Family Support and Self-Mastery as Predictors of Assertiveness Among Young Adult

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Abstract
The study investigated family support and self-mastery as predictors of assertiveness among undergraduate. One hundred and thirteen (113) participants which comprised 70 females and 43 males between the ages of 24-50 years with a mean of 13.43 and standard deviation of 2.54, were selected from Enugu State University of Science and Technology (E.S.U.T), with the aid of purposive sampling techniques from the following faculties; Social Sciences and Humanities (45), Management Sciences (37), Law (31). The study was a cross-sectional survey in which Spencer (1973) Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS), Uddin and Bhuiyan (2019). Family Support Scale and, Pearlin and Schooler (1978) Pearlin Self-Mastery Scale, were used for data collection, while linear regression was used for analysis. Three hypotheses were tested and the results revealed that; family support Stβ= .434*** and t= 3.932*** positively predicted assertiveness among undergraduates at p< .001. Self-mastery Stβ= .249* and t= 2.256* positively predicted assertiveness among young adults at p< .05. Family support and self-mastery jointly predicted assertiveness at at p< .01. In view of the findings of the study the researcher discussed the result and recommendations were made.

Keynote: *Family support, Self-mastery, Assertiveness, Undergraduate, Student*

Background of the study

Being assertive is important in various aspects of life such as education, work, and social life. It helps individuals to communicate their thoughts and feelings effectively and stand up for themselves while respecting the opinions and feelings of others. This skill becomes even more crucial during the young adult phase where individuals are preparing themselves for adult roles and responsibilities. It allows them to express their needs and opinions confidently and establish healthy boundaries in their relationships. Assertiveness can play a significant role in improving communication skills, which in turn can have a positive impact on academic performance. When students and young adults are assertive, they are better able to express their needs and concerns to their teachers, peers, and colleagues. This helps to create a more positive and open communication environment, promoting mutual understanding and respect. As a result, students and young adults can save time and avoid misunderstandings, which can lead to better academic achievement. Research studies such as Hurry et al. (2006) have shown that assertiveness is positively associated with academic performance.

Assertiveness is a crucial skill for teenagers as it can have a significant impact on their self-efficacy and interactions with others. When teenagers are assertive, they are better able to express their thoughts, feelings, and needs, which can lead to improved trust and self-esteem. Moreover, assertiveness can help them deal with peer pressure and protect them from the factors that may affect their health. On the other hand, the lack of assertiveness can lead to many problems for young people. They may have difficulty in saying no, which can result in unwanted situations, and they may struggle with low self-esteem and anxiety. Research studies such as Ghodrati et al. (2016) have shown that assertiveness is closely associated with self-confidence, self-esteem, and anxiety.

While there may be some variations in the way scholars define assertiveness, the underlying concept of the definition remains quite similar. For instance, Seguided (1995, as cited in Ghodrati et al. 2016) defines assertiveness as a healthy way of communication, where individuals can express themselves honestly and respectfully. This involves being able to stand up for oneself and communicate needs and opinions effectively, without disregarding the needs or feelings of others. In essence, assertiveness is about finding a balance between being passive and aggressive and learning to communicate assertively can have many benefits in different areas of life. Assertive individuals can communicate their needs and opinions in a manner that is both firm and respectful of others' feelings. They can find a balance between being too passive or too aggressive, which can lead to better communication and healthier relationships. It is a learned skill that can have many benefits in different areas of life, including meeting the social demands of society. According to Carrobles (1986, in Ghodrati et al. 2016), assertive behaviour is not a stable and general trait of an individual. Instead, it can vary depending on the situation and the social interactions. Individuals may exhibit assertive or socially skilled behaviour in some situations, passive behaviour in others, and aggressive behaviour in some extreme situations. Some factors can cause the occurrence of assertiveness, one of which is family support. Assertiveness can be influenced by a combination of genetic factors, personality traits, and environmental factors. This means that while it may be a natural part of one's personality, it can also be learned and improved upon over time. Family plays a crucial role in the development of assertiveness, as it is often where individuals first learn social interactions and communication skills. As such, family can be a key agent of socialization in the development of assertiveness (Porreco & Barkey, 2010).

Family communication can have a significant impact on the development of an adolescent's personality and behaviour. Studies have shown that family dynamics and communication styles are key factors in shaping an individual's social and emotional development (Farahati et al., 2011). By examining family interactions and communication patterns, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of how family relationships and dynamics affect individuals. This can ultimately lead to a better understanding of family functioning and how to improve it (Keshtkaran, 2009).

