

Confidence To Speak Up: Exploring the Relationship Between Sexual Assertiveness and Self-Efficacy Among School Children

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Abstract

Background: Sexual assertiveness and self-efficacy are important psychological characteristics that may contribute to children's ability to recognize inappropriate situations, communicate personal boundaries, and seek support when necessary.

Aim: The present study examined the relationship between sexual assertiveness and self-efficacy among school children and investigated gender differences in these variables.

Research Design & Population: A quantitative correlational research design was adopted. The study included 71 school children, comprising 38 girls and 33 boys. Participants completed measures assessing sexual assertiveness and self-efficacy, Pearson's correlation, independent t tests, and simple linear regression analysis were used to examine the study objectives.

Results: The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between sexual assertiveness and self-efficacy, $r(69) = 0.33$, $p = 0.00$. Regression analysis further indicated that sexual assertiveness significantly predicted self-efficacy, $F(1, 69) = 8.55$, $p = 0.00$, explaining 11% of the variance in self-efficacy. However, no significant gender differences were observed in sexual assertiveness, $t(61.30) = 0.04$, $p = 0.96$, or self-efficacy, $t(69) = 0.07$, $p = 0.93$.

Conclusion: the findings highlight the importance of school-based programs that provide both boys and girls with opportunities to strengthen assertiveness, self-efficacy, communication, and personal safety skills.

Key Words: Sexual Assertiveness, Self-efficacy, Safety, School Children.

Introduction

Assertiveness is the ability to communicate confidently without being aggressive or subservient communication skills (Albert & Emmous, 1982; Parray, Kumar & David, 2020). According to Parray, Kumar, and David (2020), Assertiveness firmly involves stating one's rights or opinions while respecting others and it is a skill that can be developed over time. During the teenage phase, being assertive is crucial for shaping one's future social interactions and relationships with others (Parray & Kumar, 2017). It is recognized as a social skill that enables the establishment of healthy relationships (Deniz, 1997; Koparan et al., 2009) and it nurtures students' talents and fosters their creative growth (Hekmati, 2002; Parry & Kumar, 2017). Training in assertiveness skills enhances awareness of personal rights, helps distinguishing various communication styles, establish limits, and preventing manipulation of mistreatment (Parray, Kumar & David, 2020). Assertiveness serves as a means of technique for effectively expressing agreement or disagreement, it is essential for adolescents to be assertive enough to defend themselves in case of any harassments from familiar or unfamiliar people, and set boundaries to ensure their own protection (Thakur, 2023). Studies revealed assertiveness and safety related skills are not necessarily restricted to a particular gender (Koparan et al. (2009); Yıldız (2005).

Another key term of the study is self-efficacy. It is described as individual's belief on their ability to successfully complete a particular task in order to achieve the desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997, 1999, 2000). This concept reflects peoples' confidence to carry out a task and attain the intended results. It can be characterized as being a combination of competency based emotional wellness (Bandura, 1997) as well as being action oriented (Bandura, 1997; Luszczynska, Scholz & Schwarzer, 2005). Cross sectional studies have identified an inverse relationship between self-efficacy and depression, children with reduced self-efficacy tend to experience elevated levels of depression (Comunian, 1989; Ehrenberg, Cox & Koopman, 1991; Muris, 2001). A strong feeling of self-efficacy promotes healthy social relationships (Bandura et al., 1996). High self-efficacy boosts children's confidence and strengths and their ability to cope with challenges effectively (Pajares & Schunk, 2001). Furthermore, self-efficacy is associated with numerous aspects of psychological adjustments, including lower levels of psychopathology and improved mental

health and overall well-being (Suldo & Shaffer, 2007). Anjali & Mathews (2020) reported that the relevance of developing self-efficacy among children irrespective of gender.

Similarly, assertiveness enables children to express their thoughts, emotions and personal boundaries confidently while promoting healthy interpersonal relationships. Assertiveness and Self-efficacy training programs may benefit from to both boys and girls by provide equitable opportunities to strengthen and apply the skills in age- appropriate personal safety situations, in different cultural context. Based on these findings, both assertiveness and self-efficacy play a significant role in fostering children's overall psychological, social and personal development. So, this study aimed to assess correlation, gender difference and prediction level of the Sexual Assertiveness and self-efficacy among school going children. The school education system aims to develop rational thinking, autonomy, health, and well-being, and to collaborate with the community, participate in economic development, and contribute to cultural values. The hypotheses of this study are follows:

H₁: there will be a significant positive relationship between sexual assertiveness and self-efficacy among school children.

