

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSERTIVENESS AND BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS**

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### **Abstract**

*The present study investigates the association between assertiveness and big five personality traits (extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness to experience). To assess the relationship between the variables a sample of 150 individuals were selected from various places within Peshawar i.e., markets and parks. Data was analyzed using SPSS 22. Findings of the study indicate that there exists significant positive association between assertiveness and extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness. There exists inverse relation between assertiveness and neuroticism. Further results showed that there is no relation between assertiveness skills of an individual and openness to experience. The study has several implications in educational and daily life functioning.*

### **Introduction**

Personality is, in reality, noticeably permanent way to decide one's response to occasions and lifestyles reviews. The main features of personality are relatively stable, nevertheless, human will evolve and demonstrate new and impressive behavior based on experiences and skills they learn. This study focusses on

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relating individuals assertive skills with their personality traits. According to Wood (2012) personality is comprised of characteristics that identify people on the basis of their unique ideas and acts. Mischel and Shoda (1995) suggested that personality is a construct that assumes that people have diverse qualities. Whereas assertiveness is the ability to defend one's own self-experiences. A person who is self-assured is able to convey his feelings and interests in a clear and unafraid manner (Albert & Emmons, 1970).

Assertiveness is a learned interpersonal communication skill that enables people to satisfy society's social demands. Assertiveness is frequently viewed as a middle ground between passive and aggressive behaviour. Assertiveness entails considering other people's rights, wants, needs and desires. Generalized assertiveness has been defined as standing up for one's personal rights and communicating one's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in an honest, straightforward, and reasonable way without intruding on others' rights (Lange, 1976). Assertiveness elicits both good and negative responses, and it aims to attain personal and/or instrumental objectives (Ames, 2009).

Understanding assertiveness as a personality feature and communication style is one way of looking at it. To distinguish assertive individuals Rakes (1991) described three antecedent obligations on the basis of in-depth review of the literature that is i. considering all participants' rights, ii. giving persuading responses without judging the other's self-worth, and iii. considering potential negative effects of assertion.

Assertiveness is the ability to communicate one's own point of view, feelings, opinions, and needs while respecting the rights of others. On a case-by-case basis, an assertive person learns which response to use, whether it is none assertively aggressive or assertive (Oxford dictionary). According to Peneva and Mavrodiiev

(2013) an assertive person can pause and consider what is best for him or her and for others as well.

Assertiveness was first studied in the middle of the twentieth century, and it was linked to therapeutic practice. Clinical psychologists recognized non-assertiveness as a cause of several mental diseases, and as a result, they developed a number of treatments aimed at improving assertiveness (Speed et al., 2017). Some psychiatrists focused on assertiveness as a strategy of safeguarding individual rights in the 1970s, when the civil rights movement in America was rising. They believed that one of the most important characteristics of assertive behavior is the ability to preserve individual human rights in a compassionate and democratic manner while respecting the fundamental rights of others. As a result, during the 1980s and 1990s of the twentieth century, political and social organizations encouraged assertiveness as a way for maximizing individual satisfaction and human capacity (Speed et al., 2017).

Andrew Salter, an American psychologist, conducted the first study on assertiveness in 1949 with the goal of uncovering the reasons of doubt and finding a way to treat or lessen its neurotic effects (Peneva & Mavrodiev, 2013). According to him, doubt arose as a result of the nervous system's preference for retention processes over stimulation activities. He also asserted that the majority of people in modern culture suffer from a balance nerve issue. This gave rise to the assertion theory, which assumes that everyone has some basic human rights, including the right to make mistakes (Peneva & Mavrodiev, 2013).

Assertive people have qualities like emotionality in speaking, expressiveness in speech, the ability to resist and challenge others' proposals, receiving accolades, and being impetuous in their own acts and denials (Ames, 2008). Non-assertive people, on the other hand, are unable to maintain proper boundaries

between personal rights and other people rights. They let others to pushed back their boundaries (Ames, 2008). An assertive person tends to internalize tensions and feelings, resulting in worry, fear, tiredness, uneasiness, and melancholy, among other emotions (Ames, 2008).

