

The Role of Parenting Style and Gender on Assertiveness among Undergraduate Students in Bahir Dar University

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Abstract: This study was design to examine the role of parenting style and gender on assertiveness among students at Bahir Dar University. To meet this objective, the researcher drew 100 out of 379 student populations who were pursuing their study in 2007 E.C. 59 male and 41 female students selected as the sample participants of the study using stratified random sampling technique. The data were analyzed through mean, standard deviation, and three- way- ANOVA. The result revealed that there is no significant mean difference that observed between students' level of assertiveness in second and third year students. The study also revealed that there is no significant difference in students' assertiveness and sex. In addition, the study revealed that there is no statistical mean difference in assertiveness scores across four parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive/ indulgent and neglectful). The study suggested that it is advisable to aware Parents of students on how to improve their children assertiveness and socially responsible behavior. This can be conducted by media channel, Non-governmental organizations so as to bring more advanced assertiveness on each generation. This should be consolidated by (i.e. teachers, principals, supervisors, union of parents – students- and teachers, and guidance and counseling officers, instructors and other concerned bodies in and out of university.

Keywords: Assertiveness, Gender, parenting style, and Undergraduate students

INTRODUCTION

Assertiveness is multidimensional in the sense that the way of communication in which one express oneself in a direct and honest manner in interpersonal situations, while simultaneously respecting the right and the dignity of others. Assertiveness reflects the knowing of our needs, rights, wants and goals and asking for them to be met while acknowledging the needs, rights, wants and goals of the other person [1]. From this we can understand that assertiveness may have its own effect to have disciplined generation who understand and acknowledging the needs, rights, wants and goals of the other person.

Psychologically, assertiveness has its own conceptual definition. In relation to this, Glandding (1988) cited in Moore et al [2] stated, the psychological concept of assertiveness provokes a great deal of interest in the social and counseling psychological field mainly because of its multi-dimensional definitions that covers the three major tents of human expression: behavior, cognition and affect. Again Glandding said behaviorally, assertiveness is exercised when an individual is capable of freely expressing his or her emotions, is able to define his or her purposes or goals in general and specific situations, and can establish rewarding and fulfilling interpersonal relationships. In addition he states that affectively and cognitively assertive people are capable of expressing and reacting

to positive and negative emotion without undue anxiety or aggression.

Assertiveness has importance in increasing self-confidence, openness, self esteem, judgment, conscious and other rational abilities. Aruna Ap (n.d) expresses that when we communicate assertively our self-confidence increases and we stand in a better chance of what we need. Aruna. Ap (n.d) further indicated that being assertive makes people understand, know exactly where they are, open to receiving feedback, have relationships based on reality rather than illusion, feel better for expressing their feelings, have fewer situations that are un resolved and even if we don't resolve a situation, we feel better for having tried.

To the contrary, some scholars argued that rather than listing down the characteristics of assertiveness; they prefer to discuss the importance of assertiveness in relation to its components. For example, Alberti and Emmons [3] indicated that the key components of assertiveness are: knowing what you want and need, being able to say clearly what you want and need, and believing you are worthwhile and value of trying again to take care of your needs. So assertiveness is important to knowing the needs, abilities of expression and valuing oneself and others critically.

Assertiveness can be reflected in different dimensions. Concerning these Cattle cited in Welder, [4] maintained that assertiveness exists at three continuum dimensions. These include positively assertive, non-assertive, and negative. Cattle further indicated that positively assertive individuals are able to express their emotions, opinions, attain specific goals, and experience peace and joy in their daily lives. To the contrary, non-assertive individuals tend to be highly anxious about their interpersonal interactions, value themselves less than others and fail to get logical goals. On the other hand, negatively assertive individuals tend to set socially undesirable goals and trample on the rights, needs, and feeling of others despite their high anxiety.

