

From Compliance to Confidence: A Study on Assertiveness Among Trained Nurses

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Abstract: ***Introduction:** Assertiveness is a vital professional attribute in nursing practice, enabling nurses to communicate their needs, opinions, and concerns confidently while respecting the rights of others. In the complex and demanding environment of tertiary care hospitals, nurses must interact effectively with patients, families, physicians, and other healthcare professionals to ensure safe, ethical, and high-quality patient care. A lack of assertiveness may lead to poor communication, increased workplace stress, job dissatisfaction, and compromised patient safety. In contrast, appropriate assertiveness enhances teamwork, professional autonomy, and clinical decision-making. Despite its importance, assertiveness levels among nurses may be influenced by factors such as hierarchical work culture, workload, years of experience, and individual personality traits. Therefore, assessing the level of assertiveness among trained nurses working in tertiary care settings is essential to identify gaps and plan targeted interventions, such as training and professional development programs. **Methods:** A quantitative cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted to assess the level of assertiveness among 50 staff nurses at a selected tertiary care hospital in Kolkata. Participants were recruited using consecutive sampling from inpatient departments. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising demographic variables and Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) scale. Ethical approval and informed consent were obtained prior to data collection. The collected data were coded and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. **Results:** The study revealed that the majority of nurses were fairly assertive (52%), followed by those who were assertive in some situations (38%), and consistently assertive (10%). None of the participants demonstrated difficulty in assertiveness. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that assertiveness is a crucial behavioral and professional skill among nurses. Being assertive involves expressing one's thoughts, feelings, and rights confidently while respecting others. It reflects social courage, professional responsibility, and the ability to refuse unreasonable demands. Assertiveness plays a key role in personality development and is essential for effective interaction with patients and healthcare professionals. It enhances self-confidence, improves communication, and supports professional growth in nursing practice. Therefore, incorporating assertiveness training programs into nursing education and in-service training is recommended to strengthen this essential competency.*

Keywords: Assertiveness, trained nurses, Levels of assertiveness.

1. Introduction

Assertiveness is an essential interpersonal and professional skill in nursing, characterized by the ability to express one's thoughts, feelings, needs, and rights clearly and confidently while maintaining respect for others. In the healthcare setting, especially within tertiary care hospitals, nurses serve as the backbone of patient care and are continuously engaged in complex interactions with patients, families, physicians, and multidisciplinary healthcare teams. Effective communication through assertive behavior enables nurses to advocate for patients, participate actively in clinical decision-making, clarify medical orders, and address ethical concerns, thereby contributing to improved patient safety and quality of care.¹

In contrast, inadequate assertiveness among nurses may result in communication breakdowns, medication errors, moral distress, workplace conflict, and reduced job satisfaction. Nurses who are unable to assert themselves may hesitate to question inappropriate orders, report unsafe practices, or express professional opinions, particularly in hierarchical healthcare systems where power imbalances exist. Over time, such suppression of professional voice can negatively impact nurses' confidence, mental well-being, and overall performance, ultimately affecting patient outcomes and organizational effectiveness.²

The level of assertiveness among trained nurses is influenced by multiple factors, including educational background, years of clinical experience, workplace culture, leadership style, workload, and socio-cultural norms. In many healthcare institutions, nurses are expected to demonstrate obedience and compliance rather than assertive communication, which may hinder their professional growth and autonomy. As healthcare delivery becomes increasingly complex, the demand for nurses who can communicate assertively, collaborate effectively, and advocate strongly for patient rights has become more pronounced.³

A cross-sectional assessment of assertiveness among trained nurses working in tertiary care hospitals provides valuable insight into their current communication behaviors and professional competence. Understanding the existing level of assertiveness can help nurse administrators, educators, and policymakers identify gaps and design structured training programs, workshops, and supportive workplace strategies to enhance assertive skills. Therefore, this study aims to assess the level of assertiveness among trained nurses in a selected tertiary care hospital, thereby contributing to evidence-based nursing practice and strengthening the professional role of nurses within the healthcare system.⁴

Objectives

- 1) To assess the level of assertiveness among nurses working in a selected tertiary care centre.
- 2) To determine the association between the level of assertiveness and selected socio-demographic variables among nurses.

2. Methodology & Materials

The present study employed a cross-sectional descriptive research design and was conducted at a selected tertiary care hospital in Kolkata. A total of 30 nurses directly involved in patient care were recruited using consecutive sampling. The study aimed to assess the level of assertiveness among nurses and to determine its association with selected socio-demographic variables. Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection, and participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, and assertiveness was measured using the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS), a standardized tool with an established method of scoring and interpretation. The RAS has been widely used and is considered a reasonably reliable instrument, with internal consistency measured by Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.70 to 0.85.

Inclusion criteria

- Nursing officers working in patient department of selected tertiary care hospital of Kolkata.
- Those who are willing to participate for the study.

Exclusion criteria

- Nursing officers working in OPD, training and administration areas.
- Nursing officers were on leave during data collection period.

Setting of the study

This study was conducted in a selected tertiary care hospital of Kolkata.

