

## Assertiveness of Higher Secondary Students

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### Abstract:

This research examines the level of assertiveness in higher secondary school students, focusing on how personality traits, socio-economic factors, and educational settings influence their assertive behaviour. Assertiveness is an essential social skill that allows individuals to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs openly, honestly, and respectfully. The study aims to offer insights that can help create targeted interventions to encourage assertiveness and support student's personal and academic development while identifying the impact of individual and environmental factors on assertive behaviour. The research is structured as a descriptive study. A stratified random sample of 1,200 students, including both boys and girls, was selected from government, government-aided, and private schools. This sample consists of students from 22 higher secondary schools in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. These results indicate that focused interventions, such as assertiveness training programs and a nurturing school environment, are essential for developing effective communication skills and empowering students to handle social and academic challenges effectively.

**Keywords:** *Assertiveness, Educational Environment, School environment, Positive communication skills, Academic challenges, Assertive behaviour, Student growth.*

### Introduction

Assertiveness is an essential interpersonal skill that significantly impacts students' social, emotional, and academic growth, particularly during their higher secondary years. It allows students to articulate their needs, voice their opinions, and advocate for themselves across various contexts. In an educational environment, assertiveness fosters effective class participation, maintains healthy relationships among peers, and contributes to overall academic achievement. However, assertiveness levels can differ greatly among students, shaped by factors like personality traits, family upbringing, cultural backgrounds, and their living environment. The higher secondary school period is crucial for self-exploration and personal development, making it an opportune moment to examine how students express themselves and navigate social interactions. Nevertheless, the way assertiveness is demonstrated often varies between boys and girls due to societal expectations, gender roles, and different educational experiences. Gaining an understanding of how assertiveness appears across genders can provide critical insights into the distinct challenges and advantages that each group faces in self-expression. By assessing the assertiveness levels of boys and girls, this study aims to identify potential disparities and offer suggestions for enhancing assertiveness in both genders. The results are anticipated to reveal methods for nurturing assertiveness in students, improving their communication skills, and promoting personal growth, enabling parents and policymakers to create more inclusive and supportive approaches to developing assertive, confident, and self-sufficient individuals. In an era where robust communication skills are crucial for success, fostering assertiveness in young learners can cultivate confident, autonomous individuals ready to address academic challenges and personal life situations effectively.

### Review of Related Literature

Name and year	Study and Participants	Findings Regarding Assertiveness
Galata Sitota. (2018)	A study was conducted on Assertiveness and Academic Achievement Motivation among Adolescent Students in Selected Secondary Schools of Harari Peoples	Adolescents from Harari Peoples Regional State involved in this study exhibited low levels of assertiveness; male adolescents demonstrated higher assertiveness than their female

	Regional State, Ethiopia. The sample included 332 students (145 males and 187 females).	counterparts. A statistically significant positive correlation was found between assertiveness and academic achievement motivation. Additionally, there was a statistically significant positive connection between parental educational attainment and assertiveness. In contrast to assertiveness and parental educational status, gender appeared to have less impact on explaining academic achievement motivation among adolescents.
<b>Lubna Kumar &amp; Kruti Rathi. (2020)</b>	A correlational study was conducted to examine assertiveness and self-esteem among adolescents. The study randomly selected 100 adolescents aged 16 to 18 years, consisting of 50 boys and 50 girls from schools in Nagpur, India.	The results indicated that assertiveness training notably enhanced self-esteem in the experimental group, while there was no significant impact of assertiveness training on the academic performance of students within the experimental group.
<b>Parry &amp; Waqar Maqbool (2020)</b>	This study investigated the effects of assertiveness training on self-esteem, stress, psychological well-being, and academic performance among adolescents. The sample included 359 students, both male and female, from Army Public School and Vatsalya Senior Secondary School in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh.	The findings of this research confirmed that assertiveness training significantly improved self-esteem in the experimental group, but it did not have a significant effect on enhancing academic achievement among students in that group.

### Need and Significance of the Study

Assessing assertiveness among higher secondary students is particularly important in today's context, as effective communication skills are essential for achieving success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Proficient communication enables students to articulate their thoughts clearly in educational and social environments, promoting active involvement in classroom discussions, better interactions with peers, and healthier relationships with educators and family members. In a diverse and multicultural society, comprehending assertiveness can aid in identifying the obstacles that various groups, such as those based on gender or socio-economic status, may confront when attempting to express themselves confidently. Since assertiveness differs among individuals, recognizing these variations is vital for creating targeted educational strategies that foster inclusivity and cater to the diverse needs of students.

The importance of nurturing assertiveness goes beyond personal growth. By promoting assertiveness, educational institutions can foster a setting in which students feel empowered to share their views, advocate for themselves, and respectfully dissent from others, all of which are critical for equipping them for future challenges in higher education and the workforce. Furthermore, assertiveness training can enhance mental health by alleviating stress and improving coping mechanisms. Thus, investigating assertiveness among higher secondary students is essential for formulating strategies that encourage effective communication, emotional resilience, and personal empowerment.

### Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the level of assertiveness among higher secondary school students considering the differences in gender and region.
- To analyze the level of assertiveness and its components, namely Reluctant Social Desirability, Assertive Behaviour, Non-Assertive Behaviour, Communication, and Stress, among higher secondary school students in relation to gender and region.

### Hypotheses of the Study

- H1. There is no significant difference in assertiveness among higher secondary school students based on gender differences.
- H2. There is no significant difference in assertiveness among higher secondary school students due to regional differences.
- H3. There is no significant difference in the dimensions of assertiveness among higher secondary school students based on gender.

- H4. There is no significant difference in the dimensions of assertiveness among higher secondary school students based on region.

### Method and Procedure

This research aimed to examine Assertiveness among students in higher secondary schools. Therefore, a descriptive research method was employed for this study.

### Sample

The sample for the research was obtained from 22 schools in district of Chennai, Tamil Nadu, including government, government-aided and private schools. The total sample included 1200 students, comprised of 589 boys and 611 girls. Participants were selected by stratified random sampling approach.

### Tools Used for the Study

To develop the assertiveness tool, the researcher referred to various tools such as i) *Assertiveness inventories* developed by Nevid & Rathus (1972), ii) *The Assertiveness Tool* developed by Tanseem Naqvi (1988), and iii) *The Assertive Inventory* developed by Alberti & Emmons (1974). With these references, the investigator constructs and validates the tool with the help and guidance of the research supervisor.

### Analysis and Interpretation

H1. There is no significant difference in assertiveness among higher secondary school students owing to the difference in gender.

**Table 1**

**The critical ratio of the gender-based difference in assertiveness among Higher secondary school Students**

Variable	Category	Sub-Category	N	Mean	SD	t- value	df	Level of Sig (P)
Assertiveness	Gender	Boys	589	140.56	12.43	4.193	1198	0.000 S
		Girls	611	143.33	10.42			

### Interpretation

The data presented in **Table 1** indicates that boys have a mean score of 140.56 with a standard deviation of 12.43, while girls have a mean score of 143.33 with a standard deviation of 10.42 when assessing assertiveness in relation to gender among higher secondary school students. This suggests that girls demonstrate greater assertiveness than boys. The P value for gender is 0.000, which is lower than 0.01 at a 99% confidence level with 1198 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the hypothesis positing no significant difference in assertiveness based on gender is rejected. Consequently, we can conclude that there is a significant difference in assertiveness among higher secondary school students due to gender differences.

H2. There is no significant difference in assertiveness among higher secondary school students owing to the difference in region.

**Table 2**

**The critical ratio of assertiveness differences among higher secondary school students based on region.**

Variable	Category	Sub-Category	N	Mean	SD	t- value	df	Level of Sig (P)
Assertiveness	Region	Urban	781	141.32	11.52	2.686	1198	0.007 S
		Rural	419	143.19	11.47			

### Interpretation

The data presented in **Table 2** indicate that the mean score for urban students is 141.32 with a standard deviation of 11.52, while the mean score for rural students is 143.19 with a standard deviation of 11.47 regarding assertiveness among higher secondary school students. This suggests that rural students display greater assertiveness than urban counter parts. The P value for the region is 0.007, which is lower than the 0.01 threshold at a 99% confidence level and with 1198 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in assertiveness based on region is not supported. Consequently, we conclude that there is a significant difference in assertiveness among higher secondary school students due to regional differences.

**H3.** There is no significant difference in the dimensions of assertiveness among higher secondary school students owing to gender.

**Table 3**

**The critical ratio dimensions of assertiveness differences among higher secondary school students based on Gender.**

Dimensions	Category	N	Mean	SD	t- value	df	Level of sig (P)
Reluctant Social Desirability	Boys	588	33.87	4.396	4.366	1198	0.000 S
	Girls	611	34.93	4.028			
Assertive Behaviour	Boys	588	35.35	4.692	3.509		0.000 S
	Girls	611	36.27	4.357			
Non-Assertive Behaviour	Boys	588	35.78	4.375	0.209		0.834 NS
	Girls	611	35.83	3.973			
Communication and Stress	Boys	588	35.56	4.558	3.029		0.003 S
	Girls	611	36.30	3.943			

**Interpretation**

The data in **Table 3** indicates that the “P” value for dimensions such as reluctant social desirability, assertive behaviour, communication and stress is below 0.01 at a 99% confidence level with 1198 degrees of freedom. Consequently, the hypothesis positing that there is no significant difference in assertiveness among higher secondary school students based on gender is rejected. This leads to the conclusion that significant differences exist between male and female students in the areas of reluctant social desirability, assertive behaviour, communication and stress. On the other hand, the “P” value for the dimension of non-assertive behaviour is above 0.01 at a 99% confidence level with 1198 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the hypothesis suggesting there is no substantial difference in assertiveness among higher secondary school students based on gender is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between male and female students in the area of non-assertive behaviour.

**H4.** There is no significant difference in the dimensions of assertiveness among higher secondary school students owing to the region.