In examining the role of parenting style and gender, it is necessary to look at the factors that affect assertiveness. According Rodriques, *et al.* [5] cited in Moore, *et al.* [2], there are factors that influence assertiveness. Among these culture, age, sex, birth order, ethnic identity, family occupation, and education are worth mentioning. Results on multiple regression analysis on measuring the assertiveness of low income, culturally diverse women indicated that the most wide spread effect for assertiveness are culture, ethnic identity, age and sex. Pederson [6] cited in Yoshioka [7] indicated that for the most part women and members of minority groups were minimally represented. As the results of question then arise of the extent to which the assertive behaviors of women and minorities will be systematically misjudged due to their linguistic and /or culture influences. From this we can understand that assertiveness has a great impact on women's life.

Gender has its own influence on assertiveness. Women are more compassionate than men, more easily moved to tears, at the same time are more jealous, more querulous, more strike than men. Furthermore, they are more prone to feeling of disheartened and less hopeful than men, more void of shame or self-respect, more deceptive, and of more retentive memory. To the contrary, males are expected to be objective, independent, assertive, logical and competitive according to Eagly and Wood, [8] cited in Ahmad *et al.* [9]. Here we can understand that, being a female or being a male has its own role for asserting or reasonably arguing.

Parenting style may be the other factor that affects assertiveness. Baumrind [25, 26] cited in Heaven and Ciarroach [10], suggested that parenting styles can be described as permissive, authoritative, authoritarian – a conception that is still reflected in some recent measure of parental styles. For example, Ellis [11] indicated that children from Authoritative parenting styles were found to be more mature, independent, pro-social, active, achievement oriented

and acceptance of adolescents need than children of permissive parents scored lowest on measure of self-reliance, self-control, and competence.

Similarly, recent findings show that positive effects of authoritative parenting are amplified when both parents engage in an authoritative parenting style. Findings on the consequences of parenting on adolescent outcomes show that the authoritative parenting style is associated with the lowest levels of depression, increasing the demands for independent decision-making and the highest levels of school commitment among adolescents [12]. Furthermore, Tilahun [13] said students from authoritative families have shown the most positive level of psychological adjustments and students from neglected families have had negative level of psychosocial adjustments. Therefore, it can be thought that students who have high level of psychosocial adjustment could have high level of assertiveness.

The role of assertiveness skill is not only important to lower grade students but for college students. Now, special attention was paid to the formation of assertive skills in upper grade and college students, as it was believed that this age was conducive to build a vision, perseverance, self-reliance and initiative, qualities that were objective prerequisite for development of assertiveness.

The present researcher could not find any research done regarding the role of parenting style and gender on assertiveness among students to be cited in the Ethiopian context particularly in Bahir Dar University. As the result, one can hardly illustrate clear pattern of the role of parenting style and gender on assertiveness across some demographic variables such as sex and year level. Again it is the firm belief of the researcher that most studies were made in foreign contexts which is worth to investigate the role of parenting style and gender on assertiveness.

Therefore, the researcher thought that investigating the role of parenting style and gender on assertiveness with different demographic variables such as sex and year level is significant. So investigating the role of parenting style and gender on assertiveness among undergraduate students was guided by the following basic research questions.

- Are there any differences in year level of students' assertiveness in the faculty of education and behavioral science 2nd and 3rd year under graduate students in Bahir Dar University?
- Are there differences in assertiveness between male and female students?
- Are there differences in assertiveness among students who experienced different parenting styles?

General objective of this study was to investigate the role of parenting style & gender on assertiveness among under graduate students in Bahir Dar University. Accordingly, this study focused on the following specific objectives that indicate the direction of the research work.

- To assess the differences in year level of students' assertiveness in the faculty of education and behavioral science 2nd and 3rd year under graduate students in Bahir dar university.
- To identify the differences in assertiveness between male and female students in the faculty of education and behavioral sciences in Bahir Dar University.
- To examine differences in assertiveness among students who experienced different parenting style in the faculty of education and behavioral sciences under graduate students in Bahir Dar University.
- To investigate whether year level contributes for the development of assertive behavior among students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main purpose of the study was to examine the role of parenting style and gender on assertiveness among undergraduate students. Furthermore, the present study aimed at investigating whether there was difference in assertiveness of students across parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglected), sex and year level. In order to arrive at the

stated purpose, Quantitative research design was employed.

