

Assertiveness, Locus of Control, Affiliation and Vulnerability of Personality to Manipulation: Connection and Properties

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Abstract

In the article for Russian-speaking residents of Belarus positive connection between assertiveness and internal locus of control both for men and women is established, while in English speaking society it takes place only for men. A high statistically significant negative correlation between assertiveness and striving to acceptance, assertiveness and the fear of rejection is found, which indicates the self-sufficiency of the assertive personality regarding the process of communication. The fact received by the author earlier that women are generally better protected against manipulative influences than men is confirmed. Mental states experienced by the assertive as well as vulnerable to manipulations objects and subjects of manipulation are revealed. The results of this experimental study are compared with the results obtained by other researchers.

Keywords: *Assertiveness; Locus of Control; Affiliation; Insecurity from Manipulation; Mental States*

Introduction

“Assertiveness is a person’s ability to defend their rights confidently and with dignity, without violation of other people’s rights. Assertive behavior is the direct overt behavior not aimed at harming other people” [1].

Assertiveness is one of the social competence components. Assertive behavior is correlated with the following abilities: to defend private rights, to ask for other people’s help if necessary, to show the positive and negative feelings, to reject undesirable requests, to cope with social anxiety and also to adapt to social life [2].

In Salter’s theory [3] assertive behavior is considered to be an alternative to a very widespread method of destructive impact - to manipulation. This point of view is supported by several other authors [4,5]. According to their opinions, assertiveness is an optimal and most constructive approach to interpersonal relations.

The author [6] earlier introduced the construct “the vulnerability of the individual to manipulative influences” into scientific use. In the process of his studies on a sample of more than 1500 participants it was revealed that every person to a certain extent is not protected against manipulations. The representativeness of the sample allowed asserting that the introduced construct to some extent is relevant for any person.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the article are to study: 1) possible relationships between assertiveness and locus of control; 2) between assertiveness and affiliation; 3) between assertiveness and the vulnerability of the individual to manipulation; 4) mental states experienced by objects and subjects of manipulation.

Methods

To study and evaluate the assertiveness, the author's methods of measuring assertiveness were used, which reliability and validity have been proved [5].

Evaluation of the degree of the individual's vulnerability to manipulative influences was carried out with the help of the author's test, which reliability and validity also have been proved [7].

To identify mental states experienced by objects and subjects of manipulation, the author's questionnaire presented in this article was used [7].

For research and evaluation of locus of control the modification of the scale I-E of J Rottor - Panteleev's and Stolin's test questionnaire of subjective control localization was used [8].

To identify the trends in affiliation the well-known A. Megrabyan's questionnaire in the modification of M. Sh. Magomed-Eminov [9,10] (test of affiliation motivation) was used.

In the empirical part of the research the participants were the students of the Academy of Postgraduate Education (APE Minsk), and the National Institute for Higher Education (NIHE, Minsk), the teachers of the Belarusian State Medical University (BSMU, Minsk), teachers and laboratory assistants of Slutsk Medical College. Total number is 202 respondents aged from 21 to 74 years: deputy directors (51 pers.), university teachers (45), teachers and laboratory assistants of the college (43), defectologists (32), psychologists (31).

Testing of subjects was carried out anonymously and on a voluntary basis. Each test subject was given a set of tests and a response form with a code, according to which he recognized his personal result.

To reject poor-quality answers in each test set, there was a "lie scale".

At all stages of the study, the results of group testing were checked according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov one-sample criterion for compliance with the distribution law. The calculation of the statistics Z and the related error probability p showed that the distribution of all the studied variables obeys the Normal law.

For example, the indicators of test B (assessment of the degree of insecurity of an individual from manipulating him) for young men gave the following statistics: $Z = 0,790$, two-sided statistical significance $p = 0,561$ (for girls, respectively, $Z = 0,668$ and $p = 0,764$). In both cases, the obtained values of $p \gg 0,05$, that is, the probability of error in accepting the hypothesis of a normal distribution of test B indicators is not statistically significant.

Similarly, there is a normal distribution of test results and all other studied personality traits of the subjects.

Conformity of test results to normal distribution. allows you to apply parametric methods for statistical analysis.

It is important that the normal distribution of test results serves as a reliable indication that both male and female samples are representative sections of the population [11]. Thus, the representativeness of the analyzed samples at all stages of the study is once again confirmed, in this case, by statistical analysis.

