

*** The relationship between assertiveness
and anxiety in Emirates
(Male/Female) sample**

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***The relationship between assertiveness and anxiety in
Emirates (Male/Female) sample**

by

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Abstract:-

Based on Wolpe's contention that assertive responses are incompatible with anxiety and are effective in overcoming neurotic fear, the present study predicted an inverse relationship between assertiveness and anxiety. One hundred and ninety male and 240 female high school and college undergraduates completed the Arabic version of the Wolpe & Lazarus Assertiveness Inventory and the Arabic version of the Costello & Comrey Anxiety Inventory.

Contrary to the majority of the previous studies in the literature, no differences were found between males and females on assertiveness. Based on the frequency distribution of the assertiveness scores, three discrete, noncontiguous groups (high, average, and low assertive) were formed for further analysis. Analysis of variance confirmed that assertiveness relates inversely and highly significant with anxiety.

The results were discussed in the light of the previous studies in the literature. Implication for therapy and future research are presented.

Introduction:

Assertive behavior is defined as the proper expression of any emotion other than anxiety towards another person (Wolpe, 1973 p.81). There are many contexts in which assertive behavior is a appropriate

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Therapeutic instrument. In almost all of them, the patient is inhibited from the performance of normal behavior because of neurotic fear. Wolpe notes that the interpersonal anxiety responses sometimes lead to the channeling of innate drives into unadaptive paths. As an example, fear evoked by heterosexual peers may deflect the patient from normal sexual partnerships, to engage in deviations like homosexuality, pedophilia, or exhibitionism. In other cases, the suppression of action that would give outward expression to feelings results in continuing inner turmoil, which may produce psychosomatic symptoms and even pathological change in predisposed organs. In all such cases, Wolpe suggests that the correct strategy of treatment aims at the neurotic interpersonal anxieties that are generally amenable to assertive training. (Wolpe, 1973, p.81).

Wolpe argues that assertive responses are incompatible with anxiety and are therefore effective in overcoming neurotic fear through the mechanism of reciprocal inhibition. As a logical outgrowth of this view he suggests that assertive training is particularly appropriate in the treatment of neurotic patients manifesting unadaptive anxiety responses in interpersonal contexts (Wolpe, 1958, p.114). From Wolpe's analysis one would predict an inverse relationship between assertiveness and trait anxiety. Many Western studies confirmed the inverse relationship between assertiveness and anxiety. Orenstein ; Orenstein. & Carr (1975, p.204) studied 86 college undergraduates and used the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS), Maudsley Personality Inventory (MPI), The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Trait Scale), and the Fear Survey Schedule. The authors found that assertiveness is inversely related to trait anxiety for both men and women. Morgan (1974) obtained a statistically significant correlation of -0,239 between the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule and a Scale of Social fears. Gay and his colleagues (1975) compared high and low assertive college students on several measures. The authors found that the low assertive group scored significantly higher on the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale (Cited in Orenstein., et al, 1975, pp. 203-204). However, apart from western studies, there has been little evidence in the Arabic World to support Wolpe's view. Very few assertive training practitioners or writers have been taking cultural differences into consideration (Alberti. & Emmons, 1978, p.143). Some of those practitioners offer a thorough

analysis of cultural considerations in assertive training. They examine the effect on behavior of the psycho-social history of a group, and present a new assertive training methodology designed to accommodate the special needs of specific groups.

With regard to sex, the majority of the studies have indicated that males always have higher scores than females on assertiveness. Ghareeb (1983 p. 139) in his study of 140 Egyptian subjects (82 female, 58 male) and using the Wolpe & Lazarus Assertive Inventory, found that the male mean of assertiveness is significantly higher than the female mean of assertiveness ($t = 4,70$. $df = 138$, $P < 0,001$). Hollandsworth. & Wall, (1977, p.218) (Cited in Crassini., Low. & Wilson, 1979, p.15), in their comprehensive review of the available sex-related assertiveness literature, found that of the 14 samples in which sex-identified assertiveness scores were available, four reached significance in favour of males of $P = 0,05$ or better. Orenstein and his colleagues in their study of 450 subjects (200 female, 250 male) and using the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS), found that the t test comparing male and female scores was highly significant ($t = 3,51$. $df = 448$, $p < 0,001$) (Orenstein., Orenstein & Carr, 1975, p.204). This sex-assertiveness relationship is perhaps one of the reasons behind the females' tendency to be more anxious than males especially in the interpersonal contexts.

The present study investigated the relationship between assertiveness and anxiety in high school and college undergraduates from the United Arab Emirates.