Other related themes that emerged from the assertiveness assessment included professional light, assertive communication, self-confidence, and conflict and conflict management. The context for understanding these notions and their independence in assertiveness has been claimed. Lizarraga et al., investigated the effects of compulsory schooling on forty middle school students (Lizarraga et al., 2003). A quasi-experimental design was used in the investigation, with pre- and post-test measurements. According to them, assertiveness refers to an individual's ability to freely express and advocate for own interests, thoughts, and feelings while preserving respect for others.

People who are self-assured and competent communicate more naturally and truly in forming relationships, which is why assertiveness is linked to self-esteem and self-confidence. Deltsidou (2008) investigated assertive behavior among students' mutual interactions with each other and during their studies in the first two semesters of under graduation.

According to Anna, the concept of assertiveness took on new significance when it was defined in terms of specific characteristics like autonomy, partnership, and authenticity (Deltsidou, 2008). An assertiveness scale was used in the study to measure assertiveness relationships, and it was shown to be valid and reliable to a large extent. Nurses communicate with coworkers, patients, and other health care professionals, and their interactions are improved when they have effective assertive communication skills.

There is a wealth of information available on assertiveness and assertiveness training. Nonetheless, assertiveness is described as the practice of characteristics that enable people to act in their own best interests. In their study *Assertive as Communication Competence*, Singh and Nagoya (1993) offered the notion of assertiveness in a similar way, claiming that there is significant difference between persons' attitudes toward performing assertive actions (Singhal & Nagao, 1993).

According to Anderson (1995) assertiveness comes along with tremendous benefits i.e., it boosts self-confidence, reduces stress and frustrations, prevents or reduces strife moreover being assertive can also help boost your self-esteem and earn others respect. Therefore, understating of the factors that relates to it is very essential.

Personality, according to Allport (1961), is a dynamic integration of psychophysical systems within a person that creates the person's unique patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. According to John et al. (2008) the phrase "Big Five" does not indicate that personality variations could only be measured using five unique personality characteristics. Each dimension represents a summation of a huge number of unique and specialized personality characteristics; thus, the big five framework represents a vast spectrum of personality traits.

Personality, according to the researchers at the personality project, is a unified pattern of affect, cognition, and wishes (goals) that led to conduct (Revelle, 2013). Many academics today believe there are five basic personality qualities. Evidence supporting this theory has been collecting for many years, starting with D.W Fiske's investigations in 1949 and later expanded upon by others including Norman (1967), Smith (1967), Goldberg (1981), and McCrae and Costa (1987).

Human resource professionals commonly use the big five personality dimensions to assist with employee placement (The Big Five Personality Traits & Workplace Behavior, 2013). Since these dimensions are regarded to represent the underlying features that make up an individual's overall personality. People who enjoy new experiences and learning new things are more likely to be open Being intelligent and imaginative, as well as possessing a diverse range of interests, are examples of openness. People that have a greater level of conscientiousness are reliable and punctual. Characteristics include being orderly, methodical, and thorough. Introverts draw their energy from within, while extraverts obtain their energy from connecting with others. The characteristics of extraversion include being active, chatty, and forceful. Individuals that are agreeable are sociable, helpful, and caring (Digman, 1990). People who are less likeable are more likely to be distant. Kindness, tenderness, and sympathy are characteristics. Emotional stability is a term that is occasionally used to describe neuroticism. This dimension also deals with the severity of negative emotions. Emotional instability and negative feelings are more common in neurotic people. Besides two traits of moodiness and tenseness are characteristic of them (Digman, 1990).