Contemporary research has put forth the interpretation of social support as a person's overall cognitive perception of receiving support from significant members of their social network, such as family, friends, and significant others, rather than just the actual execution of supportive actions or behaviours (Toepfer, 2010). Gardner (1998) has provided a more specific definition of family support, stating that it can entail either self-help or volunteer assistance for family members with minimal outside involvement until the family identifies a need. It can also involve a range of guidance, support, and specialized help, commencing in the community and directing the family towards early, less traumatic intervention to avoid a crisis. Additionally, family support can refer to a specific approach towards dealing with life crises and problems, including abuse within families, which takes into account any positive relationships and strengths within these families that could aid in recovery. Family support is defined as "the provision of a range of supports and services to ensure all children and young people have the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential. It aims to promote their development primarily by empowering and supporting families and strengthening communities. Its emphasis lies in early intervention, guaranteeing that appropriate assistance is accessible to families at the earliest opportunity, and addressing all levels of need (Families Matter, 2009).

Family support is a practice orientation in children and families in social care settings that is both contested and contentious. Children's social care is an all-encompassing term that refers to a range of support services for children who require some degree of care and protection (Frost & Parton, 2009). Gilligan (1995) outlined the principles of family support and suggested that it involves recognizing and responding to the needs of families, particularly during challenging times. The family must define their own need or problem, and the required support must be accessible when needed. It is logical that family support must be supportive and not be perceived as threatening, alienating, or demeaning. It must be offered and available on terms that make sense in the lived reality of the service user. In practice, this will entail a low-key, local, non-clinical, unfussy, user-friendly approach. To be effective, it must be offered within a close proximity and operate on a principle of consent rather than coercion. Families must feel that their involvement is beneficial, with the service presented enticingly and appealingly. Family support should aim to enhance rather than diminish the confidence of those being helped. Additionally, it requires a respectful ally orientation on the part of the professional, rather than a patronizing expert approach. Finally, family support must wrap around the specific circumstances and child-rearing stage of the family. There is evidence that family support is related to numerous factors in our lives, including loneliness (Corty & Young, 1980),. Generally, research suggests that it is not the amount of social support per se that is protective, but rather the positive interpretation of the individual's interactions (Lyons, Perrotta et al., 1988; Heller et al., 1986).

Researchers have found a relationship between parenting style and the development of life skills. Some believe that there is a significant relationship between the type of parenting and

the quality of life skills in adolescence (Slicker et al., 2005). The findings of Hoseinian and Baniasadi (2006) suggest that individuals with more life skills have a more realistic evaluation of life, are more adaptable to change, and are more decisive in utilizing their capacities when faced with life events. Additionally, they appear to be more resilient when encountering life's challenges. The World Health Organization (2002) has divided life skills into personal and social skills. Examples of personal skills include decision-making and problem-solving skills, personal skills, and communication skills, while social skills are internal skills. Lack of assertiveness is an internal issue that can manifest in social situations, work environments, family dynamics, and community interactions. It can serve as a basis for other psychological issues. Decisiveness is one of the most important factors in social skills and is a remediable aspect of interpersonal relationships that can be learned and changed. Receiving support requires a certain level of self-awareness and awareness of one's perceived environment.

Mastery, which is a sense of having control over the forces that impact one's life, is a critical component of psychological health and well-being across the lifespan (Conger et al., 2009). Research conducted across various domains and age groups demonstrates a relationship between a sense of control and individual differences in mental and physical health (Conger et al., 2009). For instance, Conger et al., (2009) discovered that personal control is correlated with a healthier lifestyle. Mastery is believed to be a component of an individual's resources that enables them to cope with negative life events and other stressful situations, such as job loss, economic pressure, and relationship problems (Conger & Conger, 2002;). Indeed, individuals with high self-esteem and a sense of personal control may possess the skills necessary to avoid or prevent negative events or chronic difficulties (Conger et al., 2009).

Conger and Conger (2002) discovered that adults who rated high on mastery exhibited decreasing economic problems over time. Additionally, mastery may promote good social functioning, as evidenced by a more fulfilling job, a healthier lifestyle, and more satisfying relationships (Conger et al., 2009). Therefore, mastery appears to function as a critical personal attribute that serves as an indicator of positive adaptation and a resource that promotes individual well-being in adulthood.