In agreement with Wolpe's view, it was hypothesized that anxiety and assertiveness would be inversely related for both males and females, and that low assertive subject would show elevations of trait anxiety. Also, the study hypothesized that assertiveness can be a good indicator of anxiety, though it can be used as a predictor of the level of anxiety. In addition, in accordance with the majority of the studies mentioned in the literature regarding sex difference in assertiveness and anxiety, the present study proposes that males would score higher on assertiveness and lower on anxiety than females.

The study hypotheses, which pertain to the Emirates high school students and college undergraduates, are as follows:

1. There is a significant inverse relationship between assertiveness and anxiety for the males and females together.
2. The inverse relationship between assertiveness and anxiety in the Emirates exists for each of the males and females groups.
3. The Assertiveness score can be used as an indicator for anxiety for the males and females together.
4. There are sex differences related to assertiveness with males scoring higher than females.
5. There are sex differences related to anxiety in the Emirates, with males scoring lower than females.

Method:

Subjects:

The subjects were 430 high school and college undergraduates (190 males, 240 females) all of whom were Emirates Nationals. The mean age for the whole sample is 19,4 years (S.D. = 2,7). Age ranged from 14,00 to 30,00 years.

Measures:

Two inventories were used in the study, the Arabic version of the Wolpe & Lazarus Assertive Inventory (Ghareeb, 1986), and the Arabic version of the Costello & Comrey Anxiety Inventory (Ghareeb, 1987; 1991-a). The two inventories were translated into Arabic and standardized by the present author. Both inventories are adequately reliable and valid measure of the related trait.(Ghareeb, 1986; 1987; 1991-a).

Procedure:

The two inventories were administered to the subjects by the author himself. On the basis of the frequency distribution of the Assertive Inventory scores, three discrete, noncontiguous groups were formed. Cut-off points for the three groups were chosen based on the first and third quartile. The high assertiveness group (HA) was consisted of the subjects whose score equaled or exceeded the third quartile. The low assertiveness group (LA) was consisted of the subjects who scored at or below the first quartile. The remaining subjects were considered as members of the average assertiveness group (AA). This categorization

of the assertiveness scores resulted in 114 subjects in the HA group, 200 in the AA group, and 116 in the L.A group.

Statistical analysis was conducted via the SAS package. Besides obtaining descriptive statistics, two-way analysis of variance was used to investigate the joint effect of assertiveness and sex on anxiety. In addition, anxiety scores were regressed on assertiveness scores to determine whether assertiveness is a useful indicator of anxiety.

Results:

The entire sample scores on the Assertive Inventory range from 4. to 24. The mean score of the Wolpe & Lazarus Assertive Inventory for the whole sample is 15,4 (S.D. = 3,3). The corresponding mean for males alone (N = 190) is 15,4 (S.D = 3,0), and for females alone (N = 240) is 15,5 (S.D. =3,3).

With regard to the Costello & Comrey Anxiety Inventory, the entire sample scores on the Inventory range from 14. to 79. The mean score for the whole sample (N = 430) is 42,4 (S.D. = 11,9). The corresponding mean for males alone (N = 190) is 40,3 (S.D. = 11.3). and for females along (N = 240) is 44,1 (S.D =12,0).Descriptive statistics for the entire sample are presented in Table 1

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for the entire sample on
Age, Assertiveness, and Anxiety

Variable	Sex	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	S.D.
Age	M	190	14,00	30,00	19,82	3,20
	F	240	15,00	25,00	19,07	2,22
	M+F	430	14,00	30,00	19,40	2,27
Assertiveness	M	190	5,00	23,00	15,35	3,37
	F	240	4,00	24,00	15,49	3,25
	M+F	430	4,00	24,00	15,43	3,30
Anxiety	M	190	14,00	79,00	40,27	11,32
	F	240	18,00	76,00	44,08	12,05
	M+F	430	14,00	79,00	42,40	11,87

Table 2 shows the results of the analysis of variance for the effect of assertiveness and sex on anxiety. The table indicates that the interaction of assertiveness and sex is not significant ($F = 0,37$, $P = 0,71$). This means that mean difference between the three groups characterized by low, average and high assertiveness are the same for both males and females. In this case, sex difference in the effect of assertiveness on the level of anxiety could be ignored, and interest would be in the main effect.

Table 2 shows that there are mean differences in anxiety related to sex ($F = 10,92$, $P = 0,001$). The females mean anxiety score (44,08) is higher than the males mean score (40,27).

With regard to the effect of assertiveness on anxiety, table 2 shows that there are significant differences in trait anxiety between the high, average, and low assertiveness groups. ($F = 12,03$, $P = 0,0001$).