**Table 4**

**The critical ratio dimensions of assertiveness differences among higher secondary school students based on Region.**

Category	Sub-Category	N	Mean	SD	t- value	df	Level of sig (P)
Reluctant Social Desirability	Rural	419	35.16	4.257	4.520	1198	0.000 S
	Urban	781	34.01	4.185			
Assertive Behaviour	Rural	419	35.96	4.940	0.778		0.437 NS
	Urban	781	35.75	4.321			
Non-Assertive Behaviour	Rural	419	35.66	4.117	0.885		0.376 NS
	Urban	781	35.88	4.203			
Communication and Stress	Rural	419	36.41	3.830	2.824		0.005 S
	Urban	781	35.68	4.470			

**Interpretation**

The data presented in **Table 4** indicates that the "P" value for the dimensions of reluctant social desirability, communication and stress is less than 0.01 which is significant at the 99% level, with 1198 degrees of freedom. Consequently, the hypothesis suggesting that there is no significant difference in assertiveness among higher secondary

school students based on their region is rejected. This leads to the conclusion that there is significant differences between rural and urban students in the dimensions of reluctant social desirability, communication, and stress. In contrast, the "P" values for assertive behaviour and non-assertive behaviour are greater than 0.01 at the 99% level, with the same degree of freedom. Therefore, the hypothesis indicating no significant difference in assertiveness among higher secondary students based on region is accepted. It can be concluded that there is no significant difference between rural and urban students concerning assertive behaviour and non-assertive behaviour.

### **Finding of the Study**

#### **Gender**

After examining the data in **Table 1**, the hypothesis is rejected, revealing a significant difference in Assertiveness among higher secondary school students based on Gender. This suggests that Girls exhibit greater Assertiveness than Boys.

The hypothesis is rejected after analyzing the data in **Table 3**, which demonstrates a significant difference in Assertiveness among higher secondary school students based on Gender. Hence, it can be concluded that notable differences exist between Boys and Girls across the dimensions of Assertiveness including Reluctant Social Desirability, Assertive Behaviour, Communication and Stress.

The hypothesis is accepted following the data review in **Table 3**, which shows no significant difference in Assertiveness among higher secondary school students based on Gender. This implies that there is no significant difference between Boys and Girls in the dimension of Non-Assertive Behaviour.

#### **Region**

After interpreting data from **Table 2**, the hypothesis is rejected, indicating a significant difference in Assertiveness among higher secondary school students based on Region. The findings suggest that Rural students demonstrate greater Assertiveness than Urban students.

The hypothesis is rejected after analyzing the data in **Table 4**, which reveals a significant difference in Assertiveness among higher secondary students due to Region. This infers that major differences exist between Rural and Urban students in the aspects of Reluctant Social Desirability, Communication, and Stress.

The hypothesis is accepted after interpreting data from **Table 4**, which indicates no significant difference in Assertiveness among higher secondary school students based on Region. Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between Rural and Urban students concerning Assertive Behaviour and Non-Assertive Behaviour.

### **Educational Implications of the Study**

From the findings of this study, several educational implications arise:

- **Sensitive Assertiveness Training:** Introduce programs that promote equal assertiveness development for both boys and girls, focusing on empowering girls to confidently share their opinions while helping boys balance assertiveness with empathy.
- **Fostering Assertiveness in Rural Areas:** Rural students display higher levels of assertiveness, likely due to their close-knit communities and straightforward communication styles. Utilize the direct communication approach of rural students by facilitating structured classroom discussions, debates, and role-playing activities to enhance their assertiveness in formal situations.
- **Addressing Assertiveness in Urban Students:** Urban students may have limited exposure to direct communication styles, resulting in lower assertiveness compared to their rural counterparts. In urban educational settings, aim to provide opportunities for more reserved students to practice assertiveness through group activities and interactive exercises.

**Creating Gender-Inclusive Learning Environments:** Gender norms influence the expression of assertiveness, with boys typically encouraged to be assertive while girls may feel societal pressure to be more passive. Establish classroom environments that challenge conventional gender norms and promote assertive behavior in all students, regardless of 48(5), 458–466.

- **Henders gender.**
- **Developing Tailored Assertiveness Programs for Rural and Urban Students:** Rural students may require guidance on moderating their assertiveness in formal contexts, whereas urban students might benefit from building confidence in self-expression. Create region-specific programs that address the distinct needs of rural and urban students, ensuring that assertiveness training is applicable and contextually relevant.
- **Teacher Training on Regional and Gender Differences:** Educators must understand the impact of regional and gender differences on student assertiveness. Provide professional development for teachers to equip them with strategies to encourage assertiveness while being aware of these differences.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

- The study focused solely on higher secondary students, though it could be expanded to other educational levels.

- Data for this study was limited to Chennai. To generalize findings, similar research could be conducted in other cities or states.

### Conclusion

The research on assertiveness of higher secondary students emphasizes the necessity of fostering self-expression and confidence in both academic and social environments. Through this study, we aimed to support their overall development, enabling them to tackle challenges effectively. Promoting assertiveness in students necessitates specific strategies that consider gender and regional influences. Educational initiatives should empower both boys and girls equally while addressing the particular needs of students from urban and rural settings to improve their confidence and communication skills.

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