The big five scores of people stay very consistent for the majority of their lives, with occasional minor variations from childhood to maturity. Soto and John (2012) sought to monitor the evolution of the main five personality traits. Overall, they discovered that agreeableness and conscientiousness grew with age, and there was a substantial trend toward extraversion, despite gregariousness decreasing and assertiveness increasing. The researchers determined that there were more numerous features in specific facets (i.e., adventurousness and sadness) than in the large five traits overall from adolescence to middle adulthood, rather than in the big five traits overall (Soto & John, 2012).

Studies on the relationship between assertiveness and personality traits indicated that extroversion and conscientiousness have a considerable positive association with assertiveness. Neuroticism and assertiveness have an inverse association, although openness and agreeableness have no link with assertiveness. Neuroticism was also found to be a predictor of assertiveness in the study (Bagherian & Mojambari, 2016). Neurotic persons cannot be assertive in life due to their greater rates of anxiety and emotional instability (Hosseini, 2014). Hence, neuroticism is the lowest predictor of assertiveness. The opposite end of the spectrum is conscientiousness. Organized, dependable, ambitious, active, and strong-willed people have a high level of conscientiousness. Extroversion and assertiveness were found to have a strong relationship in this study (Rice, 2007; Janatian, 2015).

Kirst (2011) suggested that there exists significant positive relationship between assertiveness and extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness and self-esteem, as well as reverse association was found with neuroticism. No significant association was existed between assertiveness and agreeableness. Furthermore, in a study conducted by De Young et al. (2002) on 245 students and 222 individuals in a society revealed that there exists positive relationship between stability (agreeableness and conscientiousness) and (conformity) forecast however, there is an inverse relationship between plasticity (extroversion and openness) and conformity. The study by Kammrath et al. (2015) suggested that extraverted and agreeable people are more assertive than introverted and disagreeable people because of higher assertiveness ability (Kammrath et al., 2015).

## **Rational of Study**

The main purpose of the present research is to investigate the relationship between the level of assertiveness and the big five personality traits (neuroticism, extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience). Personality and its component play a major role in the level of assertiveness. Although, previous studies investigated the personality differences of assertive and non-assertive individuals but limited data is available about the study variables in Pakistani culture. Therefore, the current study attempted to explore this phenomenon in citizen of Peshawar.

## **Objective**

The aim of the study is to examine the association between assertiveness and big five personality traits.

## **Hypotheses**

1. There is positive relationship between assertiveness skills and extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience.
2. There will be negative relationship between assertiveness and neuroticism.

## **Methodology**

### **Sample**

In this study a sample of 150 participants comprising male and female were selected from various public places such as markets and parks in Peshawar. The individuals were chosen through convenience sampling method. The sample was between the age ranges of 18 to 35 years.

*Inclusion criteria:* The sample must have the minimum qualification of FA/F.Sc.



*Exclusion criteria:* Uneducated individuals were not considered to be the part of study.

## **Instruments**

Following two instruments were utilized for the purpose of data collection.

### ***Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS)***

This scale was developed by Rathus (1973). It is 30 items measure with items scored from very characteristic of me to very uncharacteristic. The sum of all the items is used to compute the total score after reversing the negative worded items. Test-retest reliability of the scale established using a Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was found to be moderate ( $r = .78$ ).

### **The Big Five Inventory (BFI)**

The Big Five Inventory (BFI) was used, which was created by John, and Benet-Martinez (2000). It consists of 44 statements on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strongly disagree and 5 denotes strongly agree. Of these 44 items eight items' each measures extraversion and neuroticism, nine items each represent agreeableness and conscientiousness and ten items is for measuring openness to experience. Sixteen items from the total scale are reverse scored.

## **Procedure**

On the scheduled days of data collection, a sample comprising of 150 participants were approached. The participants were briefly told about the purpose of study. They were also assured that information obtained from them would only be used for research purpose. After briefly discussing the nature and issues regarding the contents and process of the study, the assertiveness and big five personality traits scales were distributed with explicit instructions to read each item attentively and respond by selecting the response category that best reflected

how they felt. At the end the respondent queries were answered. They were acknowledged for their cooperation and involvement in the research. After data collection, SPSS 22 was used for data analysis.

