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An investigation of high school seniors' assertiveness levels based on their demographic characteristics

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High school students who are in the development age or in the last class and have chance to win the university exams or disposal stage of the business life must also have a high level of assertiveness. In this context, the purpose of this research is to compare the assertiveness levels of high school seniors. The study group consists of 312 high school seniors studying at five different high schools in Manisa center. In this research, to measure the level of assertiveness, the Rathus Assertiveness Inventory, which was developed by Rathus (1973) and translated into Turkish in 1980 by Voltan, was used. The demographic information of the participants was obtained by using 'Personal Information Form'. The evaluation of the datum which was gained from the test subjects in this research was done by using T-Test, one-way analysis of variance and Tukey Test. At the end of this research, statistically meaningful differences were found out in the students' scores of assertiveness according to their respective schools. When demographic information of the students were evaluated, statistically meaningful differences in the scores of assertiveness were found with regard to education level of their parents. Statistically meaningful differences in the scores of assertiveness were not found in relation to the gender of the students, their engagement with sports and the occupation of their parents.

Key words: Assertiveness, sports, high school seniors.

INTRODUCTION

The number of theoretical and scientific studies has mushroomed both domestically and internationally since the 1970s in conjunction with the development of psycho-social sciences. The issue of assertiveness has been scrutinized within the framework of cultural, gender-related and occupation-related studies. The basic of social life is determined by the individual's relationship with the environment. Individuals should establish positive and consistent relationships with other people. Alberti and Emmons (1976) mentioned three types of

behavior among people:

1. Nonassertive behavior: entails people who give up their rights, in other words, the persons who refrain from obtaining their rights.
2. Aggressive behavior: the person does not accept the rights of other people, is the rejection of the rights of others.
3. Assertive behavior: accepting one's own and others' rights.

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Among these three behaviors, only the assertive behavior is positive, while the other two are negative. Assertive and aggressive behaviors are sometimes confusing. Hollands worth et al. (1977) tried to show the difference between assertiveness and aggression concepts. In this regard, Alberti and Emnos (1976) emphasized that it was needed to investigate the definitions of assertive and aggressive behavior. Tucker et al. (1983) and behavioral scientists and researchers often admit that they fell into confusion about these two issues. They said that if these two concepts cannot be gained in terms of definitional clarity, in daily life assertive behavior may continue to be labeled as aggressive behavior. The experts dealing with this issue have tried to resolve the confusion by describing the concept of assertiveness. Assertiveness was first defined by Wolpe and Lazarus (1968). Wolpe and Lazarus stated that, all socially acceptable expression of the feelings and rights might be regarded as assertive behavior. Jakubowski (1973) defined it as a behavior that contains the expression of interpersonal relationships and interactions that allow being healthy, being respectful of others' rights and the individual's feelings, beliefs and thoughts directly, sincerely and clearly.

Albert and Emmons (1976) define assertiveness as; a person to act in a way that will be most profitable, without having pointless anxiety in self-supported, to describe as a kind of interpersonal format that makes it possible to express their rights without violating the rights of others.

Volcan (1981) explained assertiveness as individuals to be able to explain as they themselves can transmit both positive and negative emotions, to be able to resist their desire and ability to reverse a request from the opposite. The definition of assertiveness which is used today has been described by Albert and Emmons (2002). An assertive person was described as "a person who knows well and can defend his rights". At the same time an assertive person is one who can demonstrate his ideas, feelings, beliefs and desires and can defend his rights without violating the beliefs and rights of others, disdaining them, without affecting or attempting to use them, without threatening them. They declared that these people think that the control of their lives is in their hands, they get satisfaction from their relationship and they reach most of their purpose. According to the definition and explanations above, it is possible to say that the assertive behavior is a positive and significant behavior. Accordingly, individuals' assertiveness properties must be developed. Because assertiveness can be learned in later times, it is also possible to teach it. Assertiveness training is necessary for individuals to increase their self-confidence and to have positive influence on their self-esteem (Whirter, 1985, Connelly and Rotella, 1991).

In assertiveness training; saying the sentences about feelings that start with "I", to compliment, accepting, acting natural, reducing anxiety which negatively affects adaptation, learning to say 'no', to ask questions,

expressing all kinds of feelings, to start a conversation and keep on it, to distinguish assertiveness from aggression, to become conscious of issues such as individual rights and to transfer them to others can be processed (Erkal, 1990).

Furnham (1979) has advocated that assertiveness has to do with cultural characteristics and also points out that women in eastern cultures feel obliged to be obedient and submissive. According to his thinking, individuals living in cultures which encourage individualism and competition tend to be more assertive than those who live in cultures reinforcing collectivism and obedience. In his study, Furnham (1983) explored disparities in assertive behaviour across cultures and what assertiveness entails in each. Based on this research, the level of assertiveness of Europeans is very high, that of Indians is very low and Africans is somewhere in between.

