acceptance. The results suggest that while assertiveness training can foster self-acceptance, a more prolonged and intensive intervention may be necessary to achieve broader psychological well-being. These findings underscore the importance of sustained and tailored interventions in the psychological development of adolescents.
	Keywords: Adolescents, Assertiveness, Psychological well-being, AT

Introduction

Adolescents are the precious human resources of every nation. Being a home of 243 million individuals aged 10-19 years, India holds the most extensive national population of adolescents (UNICEF, 2011). Adolescents are the future of the nation; hence, their behaviors need to be shaped adequately. Adolescence is often described as a phase of life that begins in biology and ends in society (Sharma, 1996). The physical and biological changes are universal and occur due to maturation. However, the psychosocial and behavioral manifestations are determined by the meaning given to these changes within a cultural context.

As a research field, adolescents got attention in the latter half of the 19th century when Darwinian evolutionists tried to assemble support for their theories. They found childhood as a great source of proof for their hypotheses. But Hall (1844-1924) was one of the first psychologists to give ample time and effort to the study of adolescence. He defined adolescence in terms of physiological changes occurring in adolescents. This period begins from 12 to 13 years of age and ends when the adult status is attained by 22 to 25 years of age. According to Hall, "adolescence is a period of storm and stress." His researches paved the way for further research and made adolescence the subject of scientific study. The issue related to adolescents may be studied scientifically from physiology and its ethical, social, and pedagogical foundations. He used the questionnaires, diaries, and autobiographical accounts to write about the kind and nature of adolescents' problems. Daniel (1893) discussed adolescents' psychological aspects and described the puberty ceremonies in primitive culture. Lancaster, in the late 1890s, studied adolescent behavior employing questionnaires and published biographies. These early psychologists made extensive use of biographies, anecdotes, questionnaires, diaries, etc.

Modern psychologists study either the social and emotional growth or physiological growth of adolescents. Some are interested in studying adolescent's learning and intellectual problems in school and elsewhere.

Whatever may be the study's objective, the important aspect in dealing with adolescents is to take them and realize that they are the product of culture, past and present psychological and physical environment. It is also significant to recognize that there are undoubtedly individual variations. These differences must be known, sought out, and understood to tackle appropriately while dealing with adolescents.

The word "adolescence" is derived from the Latin verb 'adolescere,' which means "to grow up." It can be defined as the period of development between childhood and adulthood, where a person is biologically adult but lacks emotional maturity. As "Adolescence" is a cultural and social phenomenon, its endpoints are not easily tied to physical milestones. World Health Organization (WHO, 1986) defines adolescence as the period from 10-19 years of age. Adolescents constitute more than 1.2 billion worldwide, and about 225 million of these aged 10-19 years represent the Indian population.

Adolescence is a period of significant change and strong emotion. In other terms, it can also be defined as that time of life when an immature individual in his teens approaches the culmination of his physical and mental growth. It is a decisive stage and essential phase of life where many imperative keys like social, economic, biological, and demographic events occur and setting the future stage. It is a crucial stage of human life when they encounter many problems that affect them for the rest of their lives. It is also a time for search, experimentation, and introspection, which evolves a personal identity.

Assertiveness

During the 1970s, several books were written on assertiveness. Initially, assertiveness was regarded as a pre-requisite for women folk only. However, in the modern era, the emphasis has shifted, as both men and women recognize the importance of building assertiveness. Assertiveness is not about getting what one wants at others' expense, but being assertive means respecting others' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. A person with a positive attitude towards himself and others experiences others as being more positive towards him. On a 'good day,' he is more creative and productive, whereas on a so-called 'bad day,' it is vice versa.

The development of assertiveness begins when one recognizes and understands his attitudes and behavior, which will help him look at the ways necessary for consciously changing his attitude and choosing his behavior. Assertiveness involves the expression of one's preferences, needs, or opinions in a manner that is neither threatening nor punishing towards others. Contrary to popular opinion, assertiveness is not primarily a way to get what one wants

and opinions without punishing, threatening, or putting down the other person (Galassi, & Galassi, 1974).

