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Relationships between assertiveness and the power of saying no with mental health among undergraduate student

Fariba Pourjali*, Maryam Zarnaghashb

*M A in Educational Psychology, Shiraz University, Shiraz 71946, Iran
b* M A in Educational Psychology, Shiraz University, Shiraz 71946, Iran

Abstract

The aim of the present research was to study the relationships between Assertiveness, The power of saying no with mental health on a group of undergraduate students in Shiraz University. In order to achieve this goal, 120 undergraduate students participants including (62 women) and (58 men) with using random cluster sampling were chosen. The measurement tools were General Health Questioner (GHQ), Ratous Assertiveness Questioner (RAS) and Power of saying No Questioner (self designed). The data were analyzed by Pearsonian coefficient and independent T-Test. The results revealed:

1- There was a significant relationship between assertiveness and mental health.
2- There was a significant Relationship between The power of saying no and mental health.
3- There was no significant difference between the assertiveness of women and men.
4- There was no significant difference between the power of saying no, of women and men.

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Keywords: assertiveness; the power of saying No; mental health.

1. Introduction

Assertiveness (Assertion) is typically defined in terms of the legitimate and honest expression of one’s personal rights, feelings, beliefs and interest without violating or denying the rights of others (Delamater, 1986).

It is the ability to express one’s feelings and assert one’s rights while respecting the feelings and rights of others. Assertive communication is appropriately direct, open and honest, clarifies one’s needs to the other person. Assertiveness comes naturally to some, but is a skill that can be learned. People who have mastered the skill of assertiveness are able to greatly reduce the level of interpersonal conflict in their lives, thereby reducing a major source of stress (Elizabeth Scott, 2006).

In Japan, relationship between self-esteem and assertiveness training among Japanese hospital nurses was investigated by Takashi Shimizu (2004). They found that the nurses’ SE had improved at six months after the AT. In another study, they investigated the relationship between Burnout and Communication Skill Training to improve the mental of human service workers. Their results implied that communication skill training might have a favorable effect on Burnout among Japanese hospital nurses (Shimizu, 2003).
Based on the concept of assertiveness (Lindenfield, 1992) has shown a favorable effect on mental health status such as stress reaction and depressive state in previous studies (Hayman, 1980; Lee, 2003). It was also thought to enhance one’s self-esteem, self-confidence, interpersonal relationships, personal fulfillments and internal locus of control (Williams, 1984). A sense of coherence (SOC) has been proposed as a psychological factor that predicts good health and positive adjustment (Antonovsky, 2001). Japanese men with a low SOC have a tendency to be affected by stressful life events (Takayama, 1999).

Self esteem (SE) refers to whether one accepts oneself, respects oneself, and considers oneself a person of worth (Rothenberg, 1982), and is an important factor in mediating the process between stressors and stress reaction in the model of job stress and health, suggested by the (NOSH) National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (Hurrell, 1988). Enhancing one’s self-esteem reduces one’s stress levels.

In addition, there are many people who find it difficult to say No when asked to do something. Somewhere along the line they have become conditioned to do what others ask, for any number of reasons. Some people will never say NO and move through life with some sort of clear understanding that they are here to serve and that in some way they are helping others and raising their spiritual level by doing so (Archives, 2003).

It would appear that there are certain soul groups that have come in with karma to serve and rarely assert themselves. This usually involves minorities and often women. It is about one group of people saying they have control over the other and claiming it while the others ‘cave-in’ to their demands which is easier than saying NO, or what they are supposed to do (Archives, 2003).

For most people, whose souls may have been abused in childhood, this is simply not the case. Childhood leaves many people scarred from their lifetime placing them in depression or causing any number of mental illnesses as the soul has lost its ability to create balance. It not only cannot find balance, it does not know what will create this balance (Archives, 2003).

As always this goes back to self-esteem issues and respect for other person in the interaction. Assertiveness is a way to ask for what a person needs, state difficult feelings such as anger and disappointment and negotiate well with others. Someone who is strong knows what their limitations are, will evaluate what is asked of them and whether they should say YES or NO (Archives, 2003).