When it comes to cultural and gender studies conducted by authors such as Kimble et al (1984), American women of Mexican origin are found to be less assertive than American men of Mexican origin.

Alberti and Emmons, (2002) argued that many individuals and sub-groups in Latin and Spa-nish cultures have embraced 'machoism' so strongly that assertiveness in men is defined almost in terms of their degree of docility, which implies that assertiveness in men has become a show of power. In another study conducted by Soto and Shaver (1982), a negative correlation was found between traditional gender roles and assertiveness when the relationship between gender roles and assertiveness of women of Puerto Rican origin living in the States was explored. In the light of this study, it can be highlighted that women born in Puerto Rican who moved to the states later and who embraced traditional structure were found to be less assertive than new generation women of Puerto Rican born in the States.

Assertiveness is also related to culture, age and culture in another study conducted by Petrie and Rotheram (1996). In this study, children of Maori origin living in New Zealand and European children were compared and children of Maori origin were found to be more assertive and independent. Besides, age is seen to play a role as well as cultural differences; and girls are seen to be less assertive than boys; and are seen to cling to traditional roles more.

In a study by Eşkin (2003), where Turkish and Swedish youth were compared in terms of their level of assertiveness, Swedish youngsters were found to be more assertive and confident. In the same study, women and men were compared in both cultures with regards to their level of assertiveness. As a result, women, contrary to popular belief were found to be more assertive, brave and confident.

Assertiveness is a form of positive behaviour for any age and gender. High school students who are in the development age or in the last class and have chance to win the university exams or disposal stage of the business life

must also have a high level of assertiveness. High school students in preparing for college or profession for four years, spend most of their time in the school environment.

Different training programs used in schools, school resources and facilities which are used by students, teacher to student and student to student relationships, and also parents and administrators' attitudes and behaviors towards students are thought to affect socially and psychologically the high school students who are changing and developing physically.

Studies on the assertiveness levels of high school students are very limited. It is important to explore level of assertiveness in high school students, to understand reasons for low-assertiveness and offer solutions accordingly. For this reason in this study, it is aimed to investigate if the assertiveness levels of the high school seniors are affected or not by looking at their respective schools, gender, parents' education and employment status and doing sports.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study group

The students of 24 different programmed high schools located in the center of Manisa form the main idea of this research (MMEM 2014).

The sample group included the 312 high school senior students apart from five different high schools. These are the high schools and their purposes which are implementing different programs involved in the research.

Manisa Anatolian High School: This school implements higher education preparatory program based on the students' ability and success besides intensive foreign languages program. 72 students doing mixed programme in Manisa Anatolian High School participated in the study.

Industrial Vocational High School: Students are trained as intermediate elements to the industry or can attend vocational colleges. 100 students doing in mixed programme in Industrial Vocational High School participated in the study.

Anatolian Teacher High School: Students who love the teaching profession, with knowledge of foreign languages, primarily implement teacher training higher education preparatory programs. 52 students who are doing mixed programme in Anatolian Teacher High School participated in the study.

Religious Vocational High School for Girls and Boys: Officers are trained who perform religious services such as imam, teacher of oratory and Koran courses and it also applies to higher education preparatory program (Istanbul Directorate of Education 2014). 52 girls and 36 boys doing non-mixed programme in Religious Vocational High School participated in the study.

Data collection

In this research to measure the level of assertiveness RAE which was developed by Rathus (1973 and then translated into Turkish by Voltan. (1980) is used.

To learn about the participants' school, sex, doing sports or not, parent's education and jobs "personal information form" is used. RAE is a total of 30-item questionnaire consisting of positive and negative expressions and it can be applied to teens and adults. Answering is held on the 6- point Likert-type scale. Rating range is between 30 and 180.

The sums of the positive and negative expressions determine the person's level of assertiveness. Extending to lower inhibitions is 30 points, while extending assertiveness top score is 180. RAE's reliability and validity study conducted by the Voltan and reliability coefficient was 0.92, as the validity coefficient was 0.77 (Voltan, 1980; Efe et al., 2008). In this study, the reliability coefficient of Rathus Assertiveness Inventory was 0.79.

Data collection method

Questionnaires were used. Required permissions were taken in order to disseminate the questionnaires. They were given to the students during their physical examination classes, with permission taken from their teachers. They were given in the last semester to the twelfth grade students in line with the purpose of the questionnaire.

Data analysis

In this study, when comparing the t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Tukeytest were used. Statistical findings and percentage values are given in tables.

FINDINGS

32.1% of the students who participated in the study constitute Industrial Vocational High School; 16.7 %, Anatolian Teacher High School; 16.7% ,Girls Religious High Schools; 23.1%, Manisa High School; 11.4% Reputation of Men Religious Vocational High School Students. 38.1 % were female students and 61.9 % were male students.