The reliability of differences in the average values of the studied variables was checked using the t-test for independent samples. Depending on the obtained value of the Livin test, the two-sided significance of the t-test was determined under the assumption of either equality and inequality of variances.

Statistical processing of the test results was carried out using the SPSS package, version 13.00. The SPSS package calculates the significance level to the third digit. In this study, the significance level is $p = 0,05$.

Results and Discussion

It has been found that the presence of inner belief system [12] and the assertive behavior [13]- each in its own way affect a person. It is natural to ask yourself: do they operate separately or are they connected with each other.

This supposition formed the basis of a set of studies on the possible connection between locus of control and assertive behavior. It was expected that the internals who believe that their success reflects the results of their own behavior, will act according to the expectations and show assertiveness. In contrast, externals who think their actions will not benefit them will not being incline to assertive behavior.

M Seeman and J Evans [14] did the first research on this issue by examining the process of searching for information of the TB dispensary patients. The results showed that the internals have been finding more information about health than externals. So, the internals more actively asserted their right for health.

W Davis and E Phares [15] came to similar conclusions noting that the internals extracted more information in uncertain situations. In another research E Phares [16] also stated that the internals used the received information more effectively. Taken together, the results of these studies led to the conclusion that the internals behave in a more assertive way than the externals.

The further studies have found that student's internality is connected with their high level of assertiveness [17,18]. The same results have the medical students [19]. However, these studies have not paid attention to the potential differences between men and women regarding the connection between locus of control and assertiveness. It is likely that the connection between women's beliefs and behavior can be manifested not so consistently as men's behavior, because woman's assertive manner traditionally hadn't been encouraged [20]. Therefore, the aim of further research was to compare the male and female regarding the connection between the concepts of locus of control and assertive behavior.

Thus, the study of EL Cooley and S Nowicki [21] was aimed at studying the dependence of locus of control and assertiveness among students of both sexes. 55 students were tested by using Nowicki-Strickland's scale [22] to determine the internal and external locus of control among adults, and the R Rathus' assertiveness scale [23]. According to the test the males, in contrast to females, had a positive connection between internal locus of control and assertiveness.

In our study, groups made up of equal numbers of men and women showed a positive correlation between assertiveness and the internal locus of control. Indicative are the results presented in table 1.

The fundamental difference between the result and the above mentioned conclusion made by EL Cooley and S Nowicki [21] is that the positive correlation between internality and assertiveness was found in both men and women, while Cooley and Nowicki proved it only for men, but not for women.

	Administration staff	University Teachers	College teachers	Men	Women
Group size	51	45	43	101	145
Pearson Correlation	0,336	0,327	0,418	0,445	0,301
Significance level	0,004	0,032	0,044	0,002	0,047

Table 1: Correlations between assertiveness and the internal locus of control.

We have also proved a statistically significant bilateral correlation between the assertiveness and affiliation.

Affiliation (Eng. - connection, link) - is the need for communication, for emotional contact, friendship, love; it is shown in the aspiration to communicate with others. To a certain extent, the assertiveness and affiliation compete with each other, so their synchronous study with the help of participants is of interest. Many authors suggested that women tend to define themselves in relation to others, while men see themselves only apart from others. Individual assertiveness threatens relations and thus they suppress their self-assertion because of the conflict between their affiliative and assertive needs.

Affiliation is the emotional connection with others, characterized by mutual acceptance and conciliation; the term is used to denote the need for communication, for acceptance and aspiration to the interrelation. In other words, affiliation is a person’s desire to communicate with other people.

Megrabyan’s method (test) identifies two generalized stable motivators within the structure of affiliation’s motivation, i.e. striving to acceptance (SA) and the fear of rejection (FR). So, the test consists of 2 scales: SA and FR.

Our study revealed a highly statistically significant ($p < 0,008$) two-way negative correlation between 1) assertiveness and desire for acceptance, and 2) assertiveness and fear of rejection. The results are presented in table 2.

	Psychologists and defectologists	University Teachers	College teachers	College students
Desire for acceptance	- 0,379	- 0,659	-	-
Fear of rejection	- 0,492	- 0,797	- 0,616	- 0,720

Table 2: The correlation of assertiveness with the desire for acceptance and fear of rejection.

The results show the self-sufficiency of an assertive personality in terms of communication: they are neither particularly striving for acceptance nor experience the fear of rejection.

