



Impact of Assertive Training on Stress and Self-Esteem among Adolescents: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental period marked by significant physical, emotional, and social changes that may affect self-esteem and increase stress. Assertiveness training has been widely used as a psychosocial intervention to enhance communication skills, self-confidence, and emotional adjustment among adolescents.

Aim

This systematic review aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of assertiveness training on self-esteem and stress among adolescents.

Method

The review was conducted following PRISMA guidelines, and a systematic search was performed across PubMed, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate for studies published between 2016 and 2025. Ten studies meeting the inclusion criteria were included in the review.

Conclusion

The review concludes that assertiveness training consistently improved self-esteem and assertive behaviour among adolescents, while several studies reported reductions in stress, anxiety, aggression, and passive behavioural tendencies. Additional benefits included improved coping skills, decision-making abilities, academic performance, and psychological adjustment. Overall, assertiveness training appears to be an effective psychosocial intervention for enhancing self-esteem and reducing stress among adolescents. Incorporating such programmes into school and community settings may support healthier emotional and psychosocial development. Further research involving larger and more diverse populations is recommended to examine long-term outcomes.

Keywords: Adolescents, Assertiveness Training, Assertive Behaviour, Self-Esteem, Stress

Introduction

Adolescence is a crucial developmental period characterized by significant physical, psychological, emotional, and social changes. During this stage, adolescents face numerous challenges related to academic expectations, peer relationships, identity formation, and emotional regulation. The ability to cope effectively with these challenges plays an

important role in maintaining psychological health and promoting overall well-being. However, many adolescents experience stress, low self-esteem, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships, which may negatively affect their mental health and social adjustment.

Self-esteem is an important psychological construct that reflects an individual's perception of self-worth and personal value. Healthy self-esteem contributes to confidence, resilience, effective decision-making, and positive social interactions, whereas low self-esteem has been associated with stress, anxiety, poor academic performance, and emotional difficulties. Similarly, stress has become a common concern among adolescents due to increasing academic pressures, social expectations, and developmental challenges. Persistent stress may adversely affect both psychological and academic functioning.

Assertiveness is the ability to express one's thoughts, feelings, opinions, and needs in a direct, honest, and respectful manner while respecting the rights of others. It is considered an essential life skill that promotes effective communication, emotional stability, healthy relationships, and positive self-concept. Research has demonstrated a positive relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem, suggesting that adolescents who are more assertive tend to possess greater self-confidence and better psychological adjustment.

Assertive training is a structured intervention designed to enhance communication skills, self-expression, decision-making abilities, and interpersonal competence. Several studies have reported its effectiveness in improving self-esteem and assertive behaviour among adolescents. Studies conducted by Rani, Khan and Bibiana, Malik and Varghese, Golshiri et al., and Sarkar and Purkait demonstrated significant improvements in self-esteem following assertiveness training interventions. Furthermore, improvements in assertive behaviour were reported by Rani, Khan and Bibiana, Saradha et al., and Sarkar and Purkait.

In addition to enhancing self-esteem, assertiveness training has shown positive effects on stress reduction and psychological well-being. Eslami et al. reported significant reductions in stress, anxiety, and depression among high school students following assertiveness training. Similarly, Parray and Kumar found that assertiveness training improved self-esteem, reduced stress, and enhanced psychological well-being among students. Golshiri et al. also observed significant improvements in mental health and self-esteem among female adolescents who received assertiveness skills training. However, Parray et al. reported limited effects on overall psychological

well-being despite improvements in self-acceptance, indicating the need for further investigation.

Although several studies have examined the effectiveness of assertiveness training, the findings remain dispersed across different settings and populations. Therefore, a systematic review is required to synthesize the available evidence and provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of assertiveness training on stress and self-esteem among adolescents.

The present systematic review was undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of assertiveness training on stress and self-esteem among adolescents and to examine its influence on related outcomes such as assertive behaviour, mental health, anxiety, and psychological well-being.

