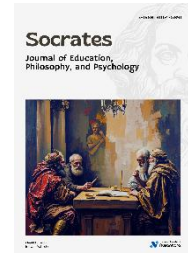




Socrates: Journal of Education, Philosophy, and Psychology

| ISSN (Online) [3064-5891](https://issn.org/3064-5891) |
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DOI: [10.63217/socrates.v2i3.310](https://doi.org/10.63217/socrates.v2i3.310)



The Relationship Between Assertiveness and Self-Esteem Among Students Who Experience People Pleasing Behavior

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Abstract: Assertiveness is an individual's ability to openly express thoughts, feelings, and needs while continuing to respect others. Meanwhile, self-esteem refers to an individual's assessment of their own strengths and weaknesses. Based on this, this study aims to examine the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem among college students who exhibit people-pleasing behavior. This study involved 174 student respondents aged 18–25 years residing in Bekasi City who exhibit people-pleasing behavior. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, assertiveness was measured using a scale based on the dimensions proposed by Arrindell & Van De Ende, and self-esteem was measured using the State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES) by Heatherton & Poliv. The results of the study indicate a significant relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem, with a significance level of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$) and a correlation coefficient of -0.198. The negative direction of the relationship suggests that the higher the assertiveness among students exhibiting people-pleasing behavior, the lower their self-esteem. This study indicates that the assertiveness observed is not entirely based on strong self-confidence but is influenced by the need for social acceptance. The implications of this study suggest that the development of assertiveness in students must be accompanied by an increase in self-esteem, so that students are not only able to express themselves but also possess a positive self-assessment in social interactions.

Keywords: Assertiveness, Self-Esteem, People Pleasing Behavior, Student.

INTRODUCTION

People-pleasing behavior is behavior that prioritizes the needs, desires, and expectations of others over one's own needs (Rohmatun, 2025). In the Indonesian social context, which values politeness and avoids conflict, this behavior often emerges as a form of self-adjustment to maintain interpersonal relationships (Zakiya & Hariyadi, 2022). A person's capacity to adapt to changes and demands in their surroundings, which aids in overcoming obstacles or pressures that come up in day-to-day living, is referred to as adaptive behavior. Students' capacity to

employ efficient coping strategies to handle social and academic stress is indicative of adaptive behavior (Romadhona & Wala, 2023). If taken to extremes, people-pleasing behavior can develop into a maladaptive pattern that hinders the fulfillment of one's own needs.

Students that have this inclination frequently display traits including finding it difficult to decline requests, constantly agreeing with the viewpoints of others, and making an effort to seem amiable in social situations (Zalika & Nisa, 2024). These characteristics make it difficult for students to discern between what they want and what their social surroundings expect of them (Sari & Komarudin, 2024). This emotional exhaustion is one of the causes of people-pleasing behavior, illustrating how such maladaptive behavioral patterns impact students' daily psychological well-being (Mutia et al., 2024).

The phenomenon of people-pleasing behavior is linked to low assertiveness and self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to an individual's evaluation of themselves. This means that such an evaluation takes into account the extent to which an individual feels competent, useful, and accepted within their environment. This indicates that self-esteem is heavily influenced by an individual's internal assessment of their own worth, in addition to internal assessments, external assessments how an individual perceives themselves also influence their behavior and interactions with others (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991). Students with low self-esteem are unable to voice their thoughts in an authoritative manner because they feel unimportant enough to turn down requests from others (Ardaningrum & Savira, 2022). Students who lack assertiveness are more likely to experience emotional discomfort in social settings because they are unable to communicate their needs and concerns effectively (Hidayatullah & Alifah, 2022). Assertiveness is the ability to respect others' opinions and express one's own views honestly, firmly, and comfortably (Alberti & Emmons, 2017). This condition encourages students to prioritize social interests over their own needs, thereby reinforcing the tendency toward people-pleasing behavior (Fauziah & Muslikah, 2025).

This indicates that most students still struggle to be assertive and have relatively low self-esteem, leading them to rely more heavily on others' judgments (Yektiningsih, 2020). The fear of social rejection causes students to suppress their personal needs in order to maintain relationships, which ultimately reinforces a pattern of behavior aimed at pleasing others. In the long term, this behavior leads to a decline in assertiveness, leaving students unable to express their feelings, opinions, and personal boundaries honestly and firmly. This low assertiveness results in their personal needs both emotional and psychological being increasingly neglected, which in turn leads to low self-esteem (Ahmad et al., 2025). Assertiveness plays a crucial role in helping students maintain a balance between their personal needs and social demands. Students with high assertiveness feel more valued by others, possess higher self-confidence, and are able to value themselves (Puji et al., 2024). Conversely, students who lack assertiveness often show a tendency to please others a persistent behavior characterized by seeking others' approval and avoiding conflict. Such behavior can lower self-confidence and create psychological stress for students (ElBarazi et al., 2023).

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to examine the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem among college students who exhibit people-pleasing behavior. Thus, the research question is whether there is a relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem among college students who exhibit people-pleasing behavior.

METHOD

In order to ascertain the association between assertiveness as the independent variable and self-esteem as the dependent variable, this study uses a quantitative technique using a correlational research design. College students in Bekasi City who engage in people-pleasing behavior, particularly those between the ages of 18 and 25, make up the study's population. Purposive sampling, which involves choosing samples based on particular criteria associated with the study's aims, was used to acquire at least 120 respondents for the study. These criteria included active students living in Bekasi City who display people-pleasing conduct. This study was carried out in Bekasi City at a time that coincided with the procedure for gathering data. An

assertiveness measure and a self-esteem scale modified from other studies served as the study's instruments. The assertiveness scale has 25 items covering the dimensions *display of negative feelings/negative assertion, expression of and dealing with personal limitations, initiating assertiveness, positive assertion*, whereas the self-esteem scale has 14 items covering performance, social, and appearance.

Strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree were the four response possibilities on the Likert scale. The development of the instrument, validity and reliability testing, dissemination of the questionnaire to qualified respondents, and data processing and analysis were the many phases of the study process. The distribution of the questionnaire was customized to the circumstances of the respondents. In order to ascertain the connection between assertiveness and self-esteem, this study employed Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis as its data analysis method. To guarantee accurate results, Jeffrey's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP) was used for data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study yielded 199 respondents, of whom 174 were selected based on specific criteria and subsequently analyzed. A purposive sampling technique was used in this study, with several respondent criteria established, namely active students exhibiting people-pleasing behavior (difficulty refusing requests, conforming to others' opinions, and avoiding conflict in social settings).

The Shapiro-Wilk normality test indicated that the data were not normally distributed ($p < 0.05$) for both variables. If the obtained significance value is > 0.05 , the data can be considered normally distributed or correlated. If the obtained significance value is < 0.05 , the data can be considered not normally distributed (Quraisy, 2020). Based on the results of the normality test, a significant value of 0.001 was obtained for the assertiveness and self-esteem scales. This result indicates a p -value < 0.05 , meaning the data is not normally distributed. The following are the results of the assumption tests conducted in this study:

Table 1. Normality Test	
Normality Test	
Shapiro-wilk	
Sig.	0.001
Information	Unmet Assumption Test

The validity test showed that on the 14-item self-esteem scale, two items were excluded because their item-total correlations were < 0.30 , with correlation values ranging from 0.317 to 0.763. On the assertiveness scale consisting of 25 items, two items were excluded with a correlation range of 0.490–0.684. Additionally, the reliability test indicated that both the assertiveness scale and the self-esteem scale demonstrated good internal consistency, making them suitable for use in this study.

Kendall's tau B correlation coefficient was used in the correlation analysis of this study to determine the strength or level of the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem. The results of the correlation analysis revealed a significant relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem, with a correlation coefficient of -0.198^{***} and a significance level of $p < 0.001$. The results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), and it can be concluded that assertiveness and self-esteem have a negative relationship, with the strength of this relationship falling into the low category, based on the Kendall's tau B correlation coefficient of -0.198^{***} . Based on the above discussion, it can be stated that there is a relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem among students exhibiting people-pleasing behavior, therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted.

Table 2. Correlation Test

Variable		Total Asertivitas	Total Self-Esteem
Asertivitas	Pearson's r	-	
	P value		
	Kendall's tau B	-	
	P value	-	
Sel-Esteem	Pearson's r	-0.624***	-
	P value	< .001	-
	Kendall's tau B	-0.198***	-
	P value	< .001	-

The results of this study indicate that the higher the assertiveness among students with a tendency toward people-pleasing behavior, the lower their self-esteem tends to be. This negative relationship can be explained by the behavioral patterns of individuals with a tendency toward people-pleasing behavior. Under certain conditions, individuals are capable of being assertive, particularly in specific situations; however, in other circumstances, they tend to avoid conflict and become passive. This suggests that assertive behavior is not entirely consistent and can be influenced by situational and social factors (Anriani et al., 2024). Even after expressing their opinions, individuals remain dependent on others' responses. Individuals also remain dependent on others' responses after voicing their opinions. When receiving negative feedback, such as criticism or rejection, individuals may experience self-doubt, which is associated with lower self-esteem (Putri et al., 2024). Assertiveness does not always stem from strong self-confidence; it can also be linked to the need for social acceptance. Individuals with high assertiveness can express their thoughts, feelings, and needs openly, honestly, and firmly without disregarding the rights of others. They can effectively convey their thoughts, expectations, and disagreements through direct and clear communication, thereby making social interactions more effective (Iranty et al., 2024).

Individuals can communicate effectively, set personal boundaries, and express their opinions clearly in social interactions. The ability to initiate social interactions, understand one's own limitations, express negative emotions appropriately, and express positive emotions. In addition to being able to express their thoughts, individuals with high levels of assertiveness are also capable of handling various forms of self-expression in social situations (Arrindell & Ende, 1985). However, in individuals with people-pleasing behavior, such behavior does not necessarily reflect strong self-acceptance. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to exhibit negative self-evaluation, lack of self-confidence, and dependence on others' judgments. Individuals may doubt their own abilities, feel worthless, and avoid situations involving social evaluation. In social interactions, they tend to fear rejection, avoid conflict, and over-accommodate (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991). This condition can affect how individuals express themselves, such as holding back opinions, having difficulty making decisions, and relying on validation from their environment (Orth & Robins, 2022). Low self-esteem is also associated with feelings of worthlessness, anxiety, and a lack of confidence in social interactions.

Overall, the results of this study indicate a relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem among college students who exhibit people-pleasing behavior. The negative correlation suggests that increased assertiveness does not always lead to higher self-esteem, individuals remain influenced by their need for social acceptance. The development of assertiveness must be balanced with the strengthening of self-esteem so that individuals can express themselves more adaptively in social interactions.

CONCLUSION

It is known that assertiveness has a negative relationship with self-esteem among college students who exhibit people-pleasing behavior. This indicates that the higher the level of assertiveness, the lower the self-esteem. This suggests that assertiveness does not fully reflect positive self-evaluation. It is known that assertiveness among students who exhibit people-pleasing behavior is at a high level, whereas their self-esteem is at a low level. This condition

indicates that while individuals may exhibit assertive behaviors such as expressing opinions and refusing requests, these behaviors do not fully reflect their self-assessment, which remains influenced by the need for social acceptance.

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