The behaviour theory of assertiveness is adopted as the theoretical framework because it posits that humans learn their behaviour from their environment. It suggests that being assertive or lacking involvement in healthy conversations is a behaviour that individuals acquire from their surroundings. It states that some factors act as reinforcers that cause the occurrence of assertiveness. The type of reinforcement an individual receives determines the level of their family support and how easily they can access themselves, allowing assertiveness to occur. The present study contributes to the literature by investigating the developmental trajectory of mastery and the significance of family characteristics and interactions for the cultivation of assertiveness. Hence the research hypotheses.

I.   Family social support will significantly predict assertiveness

II.   Self-mastering will significantly predict assertiveness

III.   Family social support and self-mastering will jointly predict assertiveness

Participants

A total number of one hundred and thirteen (113) participants which comprised 61 females and 52 males between the ages of 17-34 years with a mean of 13.43 and standard deviation of 2.54, from Enugu State University of Science and Technology (E.S.U.T), were selected with the aid of purposive sampling techniques from the following faculties; Social Sciences and Humanities (45), Management Sciences (37), Law (31). Of the total sample 61 (61.95%) were females and 43 (38.05%) were males.

Instruments

A questionnaire form comprising three scales and demographic variables were used.

The scales include:

1. Spencer (1973) Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS)

2. Uddin and Bhuiyan (2019). Family Support Scale and,

3. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) Pearlin Self-Mastery Scale

Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS) Spencer (1973)

Spencer (1973) Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS) is a 30-items questionnaire that was designed to measure a person's level of assertiveness. It is also an instrument for measuring behavioural change in assertion training. The validity of the RAS was established by comparing self-reported RAS scores to two external measures of assertiveness. Test-retest reliability was established using a Pearson product moment correlation coefficient over a two-month period (r = .78), indicating moderate to high stability of test scores. Split-half reliability (a measure of internal consistency reliability) was calculated to be .77, suggesting that the qualities measured by the RAS possess moderate to high homogeneity. Gustafson (1992) found that the original scale was reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .82). Some items are presented in ways that may be considered outdated or heterosexist – given their development more than 25 years ago (Thompson & Berenbaum, 2011). The RAS has demonstrated discriminant validity with respect to aggression.

Family Support Scale, Uddin and Bhuiyan (2019)

Uddin and Bhuiyan (2019). Family Support Scale is a 20-item questionnaire which assesses perceived support for 20 areas: love, respect, daily activities, religious activities, information, emotional support, important decisions, personal needs, social events, personal problems, help in problem-solving, health, treatment, important people, money, food, sleep, company, happiness, and satisfaction. Each item was measured via a 4-point, Likert-style scale, with possible scores ranging from 0 (no) to 3 (much). Total possible scores were between 0 and 60. Higher scores reflect greater perceived family support. The Family Support Scale was tested for internal consistency reliability. The SPSS program was used to analyse the data. All 20 items were entered into the program and analyzed. The result was a Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of 0.94.

Pearlin Self-Mastery Scale, Pearlin and Schooler (1978)

Pearlin and Schooler (1978) Pearlin Self-Mastery Scale consists of 7 items designed to assess one aspect of psychological coping resources (Mastery). Example items include measures of

an individual's level of mastery, which is a psychological resource that has been defined as "the extent to which one regards one's life chances as being under one's control in contrast to being fatalistically ruled" (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). The 7-item scale comprises five negatively worded items and two positively worded items, presented with the following response options: (1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Agree (4) Strongly agree. The negatively worded items require reverse coding before scoring, resulting in a score range of 7 to 28, with higher scores indicating greater levels of mastery.

Procedure

The researcher adopted purposive sampling techniques in drawing the participants and in selecting the faculties used for this study from Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Student faculties' executives from the selected once were employed as research assistants to distribute and retrieve the questionnaire. Total of 130 copies of questionnaires were distributed in the banks in Benin City used for the study. Out of the number, 119 copies were returned, however, 6 copies of the completed questionnaires were wrongly completed while 113 copies were properly completed. This gave 86.9% return rate of valid copies of the questionnaires used for the analysis in this study.