Objectives

The main objective of this systematic review is to examine and synthesize the available evidence regarding the impact of assertive training on stress and self-esteem among adolescents. In addition, the review aims to explore the effect of assertive training on related psychological outcomes, including assertive behaviour, anxiety, mental health, and psychological well-being, and to identify the overall contribution of assertiveness-based interventions in promoting positive psychosocial development among adolescents.

Materials And Methods

The methodology adhered to Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure a systematic, transparent, and comprehensive review process.

Databases Searched

The literature search was carried out using the following electronic databases: PubMed, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate.

Keywords Used

Relevant studies were identified using combinations of the following keywords: Adolescents, Assertiveness Training, Assertive Behaviour, Self-Esteem, Stress.

Boolean Operators

AND and OR were used to refine the search and retrieve relevant literature.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Studies published between 2016 and 2025.
2. Studies involving adolescents or students within the adolescent age group.
3. Studies evaluating assertiveness training interventions.
4. Studies assessing self-esteem, stress, or psychological well-being.
5. Full-text articles available in English.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Studies evaluating assertiveness training among adult populations.
2. Editorials, conference abstracts, and commentaries.
3. Studies not reporting stress, self-esteem, or other relevant psychological outcomes
4. Articles not available in full text

Results

Effect of Assertiveness Training on Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was one of the most frequently examined outcomes in the included studies. The findings consistently showed that assertiveness training contributed to improvements in adolescents' self-esteem. Studies conducted by Rani (2017), Khan and Bibiana (2019), Malik and Varghese (2020), Golshiri et al. (2023), and Sarkar and Purkait (2025) reported positive changes in self-confidence, self-worth, and social competence following the intervention. Notably, Sarkar and Purkait (2025) observed a marked increase in the proportion of adolescents demonstrating high self-esteem after the training programme.

Effect of Assertiveness Training on Stress

Stress reduction emerged as another important outcome across the reviewed studies. Evidence from Eslami et al. (2016), Khan and Bibiana (2019), and Parray and Kumar (2022) indicated that adolescents who participated in assertiveness training experienced lower stress levels following the intervention. Improved coping strategies, emotional control, and

greater confidence in handling daily challenges were commonly reported benefits.

Additional Psychological and Psychosocial Benefits of Assertiveness Training

In addition, assertiveness training was associated with several positive psychological outcomes. Saradha et al. (2022) and Parray and Kumar (2022) reported improvements in coping skills, decision-making abilities, interpersonal relationships, and academic performance. Golshiri et al. (2023) found significant gains in mental health among female adolescents, while Parray et al. (2024) reported improvements in self-acceptance, although changes in overall psychological well-being were less pronounced. These findings suggest that assertiveness training contributes to broader psychosocial growth during adolescence.

Relationship Between Assertiveness and Self-Esteem

Kumar and Rathi (2020) explored the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem and found a positive association between the two variables. Adolescents with higher levels of assertiveness tended to report better self-esteem, greater confidence, and more positive social adjustment. This finding highlights the important role of assertiveness in the development of a healthy self-concept.

Relationship Between Assertiveness and Stress

The reviewed studies suggest that greater assertiveness may be linked with lower stress levels. Eslami et al. (2016), Khan and Bibiana (2019), and Parray and Kumar (2022) reported that assertive adolescents were better able to manage stressful situations and express their emotions effectively.

Overall Effectiveness of Assertiveness Training

Taken together, the findings of the reviewed studies indicate that assertiveness training can positively influence adolescents' self-esteem, stress levels, assertive behaviour, and psychosocial functioning. The evidence supports its use in school and community settings to promote healthier emotional and social development.

Discussion

A Multidimensional Intervention for Adolescent Mental Health

The findings from the 10 included studies show that assertiveness training has positive effects on adolescents' psychological well-being. It improved self-esteem, reduced stress, and supported better communication and emotional adjustment.