Sources of Data

The accessible population of the present study was second and third year students in the faculty of education and behavioral sciences undergraduate students in Bahir Dar University who have been attending their education in the academic year of 2007 E.C.

Sampling Techniques

The sampling frame of the study was the list of all second and third year students in the faculty of education and behavioral sciences undergraduate program in Bahir Dar University. To select the sample, participants were stratified based on their year level and sex. Since year level and sex were included in the study as variables, selecting proportional samples based on the two variables were pertinent for this study. As the result, participants were first stratified based on their year level and sex. There were six streams in faculty of education and behavioral Science. These are Special need inclusive education, Teacher education and Curriculum studies, adult education and community development, School psychology, Educational planning and management and general Psychology. By using simple random sampling (lottery method), from the whole population 100 students were selected as a sample. Following that, the numbers of participants who were selected from each stream was determined by proportional allocation.

Table-1: Summary of the Study Population and Participants by Year Level and Sex

Year level	Population			Sample		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2 nd	96	82	178	26	21	47
3 rd	125	76	201	33	20	53
Total	221	158	379	59	41	100

Data Gathering Instruments

In gathering data for the present study questionnaire was employed. The questionnaire consisted of parenting style and assertiveness scales.

The parenting style questionnaire has four sub-parts namely authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglected). Assertiveness scale is a 50 items self-reported inventory that measures the levels of assertiveness [14]. These assertiveness scale items ask

participants how often they behave in a specific way in a typical situation involving a variety of contexts described.

Items which have negative correlation to the most of sub scales as well as across the total items were rephrased, omitted and modified to fit purpose of the study according to the following summary reliability index.

Table-2: Summary of reliability of index of instruments for pilot study

Scale	No .of items	Cronbach alpha	Remarks	Pilot study result of Cronbach
Authoritative	8	.66	2 items modified	.633
Authoritarian	9	.75	1 items deleted	.756
Permissive	9	.70	2 items deleted	.704
Neglected	7	.92		.925
Assertiveness	40	.81	10 items deleted 6 items modified	.810

Data Gathering Procedures

After the questionnaire was developed and made ready for administration, the researcher has received cooperation enquiry letter from graduate program coordination office. Later on, the researcher secured their consent and collaboration which was crucial for the success of the study. Subsequently, the researcher contracted two assistances whose first degree is in psychology for collecting data and gave them a short orientation on how to do the task. Thereafter, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants and asked their consent. They were ensured that participation was voluntary. Then participants were kindly asked to seat in a standard examination seating arrangement. Following that, instructions were given both orally during administration of the questionnaire and in written form on the questionnaire. Respondents were encouraged to provide authentic response and informed to feel free to express any doubt on the items when they fill in. The total 100 sample students (59 males and 41 females) respond to the questionnaire appropriately and fill the questionnaire completely.

Techniques of Data Analysis

In this study to analyze the collected data, different statistical techniques were employed. After the

data were collected, preliminary process of like sorting, coding and tabulating of items made, and then descriptive statistical was used. Furthermore, mean and standard deviation were used to measure the dominant type of parenting style that participants were reared under. Three- way- ANOVA was used to examine the role of parenting style and gender on assertiveness. Specifically, three- way- ANOVA was used to investigate the difference in year level of students' assertiveness. Analyses of three- way- ANOVA inspected to examine assertiveness difference and between males and females students. Finally, three-way- ANOVA was used to investigate the differences in assertiveness across different parenting styles. For the purpose of data analysis SPSS 20.0 version was used.

RESULTS

Difference in year level of students and assertiveness level

The first purpose of this study was to compare the difference in year level of students and assertiveness level. To see the difference in year level of students and assertiveness level, three- way- ANOVA was calculated and the results were presented in table 3 below.

Table-3: Summary of three ways ANOVA of assertiveness by year level, sex and parenting style

Source	Sub variable	Mean	SD	DF	Mean squares	Sum of squares	F	Sig.
Year level	Second	93.998	3.115	1	141.781	141.781	1.257	.265
	Third	93.242	2.945					
Sex	Male	91.742	3.288	1	303.657	303.657	2.692	.104
	Female	96.176	2.804					
Parenting style	Authoritative	97.546	1.184	3	125.574	376.721	1.113	.348
	Authoritarian	91.500	3.0908					
	Permissive	93.833	5.598					
	Neglecting	93.00	7.510					
Error				87	112.769	9813.264		

As indicated in table 3, the mean and Standard deviation differences of second and third year students was 93.998 and 93.242 and 3.115 and 2.945 respectively. Both the mean and SD of the group seems to be similar. However, by using F -test we can see that the level of the significance difference of the two groups.