Population

The population refers to the complete set of individuals or objects possessing common characteristics of interest to the researcher. In the present study, the population comprised nurses working in a selected hospital in Kolkata. The target population included nurses working in the inpatient departments of the selected tertiary care hospital, while the accessible population consisted of those nurses who were available and working in the inpatient departments at the time of the study.

Data collection

Data were collected over a period of three days, from 20 May to 22 May 2024, among a sample of 50 nurses selected through consecutive sampling. Prior to data collection, the researcher introduced herself and explained the purpose of the study to the participants. Informed consent was obtained, and participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The questionnaire was then administered, and participants completed it within approximately 10 minutes. The collected data were subsequently coded and compiled for analysis.

The data collection tool comprised two sections. Section I included a structured proforma to obtain socio-demographic information such as age, marital status, educational qualification, additional qualifications, and years of clinical experience. Section II consisted of the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS), a standardized instrument used to assess the level of assertiveness among nurses.

3. Result

Table 1: Distribution of participants as per demographic data, n=50

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)		
20-30	22	44
31-40	22	44
41-50	6	12
Marital status		
Single	21	42
Married	29	58
Educational Status		
GNM	5	10
BSc(N)	42	84
MSc(N)	3	6
Additional Qualification		
Absent	44	88
Present	6	12
Clinical Experience(years)		
<2	9	18
02-Aug	18	36
Sep-16	18	36
>16	5	10
Place of training		
Army	33	66
Civil	17	34
Area of present work		
General ward	15	30
Specialized ward	35	70
Your Native place		
North India	21	42
East India	10	20
West India	5	10
South India	14	28

Table 1: Showed that the majority of subjects (44%) lies in the age group of 20-30 yrs and 30-40 yrs respectively. 58% nurses were married and maximum (84%) are graduates. 36% of them have the clinical experience of 2-16 yrs, 9-16 yrs. 12% where additionally Qualified, 66% are army trained and majority (70%) are working in specialized area. It also revealed that 42% are belonging in north India.

Table 2: Distribution of participants as per assertiveness score, n=50

Variables	Range	Mean	Median	SD
Assertiveness score	30-71	46.9	47	8.9

Table 2 showed that assertiveness scores range from 30 to 71. Also assertiveness scores have a mean of 46.9 with median 47 and standard deviation ± 8.9 .

Table 3: Distribution of study participants as per level of assertiveness, n=50

S. No	Level of Assertiveness	Frequency (%)
1	Difficulty Assertive (15-29)	0
2	Assertive in some situation (30-44)	19(38)
3	Fairly Assertive (45-59)	26(52)
4	Consistently Assertive (>60)	5(10)

Table 3 depicted that 52% of the participants are fairly assertive whereas 38% of them are assertive in some situation and only 10% of them are consistently assertive. While none of them were having difficulty assertiveness.

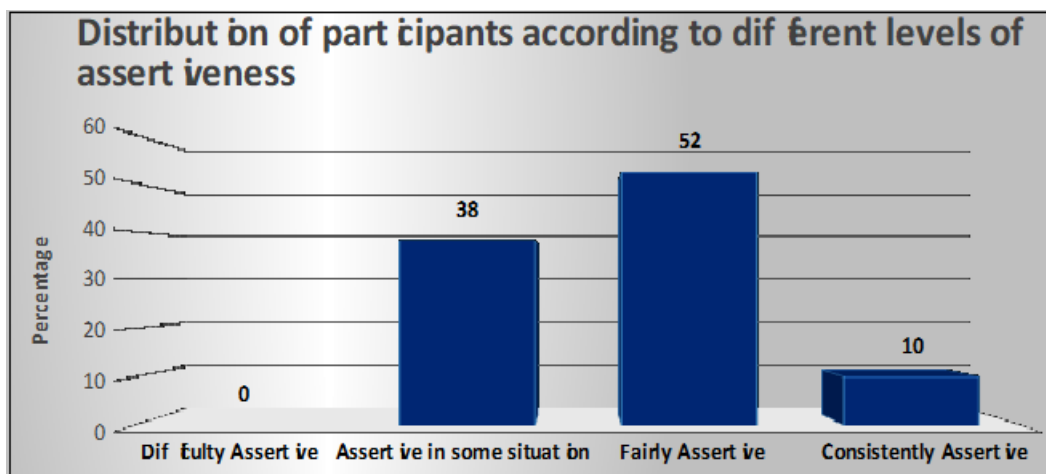


Figure 9: Distribution of participants as per different levels of assertiveness, n=50

Fig 9 Showed that 38% nurses were assertive in some situation, 52% were fairly assertive, 10% were constantly assertive among 50 participants.