One of the benefits of developing assertiveness is that it encourages an honest and trustworthy working relationship with others. The most important advantage is that it helps people to know where they stand. Sometimes people feel valued, neither for what they do nor for who they are, irrespective of what they do. In turn, it results in losing their interest and commitment to work or becoming overzealous to show to others that they can often do the job without others' help. Either way, these people have difficulty managing others effectively and are equally challenging for others to manage

Psychological well being

It is perceived that assertiveness has been associated with students' psychological well-being (Pourjali, & Zarnaghash, 2010; Shafiq, Naz, & Yousaf, 2015). Among those who face numerous stressful events and lower assertiveness levels, it increases the risk of suffering from depression (Blanco, Rohde, Vazquez, & Otero, 2014). Similarly, a sense of hopelessness is also associated with less assertiveness (Chioqueta, & Stiles, 2005). Prominently, it has been found that assertiveness training is associated with decreased levels of social anxiety and increased levels of happiness (Ghasemian, Yadollahi, Kamkar, Jadidi, & Moghadam, 2014).

Psychological well-being refers to the optimistic mental health and an individual's search for being happy and satisfied in life. It is believed to be the most important goal of life. The center of all wishes, desires, and motives of life is to be happy (Yildiz, 2002). Psychological well-being is an important concept and helpful to deal with the stress in daily life. Well-being is a broader term that encompasses all aspects of subjective well-being, psychological well-being, quality of life, satisfaction in life, and optimistic sensation. However, all these terms are not the same but are equally required for well being (Dost, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is a crucial stage in the life cycle where social skills development is essential. It may be defined as a critical period of human development manifested at the biological, psychological, and social levels of integration. Unfortunately, there has been relatively little research on assertiveness training on adolescents in the Indian setting. As the fact that today's adolescents are tomorrow's leaders this naturally calls for shaping their behavior. Adolescents equipped with requisite skills may play a significant role in the development of modern Indian society. They are the pillars of a nation and play an essential role in contributing much to its social development. The balance of influence on social development during adolescence shifts progressively from parents to peers (Hill, 1993). Given the developmental character of this life period, one can better appreciate the importance of assertiveness.

The assertive communication style is considered better as it led to success and minimized the factors that decrease self-achievement and enhanced psychological well-being (Gumusgul, Goral, & Demirel, 2014).

Issues of students like assertiveness and psychological well-being havenot gained so much maturity in India. A general observation of students' behavior in India suggests that most adolescents express either submissive or aggressive responses and lack assertiveness in many situations. There is a need for more research on students' assertiveness and its impact on psychological well-being, especially in the Indian context (Naz, & Yousaf, 2015). Western studies reported a positive association between assertiveness and psychological well-being (Sarkova et al., 2010; Voitkane, & Mieзите, 2006; Shafiq, Mahmed, & Zaki, 2014; Ates, 2016).

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the psychological well-being of students.
- To assess the impact of assertiveness training on the psychological well-being of students.

Hypotheses of the study

Based on the review of the literature following hypotheses were generated:

- Assertiveness training would positively affect the psychological well-being of the students.

Research Methodology

In this study nearly 30 schools were identified as sample and out of these 30 schools only 4 schools were selected by using the random method. While approaching to the administration of these selected schools only two schools gave their consent. Other two schools did not permit due to some administrative and management issues. While taking the number of students from the selected schools into consideration it was justifiable to commence the study with these two schools. Initially, the number of participants for the present study were consisted of 359 students, comprising of both male and female students with a mean age of 14.15 years. Participants were selected from two higher secondary schools, namely Army Public School and Vatsalya Senior Secondary School of Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. Out of total (N-359), four students withdrew their names in the middle of the study. Hence, the final sample comprised a total of 355 students from both the schools.

Criteria for sample selection

The following criteria selected the sample:

Inclusion criteria

- Students who were familiar with the English and Hindi languages.
- Students who were studying in Higher Secondary School, Sagar, M.P.
- Students who were between 12- 18 years of age.

Exclusion criteria

- Students with any diagnosed mental illnesses.
- Students who express their regrets to participate in the study.

Tools

The following tool were employed in the study:

Psychological Well-Being Scale

The psychological well-being of the participants was assessed through psychological well-being (Ryff's, 1989). The (PWB) scale had 42 items, which comprise of six psychological dimensions. These dimensions include self-acceptance, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth. Respondents have to rate statements on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and six denotes to substantial agreement. The high total score of each category indicates the mastery of that particular area of psychological well being. The reliability of the test is 0.86.