Based on table 3, there was not found significance mean difference between second and third year University students in their level of assertiveness $f(df, 1) = 1.257, P > 0.05$). This indicates that the year level of students is not a factor that enhances or negatively affects the assertiveness of students.

Univariate Analysis of Assertiveness and Sex

Students' sex and its impact on assertiveness was the other theme of the present study. Accordingly, univariate analysis was employed to examine assertiveness scores and sex. The result of the analysis is appeared in the above table.

As shown in table 3, the results of descriptive statistics indicated that the mean and standard deviation scores obtained by male and female students are quite close.

As presented in table 3, the result of three-way- ANOVA indicated that assertiveness and sex main effect found to be not significant. This result indicated that there was no mean significant difference between male and female students in assertiveness scores.

Univariate Analysis of Parenting Style and Assertiveness

The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences in assertiveness across different parenting styles. To do this, three-way analysis of variance was conducted and the results presented in table 3.

As indicated in the table, the mean and standard deviation difference of four parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive/ indulgent and neglectful) and assertiveness scores. From this table, parenting style has not any impact on assertiveness.

Table-4: Presents Summary of ANOVA of Types of Parenting Style and Assertiveness

	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Between groups	312.673	3	104.224	.924	.433
Within groups	9813.264	87	112.796		
Total	10587.360	90			

As shown in table 4, there was no statistical significance means scores among parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive/ indulgent and neglectful) $F(104.224, 112.796)$. This indicates that there is no statistical mean difference in all parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive/ indulgent and neglectful) and assertiveness scores.

DISCUSSION

Difference in year level of students and assertiveness level

One of the objectives of the present study was to examine the difference in year level of students and assertiveness level. To determine the difference in students' level of assertiveness and year level, three-way ANOVA was computed.

The result indicated that there is no statistical difference in year level of students and assertiveness level $f(df= 1) = 1.257, p > 0.05$. From this it could be inferred that students' year level has no impact on assertiveness. This might be because of respondents have learnt the same courses, disciplines or departments since all of them are joined along the same faculty. The other factor of having averaged statistical mean and standard deviation difference in students' level of assertiveness and year level might be sharing and adaption of the same living environment at least for the past two years in their campus life.

Contrary to this finding, previous studies indicated that there was a significant difference in year level of students and assertiveness level [15] indicated that the lower graders have scored better in assertiveness scores than the upper graders. Similarly, Janriverdia *et al.* [16] they assured that senior students are typically under intense stress and tension throughout their school lives, due to stressors, including study conditions that damage the biological rhythm, competition at school, irregular nutrition, poor socioeconomic conditions, anxiety for the future (failure to find a job, with consequent unemployment),

and exams not related to school activities than fresh students). Therefore, it can be thought that as students' seniority increases their assertiveness level decreases. In contrary, according to Rodriquez [17] cited in young [18] found that older under graduated had higher scores on assertiveness than their younger counter parts.

These inconsistencies could be because of the minimum gap between second and third year students. Since age category of participants is under adolescents hence, both of them are grouped in one developmental stage, late adolescence.

Assertiveness Difference and Sex

The other purpose of the present study was to investigate the difference in assertiveness and sex. To do this, the univariate analysis of ANOVA was employed to compare the mean and standard deviation difference of assertiveness scores and sex. This result might be occurred due to the respondents are educated man power, and hence, they have conceptualized knowledge about the unnecessary of gender partiality. In addition, the presence of social interaction between male and female students through formal means (i.e. accomplishing group assignments and presentation together, taking tutorial mutually, participation in one - five network and attending all lecture classes together) and informally participating in different activities such as in extracurricular activities (youth, gender clubs and different associations), religious activities, lounge (Cafe) interaction, appreciating DSTV information together, participating in different talk show and parties, etc.