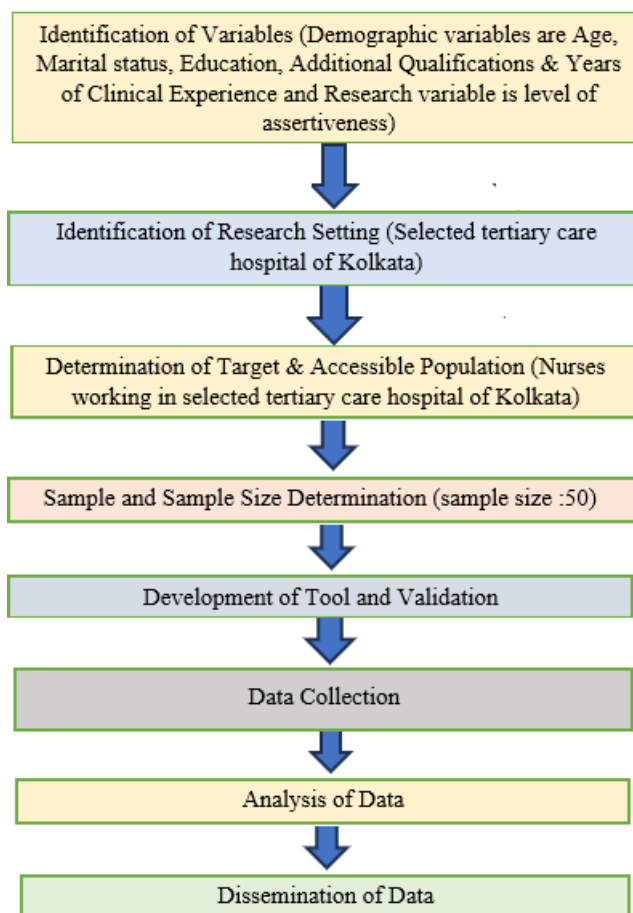
Levels of Score:

The total score on the assertiveness schedule ranges from 15 to 75. Scores ≥ 60 indicate high assertiveness, 45–60 indicate moderate assertiveness, 30–40 indicate situational assertiveness, and 15–30 indicate low assertiveness, reflecting difficulty in assertive behavior.

Data analysis procedure

The collected data was coded, compiled and analysed by using descriptive statistics. The Data coded and organised in master sheet. The collected data is analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Schematic Research Design of the Study



4. Discussion

Assertiveness in nursing refers to the ability of nurses to express their thoughts, feelings, and needs in a direct, honest, and respectful manner. It involves advocating for oneself and others while maintaining a focus on the best interests of the patient. Assertiveness is a very essential skill required for our

daily lives. Individuals can get things done if they are assertive. Of course, they must ensure that they are not aggressive. Assertiveness is the way of expressing one's feelings, opinion, beliefs, and needs openly and honestly, without violating rights of others. Assertive staff nurses are able to suggest their views clearly and accept and take criticism positively, respect the rights and responsibilities in a nursing situation and act accordingly.

Level of Assertiveness among Nurses

In the present study, 52% of participants were found to be fairly assertive, 38% demonstrated assertiveness in certain situations, and only 10% were consistently assertive, while none showed low levels of assertiveness. These findings indicate a moderate level of assertiveness among nurses. Comparable results were reported in a study conducted at Jinnah and General Hospital, Lahore (2022) by Samina Khanam et al., which demonstrated that assertiveness training significantly improved psychological well-being and work engagement among novice nurses. Furthermore, a descriptive comparative study conducted in North Central Nigeria (2021) by Anyebe EE, Aina JO et al. revealed that a majority (76.3%) of nursing students exhibited assertive behaviors, indicating a relatively high level of assertiveness. Overall, these findings suggest that assertiveness can be enhanced through targeted training and supportive clinical environments.

Association between level of assertiveness of nurses and socio demographic variables

The present study examined the association between the level of assertiveness among nurses and selected socio-demographic variables and found a statistically significant association with age. However, no significant association was observed with place of training, field of expertise, marital status, additional qualifications, or years of clinical experience. Similar study conducted by Anyebe EE, Aina JO et al (2021), there age was identified as a significant factor influencing assertiveness, possibly due to increased maturity and professional exposure. No significant relationship between assertiveness and variables such as marital status, educational background, or years of experience, suggesting that assertiveness is more influenced by individual traits and training rather than demographic characteristics alone. These findings highlight the importance of targeted assertiveness training programs rather than reliance on demographic factors.

5. Conclusion

Despite having a low level of assertiveness, the majority of nursing officers in the survey are rather assertive. According to reports, the few nurses who lacked assertiveness had high neurotic dispositions. According to this study, the most common personality type is openness, which is followed by pleasant, conscientious, and extrovert. Being assertive means being socially courageous and forthright, taking into account people's true feelings, standing up for one's legitimate rights, principles, values, goals, preferences, and beliefs, as well as refusing unreasonable requests. Being assertive is a necessary behavior for nurses as members of the health team and a fundamental component in the personality development of professional nurses. Assertiveness is an important skill in the ladder of professional progress in nursing as a nurse who

interact with patients, professional, other health care professionals. It improves the self-confidence of nursing officers.

6. Recommendation

- Assertiveness training should be incorporated as a specific module in the nursing curriculum.
- Pre-entry screening for assertiveness may be conducted for prospective nursing students.
- Routine personality assessment should be included in the selection and training process.
- Personality development and modification strategies should be integrated into nursing education where necessary.

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