Design of the study

Groups	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experimental Group	(PWB)	AT (10 Sessions)	(PWB)
Control Group	(PWB)	No Treatment	(PWB)

A pre-post quasi-experimental design was used for the present study. Pre-test and post- test were given to both the experimental and the control groups. The training period's duration was five weeks comprising two sessions per week, and each session took 45 minutes.

Procedure

Ethical Considerations

After the psychometric tools procurement, the participants were briefed about the primary aim of the study. Written consent was obtained from all the participants who agreed to participate in the study. They were also informed that they have the right to refrain from participating in the study at any time. It was also assured to them that data confidentiality and participant's privacy were secured.

Pre-test: During the pre-test, the initial sample consisted of 359 students who responded to Assertiveness, Self-esteem, Stress, Academic achievement, and Psychological-wellbeing to prepare their baseline scores. Out of 359 students, four students have not completed the entire questionnaire. After screening, 130 students who scored low on the assertiveness were selected and allocated to intervention, i.e., assertiveness training. In addition to that, the subjects were further divided into two groups, experimental (N=65) and control group (N=65). The sample was further divided randomly into two groups, matched based on the assertiveness score and residence place.

Training: During the training phase, the experimental group received assertiveness training. The training period's duration was five weeks comprising two sessions per week, and each session took 45 minutes.

Post-test: In the post-test, which was administered on the 7th day after the last training session, both groups responded to all measures, i.e., assertiveness, and psychological well-being once more.

A description of the training program is as follows:

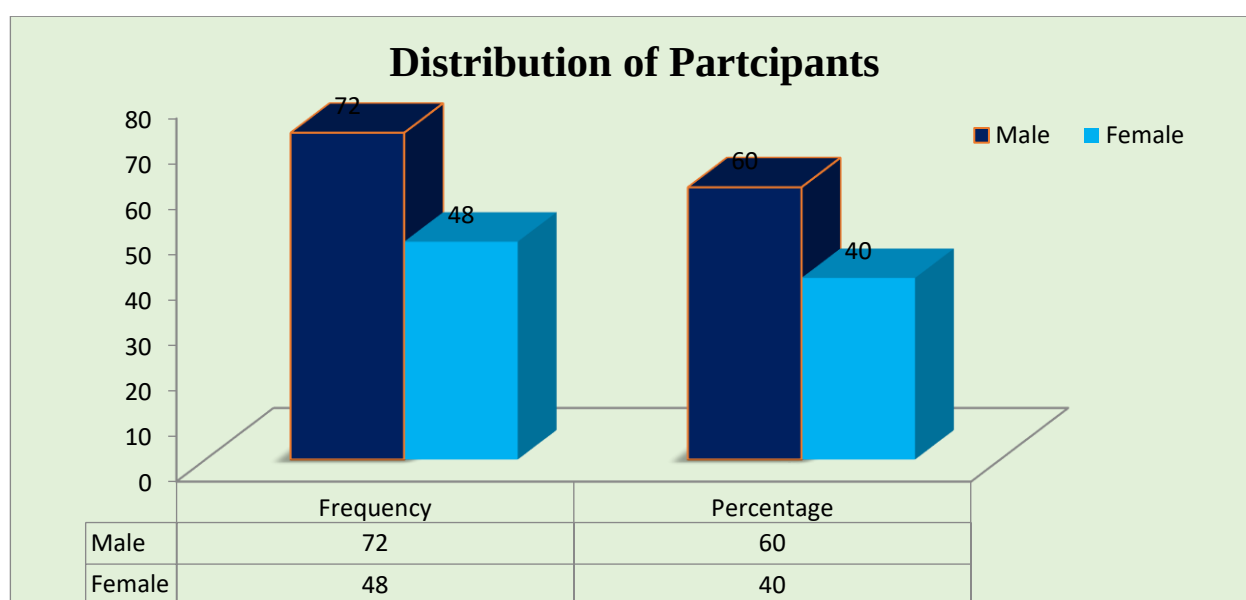
Before starting the training, each session's content was developed according to the needs of the group. The training started in October, and the post-test was taken after one week of training completion in May 2024.

