

# Assertiveness, Self-Esteem and Academic Performance in Speech and Oral Communication of Filipino Junior Secondary Teacher Education Students

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**Abstract** – *This study explored the influence of assertiveness and self-esteem on the final grade in English III, Speech and Oral Communication, among the Bachelor of Secondary Education juniors at the Nueva Vizcaya State University, Bambang campus, Philippines. The descriptive method was employed. Assertiveness and self-esteem tests were answered by the respondents and their grades in English III were taken from the university registrar. Results showed that the respondents are assertive, have slightly high self-esteem and majority got above average grade in English III. When tested for the significant influence of assertiveness and self-esteem on grade in English III, results showed that both are not significantly related. Thus, the level of assertiveness and self-esteem of the respondents have nothing to do with their grade in English III. Only religious sect emerged to be significantly related with self-esteem.*

**Keywords** – academic performance, assertiveness, self-esteem

## INTRODUCTION

In an educational institution, the ultimate measure of the outcome of education is academic performance — the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals [1]. On the part of the students, good grades are indicators of good academic performance. On the contrary, poor grades denote bad academic performance.

Students' academic performance is monitored closely in order to determine any student whose performance is likely to lead to academic failure. The faculty works with individual students to provide academic guidance to maximize the chances of all students to succeed. In a language class, for example, a student may be good in speaking but not in writing and vice versa. There are always one or two aspects that a person is good at. But no matter what it is, there will always be grounds that affect it, may it be a contributor or a hindrance.

In the Speech and Oral Communication class where the researcher teaches, some of her students struggle in the course, yet others do well. This study determined possible factors affecting such performances and assertiveness and self-esteem have been considered on one hand and ethnicity and religious sect on the other hand.

Assertiveness is a desirable behavioral trait closely related to communicative competence. It is the capacity to make requests; to actively disagree; to express positive or negative personal rights and feelings; to initiate, maintain, or disengage from conversations; and to stand up for oneself without attacking another [2]. According to Jacennik [3], conversational assertiveness is a particularly significant trait influencing how a child develops other social and intellectual abilities. Also, Yong [4] asserts that to do well in Abstract English and Communication Skills, an important university course that aims to develop academic reading, writing, listening, and oral presentation skills, students need to demonstrate high levels of assertiveness. It is because assertiveness reflects one's expression of his genuine feelings, standing up for his legitimate rights, and refusing unreasonable requests. An assertive person resists undue social influences, disregards arbitrary authority figures, and refuses to conform to arbitrary group standards. However, he is highly capable of expressing positive feelings, including love and admiration. In addition, he frequently uses the power of social influence to attain goals; for instance, he can successfully recruit others for important activities.

Self-esteem, on the other hand, refers to the image and view people have of themselves. It also refers to

the assessment and evaluation of a person's emotion concerning his worth. It is considered as an evaluative component of the self-concept [5] through which people evaluate themselves based on the feedback from others.

According to McLeod [6], self-esteem should be viewed as a continuum, and can be high, medium or low. Both high and low levels can be emotionally and socially harmful for the individual. People with high self-esteem tend to focus on growth and improvement, whereas people with low self-esteem focus on not making mistakes in life. Indeed it is thought that an optimum level of self-esteem lies in the middle of the continuum.

Marsh [7] believes in academic achievement claims that self-esteem is an important factor in social construct and psychological view. However, Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs [8] contend that the modest correlations between self-esteem and school performance do not indicate that high self-esteem leads to good performance.

There may be various definitions and perception about assertiveness and self-esteem, but the thing is on how these affect the students' life.

In the speech and oral communication class, some students manifest low performance. Some are found to be timid and they are hesitant of facilitating activities, presenting in front, doing interpretative activities, and the like. The relationship of self-esteem and assertiveness on academic performance is regarded by many educators as a well-established fact. This study is invoked to refute such.