H₂: there will be no gender difference in sexual assertiveness among school children in Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu.

H₃: there will be no gender difference in Self-efficacy among school children in Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu.

H₄: sexual assertiveness will be predicted self-efficacy among school children.

Methodology

Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between sexual assertiveness and self-efficacy among school children. The study also explored gender difference in the study variables and examined whether sexual assertiveness significantly predicts self-efficacy among children. Correlation analysis, t-test, and simple linear regression analysis were used to analyze the data.

Participants: The participants of the study consisted of 71 school going children studying in the seventh and eighth standard from a private school in Town, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India. The participants age ranged from 11 to 13 years. Both boys (46%) and girls (54%) participated in this study.

Sampling Technique: Convenient sampling method was adopted based on accessibility and availability of the students who were willing to participate and met the inclusion criteria.

Inclusion Criteria: Students studying seventh and eighth standards in the age group of 11-13 years, who were able to understand the items in the questionnaire were included.

Exclusion Criteria: Students who were absent during data collection and incomplete responses to the questionnaires were excluded.

Instruments

1. **Demographic details** including name(optional), age, gender, residence and whether they live with parents or guardians.
2. **Sexual Assertiveness Scale:** This scale was developed by Thakur (2023). It assesses the assertiveness of adolescents against sexually inappropriate behaviors exhibited by others against them and hence prevent themselves from sexual abuses. It has 20 items of single dimension with positive and negative items. The test-retest reliability of this scale is 0.89, and the scale proved its content validity. The scale has Likert style response type, ranged from five to one. The overall score ranged from 20-100. Students who scored above 74 have high assertiveness, scorers of 47-73 have moderate assertiveness and the score range from 20-46 mentioned low assertiveness.
3. **Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C):** This scale was developed by Muris (2001). The scale has 24 items classified into 3 domains which are social self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy and emotional self-efficacy. It also has five-point Likert scale. Total self-efficacy score can be obtained by summing all items. High score represented high self-efficacy and low score mentioned low self-efficacy.

Both the scales are used for Indian population to assess the adolescent students' ability to communicate boundaries, express discomfort, refuse inappropriate behavior, seek help, and protect themselves from harms.

Procedure

The study was conducted following approval from institutional and school authorities. The researcher explained the aim to students and they were administered two standardized measures with demographic details. The standard measures were Sexual Assertiveness Scale developed by Thakur (2023) and Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C) developed by Muris (2001). The participants were instructed to read each statement and respond honestly. They were informed that their responses would be confidential and would be used for academic purposes only. Doubts regarding the questionnaires were clarified by the researcher. The Data were then analyzed.

Statistical Analyses

Data analyses were carried out using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 26). Kolmogorov Smirnov test was conducted to test normality. Based on its result, parametric tests were conducted. Pearson's Correlation, Independent t test and Regression Model were run down to test hypotheses. $p < 0.05$ was considered significant level.

Results and Discussion

Normality Assessment

Prior to conducting inferential statistical analyses, the normality of the study was assessed using Kolmogorov Smirnov test to test whether the dataset meet the normality requirements and it was presented in table 4.1

Table 4.1 Kolmogorov Smirnov Test result of the distribution

Variables	Static	df	Sig.
Sexual Assertiveness	.099	71	.080
Self-Efficacy	.102	71	.063

As the significance value is greater than the predetermined value of 0.05 in Kolmogorov test the data are considered to be normally distributed. So, Parametric tests including Pearson's Correlation, Independent t- test and Regression analysis were adopted for hypotheses testing.

Correlational Analysis

In the present study, Pearson's Correlation was used to examine the relationship between Sexual Assertiveness and Self-Efficacy. The result is presented in the following table.