For university teachers, the external locus of control turned out to be positively related to the desire for acceptance ($r = 0,568$, $p = 0,014$), and for college teachers, the internal locus of control reduced the fear of rejection ($r = -0,329$, $p = 0,031$).

Individual’s vulnerability to manipulative influences was not generally associated with the assertiveness ($N = 131$). As for psychologists, the connection between vulnerability to manipulations and assertiveness exists and has a positive character: $r = 0,361$, $p = 0,046$ ($N = 31$). The peculiarities of this profession seem to have a certain influence on the emergence of this connection.

For BSMU teachers a positive correlation between personality's vulnerability to manipulations and the striving for acceptance was established ($r = 0,431$, $p = 0,017$). At the same time, women have a strong and highly significant correlation ($r = 0,710$, $p = 0,001$), while men have just a tendency to such a connection. This connection means that the striving to acceptance contributes to individual's vulnerability to manipulations.

The comparison of the average data of studied variables in both men and women showed that the degree of individual's vulnerability against manipulative influences in men ("crude" test points equal to 25, 15) statistically ($p < 0,05$) exceed that of the women (19, 24). This result confirms the previously proved fact [6] that the women in general are better protected against manipulative influences than men.

The assertiveness of defectologists and psychologists decreases with the age because of high statistically significant negative correlation between the assertiveness of the specialists and their age: $r = - 0,367$, $p = 0,009$ ($N = 50$). It previously was shown (on a sample of more than 1500 participants) that the assertiveness in general is not connected with the age. But some kinds of professional activities can lead with the age to the "assertive burnout". In this case the professions of defectologists and psychologists are connected with the studying of patient's mental states.

Revealing of mental states experienced by the subjects and objects of manipulation showed the following results. An individual's vulnerability to manipulative influences was positively related ($r = 0,202$, $p = 0,044$, $N = 100$) to their sense of satisfaction due to successful manipulation.

Assertiveness (in case of successful manipulation) is positively correlated with the state of joy ($r = 0,248$, $p = 0,013$, $N = 100$), with the intention to do the same in the future ($r = 0,265$, $p = 0,008$, $N = 100$), with the set of positive emotions due to the success achieved ($r = 0,246$, $p = 0,014$, $N = 100$), and negatively connected with the feeling of shame ($r = - 0,191$, $p = 0,057$, $N = 100$), i.e. when the assertive personality manipulates, it may experience some positive emotions, but not pangs of conscience.

This is apparently reflected in the fact that the assertive behavior was defined by one of its authors as "personal expression of any emotion rather than the concern for other person" [24].

It should be noted that among the 119 participants of the research (deputy school directors, university teachers, defectologists, psychologists) 54% were the assertive personalities, 27% - passive and 19% - aggressive.

Conclusion

The results of the study allow us to draw the following conclusions:

- A statistically significant bilateral correlation between assertiveness and external locus of control was revealed. The fundamental difference between this result and a similar result in a foreign study is that in our study, a positive relationship between external locus of control and assertiveness was found in both men and women. In the English-speaking society, it takes place only for men, but not for women.
- The presence of two-way communication between such competing personality traits as assertiveness and affiliation is established. A highly statistically significant bilateral negative correlation was found between: a) assertiveness and desire for acceptance; b) assertiveness and fear of rejection.
- The results obtained indicate the self-sufficiency of the assertive personality in terms of communication: she does not have a special desire for acceptance and to an even greater extent does not experience the fear of rejection.

- The locus of control and affiliation turned out to be interconnected: external locus of control positively correlates with the desire for acceptance, and internal locus of control reduces the fear of rejection.
- The degree of insecurity of an individual from manipulative influences turned out to be generally unrelated to assertiveness. But for psychologists, this connection exists and is positive. Apparently, the features of this profession have a definite effect on the occurrence of this connection.

For university professors, a positive correlation was found between the individual's insecurity from manipulation and the desire for acceptance. Moreover, in women it is strong and highly significant, while in men there is only a tendency to such a connection. Such a relationship means that the desire for acceptance contributes to the insecurity of the individual from manipulation.

- The degree of insecurity of an individual from the manipulative influences of men is statistically significantly ($p < 0,05$) superior to that of women. This result confirms the fact previously established by the author that women as a whole are better than men protected from manipulative influences.
- The degree of insecurity of an individual from manipulative influences is positively associated with a sense of satisfaction from his own successful manipulation.

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