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A intervention study based on assertiveness among women who have undergone domestic violence

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Abstract

The study aimed to empower women who are victims of domestic violence through training them in assertiveness skills. The intervention study was conducted by assessing 15 women for their assertiveness level. Among that 8 were given assertiveness intervention and then assessed again for assertiveness level. The results of the study revealed that the assertiveness scores of the assessment conducted before and after the study differed and the assertiveness level of the women has increased after the training.

Introduction

Domestic violence is a common phenomena across the countries, in India it has a greater part in the crimes committed against women. Feminist scholars argue that domestic violence is rooted in gender and power and represents men's active attempts to maintain dominance and control over women (Anderson, 1997). The violence experienced by women may vary and the impact remains the same as it impacts the courage and confidence of the women to a greater extent. The forms of violence/abuse against women include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse. Woodlock (2015) has supposed that technological violence especially upon women has been an add on to the already existing violence against women. There have been many theories proposed on the violence against women which propogates various reason for it - personality of the abuser, abuse cycle, battered women, societal expectations and pressure and many theories have also been brought into light for preventing and overcoming violence against women. One of the effective ways for dealing with violence against women is to make them assertive. According to the Center for clinical intervention (2018) "assertiveness means expressing your point of view in a way that is clear and direct, while still respecting others. Communicating in an assertive manner can help you to minimise conflict, to control anger, to have your needs better met, and to have more positive relationships with friends, family and others. The three major aspects of communication are aggressive, assertive and submissive communication, among these assertive communication is considered as the right way of communicating or expressing. The intervention covered the cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of assertiveness.

Methodology

Sample: The sample chosen for the study was 15 women among them 8 women were given training whose assertiveness level was very low, they all were staying in a government shelter home. All of them have undergone one or the other form of domestic violence and were either pushed away from their home or voluntarily came away from the house due to abuse.

Training : The training program took place around eight days, the training happened for five sessions- one session per day. On the first two days, rapport was established with the participants and their assertiveness level was assessed (pre-test). The training started with a brief introduction about assertiveness and its importance for self empowerment in the *first session*. On the *second session* of the training the participants learned about managing their emotions. The participants got trained in assertive verbal and non-verbal communication skills in the *third session*. The participants were made to explore and become aware about their strengths and weaknesses in the *fourth session* and also the blocks to assertiveness were discussed in that session. On the fifth session the participants were facilitated to set their assertive boundaries after realizing their basic rights in a relationship. Then on the final day a post-test was conducted for assessing the participants' assertiveness level again.

Tool description: Among the 12 items 5 items were taken from Rathus assertiveness scale and 7 items were taken from assertiveness inventor. The items taken from Rathus assertiveness scale was kept as it is and the items taken from assertiveness inventory were in the question form so it was modified into statement form, for example, 'do you find it difficult to keep eye contact when talking to other person?' was changed to 'I find it difficult to keep eye contact while talking with another person'.

Scoring: All the statements in the questionnaire were non-assertive or passive, except statement number 7, 8 and 11 which represent aggressive statements. These 3 statements have to be scored reversely. Then all the raw scores have to be added. The lowest possible score is 12 and the highest possible score is 48 where its midpoint is 30. Higher score indicates non-assertiveness and lower score indicates assertiveness.

Results and discussions

TABLE 1. shows the mean score on assertiveness for pre-test and post test

Tests	Mean
Pre-test	38.1
Post-test	27.4

The mean scores of the participants on the pre test and post-test are slightly different, that is the participants seem to have a mild difference in their assertiveness level. The mean score of the pre-test which was conducted before the training is higher than the mean score of the post-test which was conducted after the training. This means that the participants' non-assertive level has reduced.