## Results

This study focuses to find out relationship between assertiveness and big five personality traits. For this purpose, descriptive statistics, alpha reliability of the questionnaires utilized and Pearson correlation was run.

**Table 1:**

*Descriptive statistics (N=150)*

<b>Baseline characteristics</b>		<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender	Male	90	60
	Female	60	40
Qualification of the subject	F.A/F.Sc.	30	20
	B.A/B.Sc.	40	26.6
	M.A/M.Sc.	60	40
	Others	20	13.3
Age	18-20	45	30
	20-25	55	36.6
	30-35	50	33.3
Marital Status	Married	28	18.6
	Unmarried	102	68
	Divorce	20	13.3

*Note: ;n represents sample size.*

Table 1 show descriptive statistics of the sample.

**Table 2:** Alpha reliability for Assertiveness scale & Big five personality scale.

Scale	M	S.D.	Cronbach's Alpha
RAS	48.78	13.54	.74
BFI	112.04	21.12	.89

Note: M=Mean; S.D = Standard Deviation; RAS= Rathus Assertiveness Schedule; BFI= Big Five Inventory scale

Table 2 shows mean standard deviation & alpha reliability of assertiveness scale and big five inventory scale. The alpha value of the two scales is good which indicates that the scales are reliable and suitable for the current study.

**Table 3:** Correlation among variables (N=150)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>1. Assertiveness</b>	–					
<b>2. Extraversion</b>	.25**	–				
<b>3. Agreeableness</b>	.07**	.41**	–			
<b>4. Conscientiousness</b>	.03**	.52**	.40**	–		
<b>5. Neuroticism</b>	-.26**	.52**	.58**	.73**	–	
<b>6. Openness</b>	.01	.62**	.52**	.47**	.65**	–

Note:  $P < 0.01$

The table depicts that there is significant positive correlation between assertiveness and extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness traits while there exists significant negative relation between assertiveness and neuroticism at

$P < 0.01$  level. There is no relation between assertiveness and openness to experience.

## **Discussion**

The study attempts to find out relationship of assertiveness with big five personality traits. Two questionnaires such as Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) developed by Rathus (1973) and big five inventory by John and Benet-Martinez (2000) were utilized. The reliability analysis of both scales showed they were reliable instruments, for example reliability of assertiveness scale is  $\alpha = .74$  and of big five personality traits is  $\alpha = .89$ . Pearson correlation was run among the study variables. The result indicates a significant positive correlation of assertiveness skills with extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness of an individual. Further results showed that there is inverse relation between assertiveness and neuroticism and no relationship was found between assertiveness skills and openness to experience. Results of the present study are supported by previous studies.

According to Zenasni et al. (2006), there is a linear relationship amongst conscientiousness and assertiveness, but no association was found between agreeableness and assertiveness. The study conducted by Bagherian and Mojamari (2016) showed that there is a negative relationship between neuroticism and assertiveness, and there is a linear relationship between extroversion, conscientiousness and assertiveness. No significant association was found between assertiveness, openness and agreeableness. Further, the findings of the step-by-step regression showed that the assertiveness can be predicted by neuroticism, extroversion, and conscientiousness (Bagherian & Mojamari, 2016).

Findings of Sims (2016) study suggested that extraversion had a stronger influence on assertiveness as compared to conscientiousness and neuroticism that had small predictive effects on assertiveness (Sims, 2016). The path analysis by Myint et al. (2022) indicated that students with high scores in extraversion and neuroticism traits directly and indirectly effect their level of assertiveness mediated by self-esteem (Myint et al., 2022).

### **Significance of the Study**

Personality is among the most important factors contributing to individual differences in identity formation. The present study will have several implications in individual's personal and social life.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

The study was based on correlations between assertiveness and the personality traits while ignoring some other important intervening variable that mediate this association, so future studies should focus on mediation study on the under-study variables. Additionally, the small convenience sample size ( $n = 150$ ) reduces the generalizability of findings.

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