Ethnicity and religious sect are likewise considered since the students in the Nueva Vizcaya State University, Bambang campus belong to different ethnic tribes. Likewise, students belong to different religious sect and various religious organizations are accredited in the campus.

Cockley [9] noted that ethnic identity is the subjective sense of ethnic group membership that involves being able to identify with a group, creation of a sense of belonging, preference for the group, positive assessment of the ethnic group, ethnic knowledge and participation in ethnic group activities. Ethnic differences that exist within our society are discovered by children at a very young age [10]. Hence the development of ethnic identity is an important part of overall identity development and is an indispensable human need that fosters a sense of belonging and a sense of historical continuity [11].

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, it endeavored to determine the respondents' level of assertiveness and self-esteem and their profile variables such as ethnicity and religious sect. Second, it aimed to ascertain if ethnicity and religious sect influence the respondents' self-esteem, assertiveness, and academic performance in speech and oral communication and whether assertiveness and self-esteem influence the students' performance in speech and oral communication.

Hence, the findings in this study is hoped to let the teachers become mindful of factors affecting the performance of students in their speech and oral communication classes and at the same time devise means of improving their students' self-esteem and assertiveness. Similarly, the findings may enable the students to discern their assertiveness and self-esteem and how these contribute to their performance in speech and oral communication thereby making them wilful in improving these.

## **METHODS**

This research study employed the descriptive method of research since its focus was on the description and analysis of the influence of assertiveness and self-esteem on academic performance in speech and oral communication and the relationship of ethnicity and religious sect on assertiveness, self-esteem, and academic performance.

This study was conducted at the Nueva Vizcaya State University College of Teacher Education, Bambang Campus. A total of 51 students enrolled in the course English III, Speech and Oral Communication, were randomly selected from among the 90 Bachelor of Secondary Education enrollees. They were identified using the fish-bowl technique.

To determine the assertiveness and self-esteem of the respondents, the respondents took the test on assertiveness and self-esteem from the website: [www.queendom.com](http://www.queendom.com) [12]. A copy of the percentage level provided by the website was given to the researcher. These scores were then scaled to determine the respondents' level of assertiveness and self-esteem. Queendom was created by a team of psychologist, test developers, researchers and statisticians who utilized the most current and accurate research available according to American Psychological Association (APA) standards for educational and psychological testing. Meanwhile, their academic performance in English III was taken

from the registrar. A letter requesting for the grades was forwarded to the campus administrator through the registrar. It was mentioned in the letter that such grades will solely be used in the study and will be taken with utmost confidentiality. Such was also mentioned to the respondents of the study who gave permission for the retrieval of their grades from the registrar as they are no longer certain of their final grade in the subject.

In order to treat and analyze the data collected, the following statistical tools were utilized: frequency and percentage, mean, independent t-test and F-test, Pearson r, and correlation coefficient of determination

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Profile of the Respondents

**Ethnicity.** The respondents are Ilocano (49.02%); Kalanguya, (19.61%); Isinai (9.80%) Kankana-ey (5.90%), Tagalog (7.84%) and Ibaloi (7.84%).

**Religious Sect.** The biggest percentage of the respondents is Roman Catholic with 45.1% followed by UCCP with 13.7%, Iglesia Ni Cristo with 9.8%, Pentecostal with 5.9%, Born Again, Lutheran, Evangelical, MRCP, Methodist with 3.9% each and Mormon, Espiritista and Latter Day Saints with 2.0% each.

Table 1. Level of Assertiveness of the Respondents

Scale	Respondents	Description
81-100	1	Strongly Assertive
61-80	23	Very Assertive
41-60	19	Assertive
21-40	5	Slightly Assertive
1-20	3	Not Assertive at all
<b>Mean</b>	<b>59.69</b>	<b>Assertive</b>

Table 1 presents the level of assertiveness of the respondents. Data reveals that their level of assertiveness falls under the category of assertive as reflected by the mean of 59.96.