Improvement in Self-Expression and Confidence

Assertiveness training helped adolescents express their thoughts, feelings, and needs with greater confidence. They also became more comfortable communicating with peers and participating in classroom activities.

Enhancement of Self-Esteem

Improved self-esteem was one of the most common findings across the included studies. Learning to communicate assertively helped adolescents develop a more positive view of themselves and increased their sense of self-worth.

Reduction in Stress and Improved Coping

Several studies reported a reduction in stress after assertiveness training. Adolescents learned to handle academic pressure, peer expectations, and conflicts more effectively by expressing their concerns openly.

Improvement in Interpersonal Relationships

Assertiveness training improved communication between adolescents, their peers, and teachers. It also helped them set appropriate boundaries while maintaining respectful and healthy relationships.

Behavioural and Psychological Mechanism

Assertiveness training helps adolescents understand the difference between passive, aggressive, and assertive responses. Through practice, role play, and feedback, they can gradually develop healthier ways of responding to difficult situations.

Overall Pattern of Change

The findings suggest that improvement in assertive behaviour may strengthen self-esteem and help adolescents manage stress more effectively. Better emotional control and social interaction may further support the development of assertive behaviour.

Variations Across Studies

Although the studies generally showed positive outcomes, the extent of improvement differed between them. Differences in intervention duration, methods,

participant characteristics, settings, and assessment tools may have contributed to these variations.

Limitations

Limited Number of Studies

Only 10 studies were included in the review, which may limit the strength and generalizability of the findings. More studies are needed to provide stronger evidence.

Variation in Training Approaches

The included studies used different methods, durations, and formats of assertiveness training. This variation made it difficult to identify which approach was most effective.

Differences in Outcome Measures

The studies used different tools to assess stress, self-esteem, and related outcomes. This may have contributed to differences in the findings across studies.

Limited Long-Term Evidence

Most studies assessed the outcomes soon after the intervention. Therefore, it remains unclear whether the improvements in self-esteem and stress are maintained over a longer period.

Differences in Adolescent Characteristics

The participants differed in age, background, and social environment across the studies. These differences may have influenced how adolescents responded to assertiveness training.

Conclusion

The findings of this systematic review demonstrate that assertiveness training is an effective intervention for improving self-esteem and reducing stress among adolescents. The reviewed studies consistently reported positive outcomes in self-confidence, self-worth, coping abilities, and emotional adjustment following assertiveness training. In addition to its effects on stress and self-esteem, assertiveness training was associated with improvements in mental health, interpersonal relationships, decision-making skills, and overall psychosocial functioning. Although variations in outcomes were observed across studies, the overall evidence supports the incorporation of assertiveness training programmes in educational and

community settings to promote healthy psychological development among adolescents.

Recommendations

1. Educational Practice
 - a. Introduce assertiveness training as part of school-based life-skills and mental health programmes.
 - b. Conduct regular workshops focusing on communication, confidence-building, and stress management.
2. Nursing and Mental Health Practice
 - a. Incorporate assertiveness training into adolescent counseling and mental health promotion programmes.
 - b. Develop structured intervention packages targeting adolescents with low self-esteem and high stress levels.
3. Family and Community Interventions
4. Encourage parental participation in programmes that support adolescents' communication and coping skills.
5. Promote community awareness regarding the benefits of assertiveness training for adolescent development.
6. Future Research
 - a. Conduct studies with larger and more diverse adolescent populations.
 - b. Examine the long-term effects of assertiveness training on stress and self-esteem.
 - c. Compare the effectiveness of different assertiveness training approaches across various educational and cultural settings.
 - d. Explore the effectiveness of assertiveness training among male adolescents, as many existing studies primarily focused on female participants.