Results

The present study's primary objective was to investigate the effect of assertiveness training on adolescents' assertiveness, and psychological well-being. In this study, the obtained data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 26). Descriptive analysis (Mean, Standard Deviation) and Independent sample t-test were used to evaluate the data.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of participants with respect to their Gender

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	72	60
Female	48	40

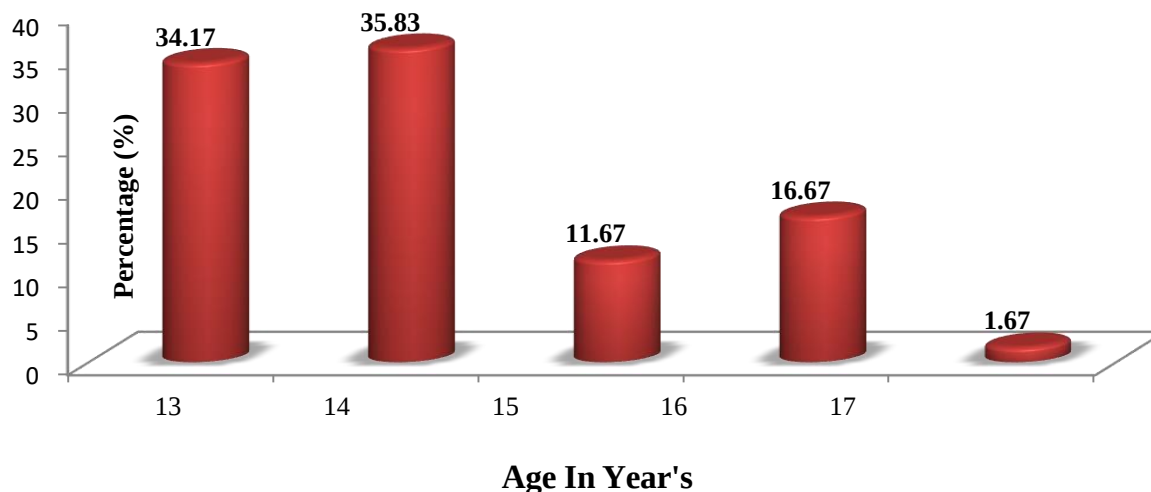


Graph No. 1

Table No.1 and graph No. 1 deals with the frequency and percentage of participants with regard to their gender. During the analysis it is found that the percentage of male participants is higher than female participants, i.e., 60% of males and 40% of females. Here the fact is quite clear that male participants dominate this study.

Table 2. Mean, SD, frequency, and percentage distribution of participants with respect to their Age

Age in Year's	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D	Min.	Max.
13	41	34.17	14.15	1.12	13	14
14	43	35.83				
15	14	11.67				
16	20	16.67				
17	2	1.67				

Graph No. 2

The above table No.2 and graph No.2 displays the information about the frequency, Mean, and SD, of participants. The participants mean age were ($M = 14.15$) and ($SD = 1.12$). The above table also reveals that the majority of the participants, 43 (35.83%) were in the age group of 14 years, 41 (34.17%) were in the age group of 13 years, 14 (11.67%) were in the age group of 15 years, 20 (16.67%) were in the age group of 16 years, and 2 (1.67%) were in the age group of 17 years.

Table 11 Independent sample t-test results of Psychological well-being with their dimensions for the experimental and control group

Pre-test					Post-test			
Variable	Group	N	M	SD	M	SD	t' Value	Significance
Autonomy	Experimental	60	24.98	6.11	25.96	4.23	1.02	NS
	Control	60	25.23	3.85	25.11	4.52	0.152	NS
Environment mastery	Experimental	60	26.63	4.56	26.93	5.17	0.337	NS
	Control	60	26.4	6.96	26.78	5.64	0.331	NS
Personal Growth	Experimental	60	26.98	5.21	27.35	4.77	0.401	NS
	Control	60	27.08	4.81	26.46	5.07	0.683	NS
Positive relations	Experimental	60	27.25	4.97	27.68	6.75	0.4	NS
	Control	60	26.4	5.82	26.68	5.48	0.274	NS
Purpose in life	Experimental	60	27.4	5.39	27.65	6.68	0.226	NS
	Control	60	28.03	4.94	26.71	6.2	1.28	NS
Self-acceptance	Experimental	60	25.86	4.86	28.71	6.6	2.69	$P < 0.05$
	Control	60	25.55	5.34	24.45	4.6	1.2	NS
Overall wellbeing	Experimental	60	160.63	17.15	161.36	27.89	0.173	NS
	Control	60	159.43	17.16	154.41	27.98	1.18	NS