Design and statistics

The researcher employed a cross-sectional survey design for this study. This is because the use of questionnaires was employed to elicit responses from the various samples drawn from the population of interest (Gabrenya, 2003). The use of linear regression using SPSS version 25 was employed in the analysis of the data. The choice of this statistics was based on the premise that regression analysis is primarily used for predictions and hierarchical multiple regression allows the researcher to determine the order that variables will be entered into the regression equation. (Campbell & Campbell, Miles & Shevlin, 2001)

RESULTS

Table I: shows coefficients of family support and self-mastery as predictors of assertiveness among young adult

Model	r	R^2	UnStβ	Stβ	t
1	.371**	.138**			
Family social support			.390***	.434***	3.932***
Self-mastery			.224*	.249*	2.256*

Dependent variable= assertiveness, at p< .05*, p= .01**. p< .001***. R= relationship, r²= relationship square, UnStβ= unstandardized beta, Stβ= standardised beta.

Table I above shows family support Stβ= .434*** and t= 3.932*** positively predicted assertiveness among undergraduates at p< .001, this means the higher the family support, the higher assertiveness. Also table I above indicated that self-mastery Stβ= .249* and t= 2.256* positively predicted assertiveness among young adults at p< .05, this implies that an increase in self-mastery will cause an increase in self-mastery. Table I above further displayed that there is a significant relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable at r=.371, both family support and self-mastery contribute 13.8% variance to assertiveness, the predictors variable predicted the dependent at p< .01,

Discussion

The first hypothesis, which states that "family support will significantly predict assertiveness," has been confirmed and accepted. This finding is consistent with Hargie and Owen's (1990) which postulated that individuals who lack warm family relationships may struggle with proper social behaviour. It suggests that family support plays a crucial role in an individual's ability to interact with the world around them, as the family serves as a place where children learn about both normal and abnormal behaviours.

According to the results, the second hypothesis stating that "self-mastery will significantly predict assertiveness" was confirmed and accepted. This finding is consistent with the works of Conger and Conger (2002), Mirowsky and Ross (2003), Pearlin et al. (1981), and Wheaton (1985), which suggest that self-mastery is a critical component of an individual's personal resources that allows them to cope with negative life events and other stressful situations such as job loss, financial pressure, and relationship problems. The results indicate that an individual's self-concept is a crucial factor that helps them to be assertive and engage in healthy communication with others. Furthermore, an increase in self-mastery can lead to an increase in assertiveness, which can ultimately result in better mental wellbeing and a healthier lifestyle. Self-mastery is a variable that assists individuals in carrying out daily activities without feeling overly stressed and helps them navigate through difficult situations. Another benefit of self-mastery is that it enables individuals to recognize their limits and know when to act and when to pull back. The results from this research work suggest that self-mastery is an essential variable that every young adult should possess, not only to facilitate healthy communication but also to promote stable psychological well-being, allowing them to carry out their daily activities without experiencing burnout or breakdowns.

The results of this research suggest that self-mastery is a crucial concept or trait that individuals must possess to be able to express themselves healthily. It is also important for young adults to have self-mastery to participate in healthy discussions and communication.

According to the research findings, the third hypothesis, which postulated that "family support and self-mastery will significantly predict assertiveness," has been confirmed and accepted. This result suggests that both primary variables are essential factors that can lead to assertiveness, as well as better overall wellbeing and a healthier lifestyle.

Implication the findings

The research findings indicate that family support is a major factor that determines healthy behaviour and communication among young adults. The results suggest that family support predicted assertiveness, indicating that having a supportive family is crucial in promoting healthy communication and behaviour that does not harm others.
The research findings suggest that self-mastery is an important factor that predicts assertiveness among young adults. This result indicates that having self-mastery is crucial in promoting a healthy lifestyle and assisting the overall wellbeing of individuals.
The research results suggest that family support and self-mastery jointly predict assertiveness among young adults. This finding indicates that both primary variables can positively influence assertiveness among young adults when considered together.

Limitation of the study

Many factors worked against, one of such is the sample size. Sampling student from only Enugu State University of Science and Technology alone reduces the numbers of participants, more student would have participated assuming other high institutions were considered.

Suggestion for further study

Other research should consider sampling more than one institution so as it can give room for more persons to participant.

Future researcher should consider other variables that can alter this study from the background, variable such as age, gender, marital status, level of education e.t.c

Enough time should be deployed by future researchers so as to enable them to access other factors such as their true age, marital status, gender et al. that might alter the result from the background.

Summary and conclusion

This research sought to investigate family support and self-mastery as predictors of assertiveness among young adults. The results indicate that both family social support and self-mastery independently and jointly predict assertiveness among undergraduates. This finding suggests that both variables can independently and jointly influence the occurrence of assertiveness among young adults. Therefore, it is important for the government, civil society, and all stakeholders to promote and encourage good family structures for the betterment of individuals.