Only 15.1 % of the subjects were licensed athletes and 47 % of these athletes were determined to be licensed in the football industry. It was found out that 72.2 % of students' mothers were housewives, and 76.6 % graduated from primary school; 40.2 % of their fathers were workers and 45;2 % graduated from primary school. The average level of assertiveness in last grade high students is 120.11.

As shown in Table 1 it was found out that there are statistically significant differences between assertiveness of students studying in different schools. To find out where the differences arise from in the group, the Tukey test was done and the results of this test show us that the differences were between the Boys' Religious Vocational High School Students and Manisa High School students and between the Girls' Religious Vocational High School and Manisa High School students. When average score is scrutinized, it is seen that students at Manisa Anatolian High School got the highest score in assertiveness whereas students at Religious Vocational High School for boys got the lowest score.

Table 1. Comparison of assertiveness scores of students by their schools.

Schools	N	%	Mean	sd		
Industrial Vocational High School	100	32.05	121.41	16.27		
Anatolian Teacher High School	52	16.66	117.76	18.58		
Religious Vocational High School For Girls	52	16.66	116.42	19.21		
Religious Vocational High School For Boys	36	11.53	113.27	21.44		
Manisa Anatolian High School	72	23.07	126.11	17.87		
Total	312	100	120.11	18.58	5.27	0.00*

$p < 0.01$.

Table 2. Comparison of students' assertiveness levels by gender.

Gender	N	Mean	s.d.	t	p
Girls	119	120.15	18.15		
Boys	193	120.09	18.81		
Total	312	120.11	18.69	0.02	0.98

Table 3. Comparison of students' assertiveness levels by mother's education.

Mother's education	N	%	ortalama	s.d.	F	p
Primary	239	76.6	118.11	18.17		
High School	52	16.6	127.57	16.54		
University	21	6.8	124.42	22.47	6.38	0.00*
Total	312	100	120.11	18.53		

$p < 0.01$.

Table 4. Comparison of students' assertiveness levels by father's education.

Father's education	N	%	Mean	sd	F	p
Primary School	182	58.3	117.69	18.27		
High School	70	22.4	124.30	16.33		
University	60	19.3	122.58	20.72		
Total	312	100	120.11	18.53	3.93	0.02*

$p < 0.05$.

As shown in Table 2, there were no significant difference of assertiveness scores between boys and girls.

As shown in Table 3 mother's education status affects the level of assertiveness of the students statistically. With the Tukey test, significant differences of the assertiveness levels between the students whose mothers graduated from primary school and the students whose mothers graduated from the high school was found. It was found that the high school graduated mothers' children's average assertiveness scores were higher than the others. The number and rate of primary

school graduate mothers is high ($n=226$, %76.6) whereas the number and rate of university graduate mothers is low ($n=21$, %6.8).

Table 4 shows that father's educational status affects the student's assertiveness. There were significant differences of the assertiveness levels between the students whose fathers graduated from primary school and the students whose fathers graduated from the high school. It was found that the high school graduated fathers' children's average assertiveness scores were higher than the others. 58.3% of students' fathers are

Table 5. Comparison of assertiveness level of students' mother's employment status.

Occupation	N	%	Mean	sd	t	p
Housewife (non working)	241	77.2	119.35	17.84		
Working	71	22.8	122.71	20.64	-1.34	0.17
Total	312	100	120.11	18.53		

Table 6. Comparison of assertiveness level of students' father's employment status.

Occupation	N	%	Mean	sd	F	p
Unemployed	15	4.8	121.53	21.70		
Worker	126	40.3	118.53	18.43		
Self employed	47	15.0	122.34	15.85		
Officer	78	25.0	122.79	20.13		
Tradesman	28	8.9	119.71	14.15	0.11	0.33
Farmer	17	5.2	113.11	21.86		
Total	311	100	120.13	18.56		

Table 7. Comparison of assertiveness level of the students who are licensed or non-licensed athletes.

License	N	%	Mean	sd	t	p
Yes	47	15	124.38	16.74		
No	265	85	119.36	18.76	1.71	.087
Total	312	100	120.13	18.56		

primary school graduates, whereas 19.3 % of their fathers are university graduates.

As shown in Table 5, when students' mothers' working status was examined, it was found that 77.2 % were non-working (housewife) but 22.8 % of them were working. There were not any significant differences in the assertiveness of the children's working and non-working mothers.

As shown in Table 6, when students' fathers' working status was examined, it was found that 40 % of them were workers while 4.8% of them were unemployed. There were no significant differences in the assertiveness level of the seniors according to their father's occupation. The lowest of assertiveness average scores belong to farmers' children.