As seen in Table 11, the mean of pre-test scores for the above mentioned dimensions of psychological well-being in the experimental group are 24.98, 26.63, 26.98, 27.25, 27.40, 25.86, and 160.63 and in the control group are 25.23, 26.40, 27.08, 26.40, 28.03, 25.55 and 159.43 respectively. The mean of post-test scores for the experimental group are 25.96, 26.93, 27.35, 27.68, 27.65, 28.71, and 161.36 and in the control group are 25.11, 26.78, 26.46, 26.68, 26.71, 24.45, and 154.41. The above results confirmed no significant effect of assertiveness training on the overall well-being and other dimensions except self-acceptance.

Discussion

The present study was undertaken to evaluate the effect of assertiveness training (AT) on psychological well-being of adolescents'. The present study is among the very few studies on assertiveness training conducted on adolescents. The findings revealed that there was no significant effect of assertiveness training on psychological well-being before and after the intervention. The assertiveness training is always considered better than other interventions, as it led to success and minimized the factors that decrease self-achievement and thus enhanced psychological well-being (Gumusgul et al., 2014). But our study evinced no significant effect on psychological well-being except one dimension, i.e., self-acceptance. The findings are contrary to the previous studies (Paezyet al., 2010; Shayan, 2012; Gilaninia, 2012; Qadir, & Sugumar, 2015; Hojjat et al., 2016), which reported a significant effect of AT on psychological well-being. Interestingly, the findings revealed a significant difference in self-acceptance after the intervention. The findings are supported by (Carlson, 1976) that AT is significant in increasing self-acceptance.

Justifying the above-obtained results can be speculated that such experiences would require greater time and intensity for students in this study to increase overall well-being. The five-week training could affect assertiveness, self-esteem, but it may not be long enough to increase the participant's overall well-being. Hence it proved that attaining psychological well-being spontaneously is a myth. It is evident from the obtained results that psychological well-being is a continuous process of development, so it needs sufficient time to apply the different skills they have learned. Several researchers suggested (Combes, 1995; Kashani, & Bayat, 2011; Jalali, & Nazari, 2009; Parray, & Kumar, 2019) that training would be effective when conducted for a reasonable long period with small groups.

Suggestions for future researchers

The present study is a modest attempt in the field of assertiveness training. Its findings may provide a rich background for future researchers in various forms. The following suggestions were concluded that would help future researchers. The study may be conducted on a larger sample of students taking more students in the experimental group. A similar study may also be conducted on different students of college and universities. Another study could be conducted on other different variables. The Government should plan strategies on assertiveness training for high school students.

Limitations of the study

Perhaps no study is flawless. Likewise, the present study also has a certain limitation, which is described as follows: First, the assertiveness training was administered at late hours of school time. It was probably the time when the students were already tired and keen to go home back. Second, all the participants were taken only from urban area, which might not be the true representative of other adolescents living in rural areas. Therefore, further research samples from rural backgrounds may be included for broader generalization. Third, students were taken only from private schools that significantly differ from government school students in certain facilities and disciplines. Further research may also include students from different government schools.

Fourth the training duration was only five weeks, and follow-up was not be made possible. A more comprehensive long-range intervention should be planned for future research. Fifth, the present study is limited to the students of only two. The sample could be taken from different schools. Sixth the study has been conducted on the students of secondary and higher secondary. Seventh, the sample was only 120 students in both the experimental and control groups. Although the sample size was adequate, repeating this study with a larger sample size may strengthen the findings. Lastly, the study would be more effective if the students could have been selected from different districts.

Conclusion

The divergence in findings may be attributed to the duration and intensity of the intervention. The five-week training program may have been sufficient to influence assertiveness and self-esteem but insufficient to induce significant changes in overall well-being. These results highlight the complexity and gradual nature of achieving psychological well-being, suggesting that longer and more intensive interventions are necessary. While assertiveness training can positively impact self-acceptance, broader psychological well-being requires sustained efforts and a more extended application of learned skills. Future interventions should consider

longer durations and smaller group settings to enhance effectiveness. This study underscores the importance of understanding individual variations and the need for culturally and contextually tailored approaches in promoting adolescent psychological well-being.

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