Table 4.2 Correlation between Sexual assertiveness and self-efficacy

Note. N =71. $p < 0.01$

The present study reveals a significant positive relationship between sexual assertiveness and self- efficacy ($r = 0.33$; $p < 0.01$), higher sexual assertiveness is associated with higher self-efficacy and vice versa. The findings are also

	Sexual assertiveness	Self-efficacy
Sexual assertiveness	-	0.332**
Self-efficacy	0.332**	-

consistent with a study by Braiseleiro et al., (2021), which reported a significant positive relationship between social self- efficacy and sexual assertiveness. So, H_1 is accepted. This evidence indicates that individuals who communicate about sexual intrusion or sexual exploitative tendency by others with confidence, demonstrate a significantly higher level of self- efficacy.

Analysis of Gender Differences

An independent sample t-test was conducted to examine differences between male and female participants in sexual assertiveness and self-efficacy, respectively showed in Table 4.3 and 4.4.

Table 4.3 Gender differences in sexual assertiveness

Gender	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Gender 1	38	81.95	7.91	0.46	61.30	0.963
Gender 2	33	81.85	9.84			

The present study found no significant differences between male and female participants in terms of Sexual Assertiveness ($p > .05$). H_2 is accepted. The result aligned with previous studies of Koparan et al. (2009); Becet (1989); Uğurluoğlu (1996); and İşmen and Yıldız (2005), which similarly reported a lack of significant gender disparities in assertiveness among high school cohorts. The cross cultural consistency of assertiveness in safety related skills is not necessarily restricted to a particular gender or a specific cultural settings.

Table 4.4 Gender differences in self-efficacy

Gender	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Gender 1	38	80.55	10.19	0.077	69	0.939
Gender 2	33	80.36	10.41			

The present study revealed no significant differences between male and female participants regarding Self-efficacy ($p > .05$). H_3 is accepted. This finding supported by previous study of Anjali & Mathews (2020), who similarly observed an absence of significant gender disparities among adolescent athletes. Based on the previous studies and current research results, school-based programs should provide both boys and girls with equal opportunities to develop self-confidence, decision-making skills, with age-appropriate manner.

Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether sexual assertiveness significantly predicts self-efficacy and the result presented in table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Linear Regression predicting Self-Efficacy from Sexual Assertiveness

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
constant	48.83	10.87	-	4.49	<0.001
Sexual Assertiveness	0.3	0.13	0.33	2.92	0.005

Note. $R = 0.33$, $R^2 = 0.11$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.09$, $F(1, 69) = 8.55$, $p = 0.005$. $N = 71$.

The present empirical investigation demonstrated that sexual assertiveness is a significant predictor of self-efficacy ($p < .05$), accounting for 11% of variance in this construct among school going children. So, H_4 is accepted. The results corroborate with the prior research of Nwachukwu et al. (2025) indicating that the structured assertiveness training yields enhancements in self-efficacy among secondary school students. Finally, these results suggest that the capacity of assertive communication subsequently reinforces an individual's generalized belief in their capability to successfully navigate and manage diverse situational demands.

Discussion

Overall, the findings of the present study highlight the significant association between sexual assertiveness and self-efficacy among school children. The positive correlation indicates that children with higher levels of sexual assertiveness also tend to report higher levels of self-efficacy. The regression analysis further demonstrated that sexual assertiveness significantly predicted self-efficacy, accounting for approximately 11% of the variance in self-efficacy. This finding suggests that the ability to communicate boundaries, express discomfort, refuse inappropriate behavior, and seek support may be related to children's confidence in their ability to manage challenging situations. The analysis of gender differences showed no statically significant differences between boys and girls in either sexual assertiveness or self-efficacy, indicating comparable levels across the two gender groups in the present sample.

Similar patterns reported in studies conducted across different countries and cultural contexts suggest that gender differences in these characteristics may not be consistently observed across settings. However, cultural and contextual factors may still influence how children develop and express assertiveness and self-efficacy. Taken together, the findings support with equitable opportunities to develop sexual assertiveness, self-efficacy, communication skills, personal-safety skills in an age-appropriate and culturally sensitive manner.

Conclusion

The current study investigated the relationship between sexual assertiveness and self-efficacy among school going children, while also evaluating potential gender differences in these constructs, the findings revealed that a statistically significant positive correlation between the sexual assertiveness and Self-efficacy. Furthermore, regression analyses indicated that sexual assertiveness significantly predicted self-efficacy and accounted for 11% of its variance. However, no significant gender differences were observed in either of the study variables. These findings help to highlight the relevance of sexual assertiveness and self-efficacy among school going children.

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