Table 2
Analysis of Variance for the effect of Assertiveness
And Sex on Anxiety

Source of V.	D.F.	Summ.S.	Mean S.	F. Value	Pr>F
Assertiveness	2	3149,3	1574,65	12,03	0,0001
Sex	1	1429,08	1429,08	10,92	0,001
Assertive X Sex	2	91,33	45,67	,35	0,71

Pairwise comparison between the mean anxiety score of the three assertiveness groups was carried out via the Bonferroni procedure. Table 3 shows that for each pair means are significantly different. It also indicates that higher anxiety is associated with lower assertiveness.

Table 3
Mean anxiety for the three Assertiveness groups and results of the Bonferroni Pairwise follow-up tests

	Assertiveness Groups		
	LA Group 1 46,3	AA Group 2 42,2	HA Group 3 38,84
LA Group 1	-	4,1*	7,5*
AA Group 2	-	-	3,4*

*Significant mean difference at family rate of 0,05

With regard to sex differences in assertiveness, table 4 shows the means and standard deviations of the males and females on assertiveness and associated t value. As indicated by the table the two groups are not significantly different with regard to mean assertiveness.

Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations of Males & Females on Assertiveness and the associated t value

Sex	N	Mean	S.D.	t	Significant
Male	190	15,4	3,4	0,447	N.S.
female	240	15,5	3,2		

The regression of anxiety on assertiveness for the entire sample was significant ($F = 30,628$, $P = 0,0001$). The value of the squared

correlation was 0,067 which means that assertiveness accounts for about 7% of the variability of anxiety.

Table 5 shows parameter estimates of the partial regression coefficients According to this table; assertiveness has an inverse relationship with the level of anxiety.

Table 5
Partial Coefficient for the Regression of anxiety
On Assertiveness

Value	d.f	Coefficient	T	P
Intercept	1	56,73	21,421	0,000
Assertiveness	1	-0,93	-5,534	0,000

Discussion:

The results of the study showed the following:

- There was a significant overall effect of assertiveness on anxiety. In addition, the results showed that the correlation coefficient between assertiveness and anxiety was significantly negative, whether for both sexes together ($r = -0,26$, Significant at 0,01 level), males ($r = -0,21$, Significant at 0,05 level) or females ($r=0,31$, significant at 0,01 level) separately.
- There was a significant regression of anxiety on assertiveness, which means that the assertiveness score can be used as an indicator of anxiety.
- There was no sex difference related to assertiveness.
- There were sex differences related to anxiety with males scoring lower than females.

The results of this study supported Wolpe's contention that assertiveness is inversely related to trait anxiety for both males and females. As predicted, these results were obtained regardless of sex.

These results agree with the majority of the previous studies (Orenstein., et al, 1975, p.204; Morgan, 1974; & Gay et al, 1975, Cited in Orenstein., et al,1975, pp. 203-204).

The results of the study also showed that contrary to the majority of the previous studies (Ghareeb, 1983, p. 139.; Hollandsworth., & Wall, 1977, Cited in Crassini., Law & Wilson, 1979, p.15., & Orenstein., Orenstein & Carr, 1975, p.204), no differences were found between males and females on assertiveness. **There is a need to know whether these results mean that the Emirates females are more assertive than their counterpart in other countries, or the Emirates males are less assertive than males in other countries.**

With regard to sex differences related to anxiety, the results confirmed the existence of this difference, males scored lower than females on anxiety. These results agree with the majority of the studies mentioned in the literature. Abdel-Khalek & Omer (1988) studied 477 Undergraduate students (200 males, 277 females) and found that mean score of trait anxiety for males is lower than the mean score of females . Ghareeb (1987) studied 400 Egyptian Youth (200 males & 200 females) and found that there were significant differences in anxiety related to sex, with males scoring lower than females. Also, Satyarthi, 1979; Rorsman et al, 1987; and Ben-zur & Zeidner, 1988, reached the same conclusion, namely there were sex differences in trait anxiety with males scoring lower than females.

The study findings may have implications for the clinical treatment of low assertive patients, who as the present study suggests, typically suffer from generalized anxiety. One of these implications is: introducing procedures that reduce anxiety might be expected to enhance the overall effectiveness of assertive training. Along these lines, Wolpe has suggested that "In patients who have a great deal of anxiety about assertion, it may be necessary to grade the tasks in way parallels desensitization" (Wolpe, 1973, p. 85). Wolpe has recommended that desensitization be employed before any attempt at assertive training. Other adjunctive procedures might include the use of relaxation training or sedative medications during sessions.

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