Again, all students have taken life skill training at the beginning of their university life so as to narrow the assertiveness gap among males and females students. Therefore, these factors probably led them to have an averaged mean difference between males and females students' and an approximately equal sd difference in assertiveness scores.

On the other hand, previous studies indicated both consistency and inconsistency between overall assertiveness and sex. Sigler [19] cited in Young [18] found significant gender difference in assertiveness, with male undergraduates reporting higher levels of assertiveness communication than their females' counter parts. In contrary, they found that females were actually more likely to perform certain assertive behaviors than males (initiating interaction, giving negative feedback, complimenting others, and admitting personal deficiencies [20]).

As the findings indicate that there is no a statistical significance mean difference between males and females students in assertiveness scores. Similarly, it is difficult to give a reliable explanation whether males or females level of assertiveness significant or not significant. Such inconsistency found between the present and previous study depending on the present data. One explanation could be the difference between the present and previous studies is socio-cultural difference between participants. Also from the researchers point of view it may be the reason why this new findings occur is for both males and females, there has equal efforts (fertile conditions) that promote assertiveness and civic and ethical education course play a great role for students to become an assertive.

Assertiveness Difference in Different Parenting Styles

One of the purposes of the present study was to investigate the difference in assertiveness across different parenting styles. To do this, three way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed.

The findings of the present study manifested that the mean and standard deviation differences of all parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive/ indulgent and neglectful) and assertiveness scores was very closer or similar. From this, it was understood that there was no significant mean difference in assertiveness scores across all parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive/ indulgent and neglectful). This might be, although the respondents came from each pole of the nation, their parenting styles and assertiveness score equally shaped by the progress of democratic types of parenting style which gave equal chances for children to participate in family issues, decisions, concerns and activities.

On the other hand, the respondents probably didn't consider their earlier child rearing practices in the answer; instead they simply included their current appearance and academic conception. Therefore, all of these factors might contribute to get non significance mean difference in assertiveness scores across all parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive/ indulgent and neglectful).

In contrary with this finding, previous findings indicated that there was assertiveness difference across all parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive/ indulgent and neglectful). For example, Ellis [11] indicated that children from Authoritative parenting styles were found to be more mature, independent, pro-social, active, achievement oriented and acceptance of adolescents need than children of permissive parents scored lowest on measure of self-reliance, self-control, and competence. Similarly, Hoskins [12] indicated that authoritative parenting style is associated with the lowest levels of depression, increasing the demands for independent decision-making and the highest levels of school commitment among adolescents than adolescents from permissive families. Therefore, it can be thought that students who have high level of psychosocial adjustment could have high level of assertiveness. In contrast, authoritarian parenting is associated with harsh, restrictive, and psychological methods of control that do not foster psychological autonomy and having an external locus of control Barber [23,24]; Steinberg, [22] cited in Buri, [21].

CONCLUSIONS

Depending on the findings of the study, the following concluding notes were made:

1. There is no mean and standard deviation difference in year level of students and assertiveness level. Therefore, for both second and third males and females there has to equal efforts (fertile conditions) that promote assertiveness. This might be because of respondents has learnt the same courses, disciplines or departments since all of them are joined along the same faculty.
2. There is no statistical significance mean difference between males and females students in assertiveness scores. This implies that the presence of social interaction between male and female students' through formal means (i.e. accomplishing group assignments and presentation together, taking tutorial mutually, participation in one - five network and attending all lecture classes together) and informally participating in different activities such as in extracurricular activities (youth, gender clubs and associations), religious activities, lounge (Cafe) interaction, appreciating DSTV information together, participating in different talk show and parties, etc.
3. Finally, the other findings revealed that there is no statistical significance mean difference in assertiveness scores across four parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive/ indulgent and neglectful). This might be, although the respondents came from each pole of the nation, their parenting styles and assertiveness score equally shaped by the progress of democratic types

of parenting style which gave equal chances for children to participate in family issues, decisions, concerns and activities. Note that the four parenting styles is nothing to promote assertiveness.

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