As shown in Table 7 despite the high average assertiveness scores of students who were licensed athletes, there were no significant differences between the scores of students who did not do any sports. The number and rate of athlete students is low (n=47, %15).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study the effects of assertiveness on senior high

school students were investigated according to their respective schools, gender, education and employment status of their mothers and fathers and doing sports or not.

The Article Number 15 of the basic laws of the Ministry of National Education (MNE2015) stipulates that mixed class of boys and girls is essential. However, it continues to stipulate that some schools can only consist of boys or girls depending on the type of education and facilities and difficulties. Mixed classes constitute the general picture in Turkey; nevertheless single gender classes are found in Manisa Religious Vocational High School.

There seems to be significant differences in assertiveness levels between the students of Manisa Anatolian High School and the Religious Vocational High School for Girls and Boys.

This difference may be due to the different curriculum between schools. Schools like the Religious Vocational High School for Girls and Boys has non-mixed education system while Manisa High School has co-educational system applications. Moreover, the curriculum of Religious Vocational High Schools aims at (MNE, 2015) teaching students to be tolerant, respectful, obedient, modest, patient and tied to traditions. Thus, expectations

of the school, teachers, society and the family result in differences in these students' score in assertiveness. Also, school, family and environmental expectations of these students seem to have caused difference.

According to the research findings, assertiveness scores of high school seniors were compared on the basis of their gender but a significant difference was not found. Even assertiveness scores in the two sexes were almost equal. In a research with badminton players, Kırmıoğlu (2008) and Aydın (1991) could not find any significant difference in assertiveness scores between the genders. Based on these results we can say that they show similar assertiveness behavior of boys and girls in this age group. In the studies of Kimble et al. (1984) and Petrie and Rotheram (1996), men were found to be more assertive whereas women were found to be more assertive in the studies of Alberti and Emmons (2002) based on Latin and Spanish cultures and of Eşkin (2003) based on Swedish youths.

According to the results of this research, there are significant differences in assertiveness scores of the students whose mothers graduated from primary school and from high school. This difference was in favor of children of whose mothers graduated from high school. In the studies of Crawford and Taylor (1999), Ekinci and Yılmaz (2001), Tekin et al (2009) and Kahriman (2005), it was found that the education of mothers has no impact of the level of assertiveness. However, the education of mothers plays a role in the level of assertiveness in this study. Dinçer and Öztunç (2009) has also found that education level of mothers brings about serious differences in level of assertiveness in high school students. As a result, it can be argued that the more educated mothers are, the higher the score of assertiveness.

According to the results of this research, there are significant differences in assertiveness scores of the students whose fathers graduated from primary school and from high school. The difference was in favor of the students whose fathers graduated from high school again. Similar studies were done by Tekin and Kapancı (2010), Ekinci and Yılmaz (2001) and Kahriman (2005) who found that when father's education level increases, the assertiveness scores of the students also increase. This result is similar to the results of this study. The upbringing of children shapes their future as adults. If children's deeds and remarks are supported by their families, they tend to be more expressive individuals. The support parents can give to their children depends on their education level. The better educated parents are, the more assertive their children can get in later years. Hence, the education of parents can be said to play a positive role in children being assertive. We can say these two results show us that the increase of the educational level of mothers and fathers affect their children's assertiveness positively.

Also, in this research, assertiveness scores of high school seniors who were licensed athletes in a club were

compared to unlicensed high school seniors. Although licensed seniors' assertiveness scores were higher than the others, there was no significant difference in contrast to the expected results. Some scientists engaged in research on the effects of assertiveness in sports; Bavli (2009), Dervent (2007), Gacar and Coşkuner (2010), Tekin et al. (2009) found that the assertiveness of those who did sport was higher than the others who did not. So based on these findings, we are able to say that doing sports develops assertiveness. This may be because 11 of the 47 licensed senior athletes were from the religious vocational high school which had the lowest assertiveness scores.

In conclusion, we can say that when we compare the senior high school students' level of assertiveness on the basis of school, the average of assertiveness scores varies from school to school. The lowest assertiveness scores were found in Religious Vocational High School for Girls and Boys, while the highest scores were found in Manisa Anatolian High School. Assertiveness scores of children increase, depending on the mother and father's education level. Students' gender, their parents are working or not, or type of their parents' profession do not create a significant difference in children's assertiveness scores.

Although the assertiveness scores of licensed high school seniors are higher than the others, it is not at the significance level.

In order to develop assertiveness of high school students who are eager to go to college or work, they should be supported by school environment, by their parents, be encouraged to do sports and male and female students should study in the same school (mixed). Every school should provide guidance services to students and those students deemed to be insufficient in assertiveness should be supported by the school. Social activities should be organized so as to make students more expressive.

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