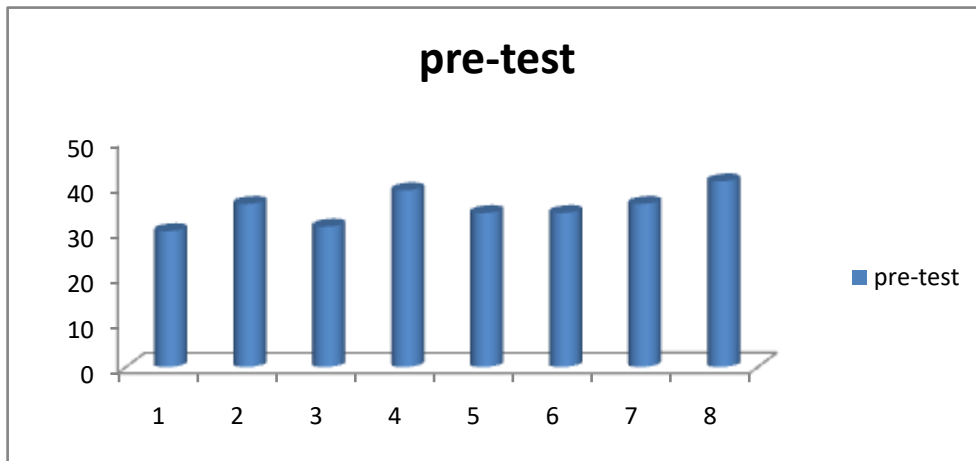


FIGURE 1. shows the individual scores of assertiveness on pre-test

From the figure it could be understood that the scores of the individual participants vary and most of them have scored above 30 except two of them who have scored below.

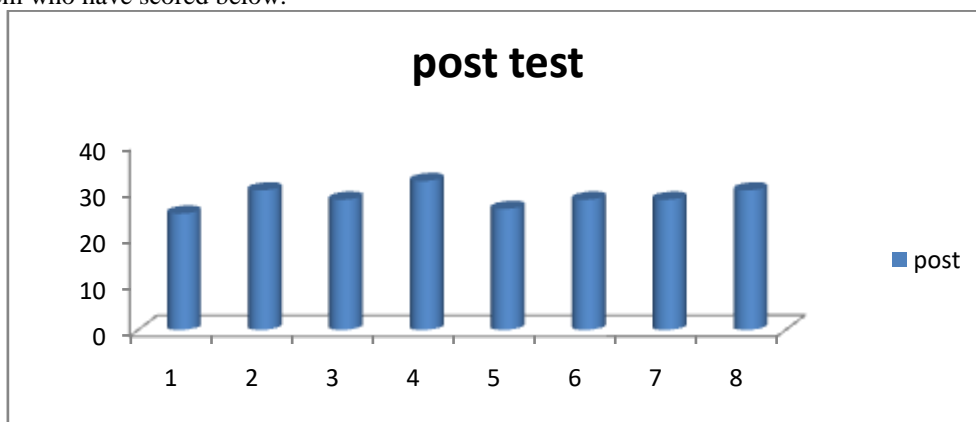


FIGURE 2. shows the individual score of assertiveness on post test

In the post test result the participants have got scores which are less than 30 except one person who have got above 30.

Discussion: From the results it could be understood that the participants had shown improvement in certain aspects of their communication and behavioral styles. The participants could have undergone self exploration during the training program which made them show improvement in their assertiveness level and leave the unhelpful non assertive behavior. Though the participants were the victims of domestic violence and have been destitutes some of them showed greater orientation towards their growth in life. This urge for moving to a better position in life and the past negative experiences could have pushed them towards assertiveness.

Training Outcome

- The participants could identify and differentiate between assertive and non assertive behavior.
- The participants were a little reluctant in the first two sessions and for the rest they became more open and started sharing their experiences without shyness or inhibition.
- The participants learned assertive non-verbal communication more actively and they have said after that they became more conscious about body language.
- They have created their assertive boundaries and are aware about the rights which they possess.
- The participants learned about how to manage emotions, especially anger.

Finding: The findings of the study suggest that the assertiveness training had a significant impact on the participants by increasing their assertiveness.

Conclusion

From the results and findings of the present study, it is understood that assertiveness training can be successful in increasing the assertiveness level of the domestic violence victims.

Suggestions for further research:

- The sample size could have been more.
- The population chosen could have been even more specific say the women victims of intimate partner violence.
- The assertiveness training program could also include dealing with cognitive distortions
- More activities related to learning assertive verbal and non verbal communication could be given

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