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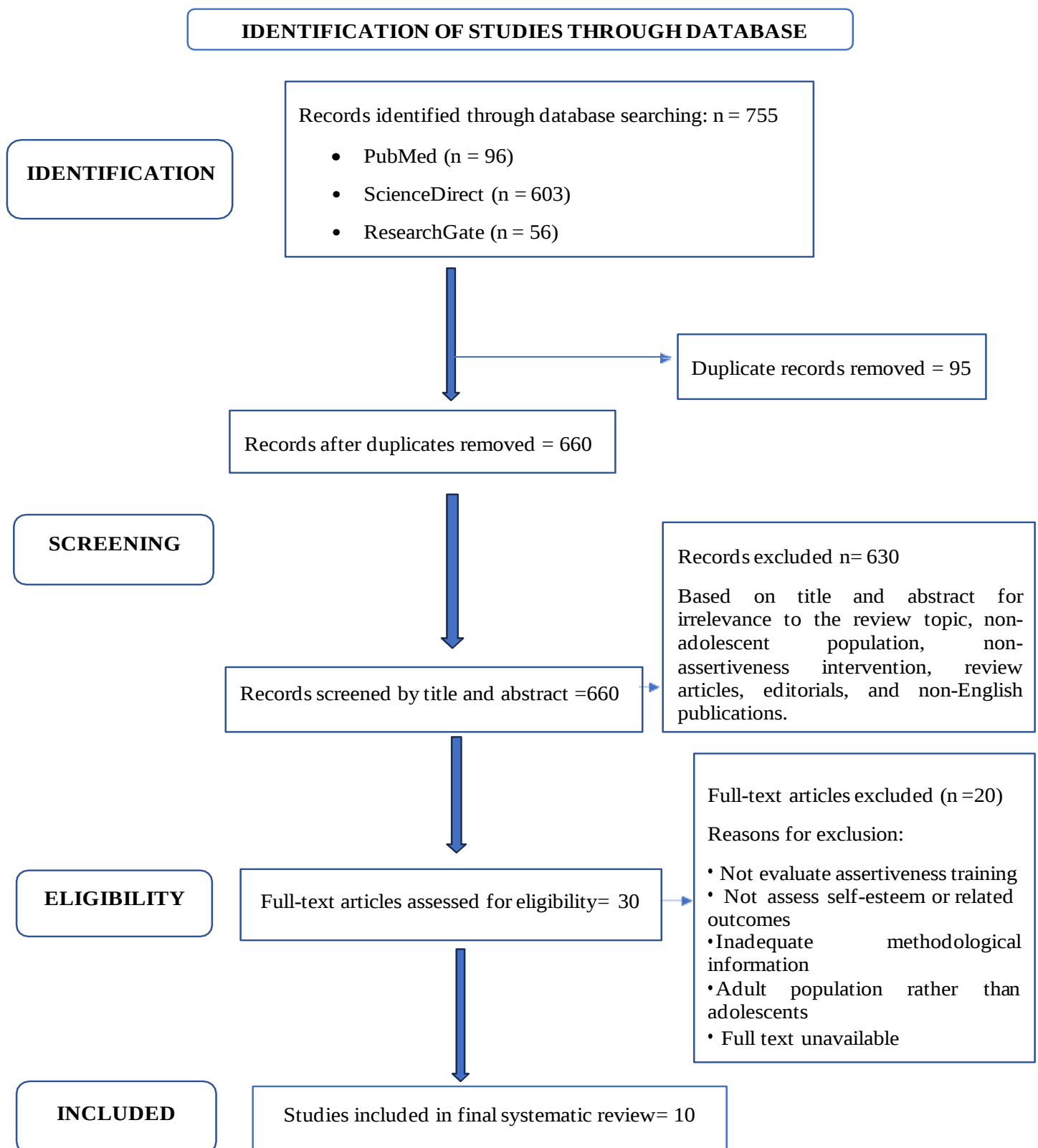


FIGURE NO.1 : SCREENING FLOW CHART