In Iran, only a few studies have investigated the relationship between assertiveness (assertion) and the power of saying No with mental health and psychological well-being, whereas, it has been widely studied in other countries. With references to above studies, it was hypothesized that assertiveness and the power of saying NO would have a positive effect on mental health.

2. Materials and Method

The subjects were 120 undergraduate students including (62 women) and (58 men) from Shiraz university. They were selected by using randomly cluster sampling. They were from 4 classes. The measurement tools for variables were General Health questioner (GHQ) and Ratous Assertiveness Questioner (RAS) and the Power of saying No Questioner (self designed).

3. Results

The first and the second hypothesis by Pearsonian correlation and the third and fourth hypothesis by independent T-Test were analyzed.

3.1. Analysis 1

In the first analysis it was aimed to find the relationship between assertiveness and mental health of the undergraduate students. A Pearson co-relational procedure was conducted. The results are presented in Table1.
Table 1. correlation of assertiveness & mental health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness &amp; Mental health</td>
<td>0.234</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the Table 1 shows, there is a positive significance correlation between assertiveness and mental health at the 0.01 level.

3.2. Analysis 2

In order to test the second null hypothesis which states that “there is no relationship between the power of saying No and mental health of the undergraduate students”, A Pearson co-relational procedure was conducted. The results were presented in Table 2.

Table 2. correlation of the power of saying NO & mental health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The power of saying no &amp; Mental health</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results shown in Table 2, revealed that a positive significance correlation between the power of saying NO and mental health was existed at the 0.01 level.

3.3. Analysis 3

In the third analysis it was aimed to compare the power of Saying NO between women and men. Therefore independent T-Test procedure was carried out. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of the power of Saying NO between women & men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The power of saying no</td>
<td>62 (women)</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.174</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58 (men)</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results shown in Table 3 indicated that a significant difference between women and men are not existed.

3.4. Analysis 4

In the fourth analysis it was aimed to compare the assertiveness between women and men. In this case an independent T-Test procedure was conducted and the results were presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Comparison of assertiveness between women & men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>62 (women)</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58 (men)</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results shown in Table 4 indicated that a significance difference between women and men are not observed.

4. Discussion

The relationship between assertiveness, the power of saying No with mental health among undergraduate students from Shiraz University was studied.

It was found that a relationship between assertiveness and mental health was existed and the importance of being assertiveness, and saying no, in psychological well-being. When there is higher assertiveness, then there would be better mental health and conversely. This corresponded to the previous studies which indicated that assertiveness contributed to self-esteem among American firefighters (Petrie, 2004) and that assertiveness reduced stress reaction among Taiwanese hospital nurses (Lee, 2003). This was also compatible with the finding that the communication skill training improved two communication skills, negotiation and accepting valid criticisms (Shimizu, 2003). Suga, (1984) suggested that a person with high self-esteem was more likely to negotiate with an opponent successfully and to suitably accept valid criticisms and this was also compatible with the finding of a pilot study carried out by Shimizu, (2003), who concluded that there was a relationship between burnout and communication skill training among Japanese hospital nurses and also with the finding of the research done by Shimizu, (2004) that found a relationship between self-esteem and assertiveness and also with the finding of Keramaty (2000) that showed a relationship between assertiveness and anxiety was existed, it means that assertive people have less anxiety.

In this work, it was found that those who have the power of saying No, have less stress in their lives and they get their needs met (which also means less stressing over unmet needs), and help others get their needs met, too. Having stronger, more supportive relationships virtually guarantees that, in a bind, they have people they can count on, which also helps with stress management, and even leads to healthier body and mentality.

It was also found that there was no significance difference between women and men from the point of assertiveness and the power of saying No, which was compatible with researches done by Keramaty (2000) and Ahmadian (2007), which may be due to the same cultural and peripheral factors. The present study had limitations of a correlation design and also it needs to other designs.

In conclusion, the results implied that assertiveness and the power of saying No had the potential effects on mental health among undergraduate students in Shiraz University.

References

By nurses in Taiwan, republic of China.