It is apparent in the findings that the respondents are at an equal distance from the extremities of passivity and aggressiveness. This finding may likewise be supported by their grades in English III in which 58.82% are above average and 41.18% are below average in which the difference may be considered close.

That the respondents are assertive means they can stand up for personal rights – express their thoughts, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appropriate

ways. They also respect the thoughts, feelings and beliefs of other people as well as their own.

Similarly, the respondents act in their own best interests, stand up for themselves without undue anxiety, express honest feelings comfortably and express personal rights without denying the rights of others.

Cognitively, the respondents lack anxious thoughts in light of stress. Behaviorally they behave for what they want in a manner that respects others. They do not shy away from defending their points of view or goals or from trying to influence others. Affectively, they react to positive and negative emotions without aggression or resorting to passivity.

Table 2. Level of Self-esteem of the Respondents

Scale	Respondents	Description
81-100	0	Strongly High Self-esteem
61-80	17	High Self-esteem
41-60	23	Slightly High Self-esteem
21-40	9	Low Self-esteem
1-20	3	Very Low Self-esteem
<b>Mean</b>	<b>52.92</b>	<b>Slightly High Self-esteem</b>

Table 2 presents the level of self-esteem of the respondents. Data show that their level falls under the category of slightly high as reflected by the mean of 52.9

A closer scrutiny of the data in table 2 reveals that majority of the respondents manifest slightly high self-esteem, the midpoint in the scale. Those who were categorized to have higher self-esteem are 17, the number being greater by only 6 to those who are at the midpoint.

Using the description of Arshad, Zaidi, and Mahmood [13] to self-esteem, the respondents who have high self-esteem exaggerate their successes and good traits and emphasize objective measures of outcomes. They also frankly accept their good qualities along with narcissistic, defensive, and conceited individuals.

Likewise, they are more likable and attractive, have better relationships, and make better impressions on others than people with low self-esteem. They are more willing to speak up in groups and to criticize the group's approach. Henceforth, the benefits of high self-esteem fall into two categories: enhanced initiative and pleasant feelings. Using praise to boost self-esteem as a reward for socially desirable behavior and self-improvement is thus recommended [8].

To generate the grades of the respondents in English III, which was used to measure their academic

performance, the researcher requested the data from the university registrar. Results are disclosed in table 3.

Table 3 shows that 30 of the respondents or 58.82 of the total population gained a grade of 2.0 and above and 21 or 41.18 percent gained a grade of 2.25 and below. This means that majority of the respondents are from average to above average performance in Speech and Oral Communication.

Table 3. Level of Academic Performance in Speech and Oral Communication of the Respondents

Grade	f	%	Description
2.0 and above	30	58.82%	Above average
2.25 and below	21	41.18%	Below average
Total	51	100%	

Table 4 unveils the degree of relationship in the assertiveness, self-esteem and academic performance in speech and oral communication of the respondents

Table 4. Difference in the Assertiveness, Self-esteem and Academic Performance in Speech and Oral Communication of the Respondents When Grouped according to Ethnicity

Variable	F	Sig.	Remarks
Assertiveness	.593	.705	Not Significant
Self-esteem	.738	.599	Not Significant
Academic Performance	1.580	.186	Not Significant

*df*=50

Data in table 4 show that the difference of assertiveness and ethnicity is .705; self-esteem and ethnicity is .599 and academic performance and ethnicity is .186; all are higher than the critical value of .050 which means not significant at all.

The not significant result may be due to the social interaction of the different ethnic tribes living in the municipality. This is because the town of Bambang where the school is situated is one of the two municipalities considered to be the center of commerce and industry in the province. This diversity has been a common thing that acculturation and enculturation have taken place; commonality had thus emerged. Hence, whether the respondents are Ilocano, Kalanguya, Isinai, Kankana-ey, Tagalog, or Ibaloi, their ethnicity has no bearing to their assertiveness, self-esteem, and academic performance.

Sue, Sue and Ino [14] also affirmed that ethnicity does not affect assertiveness. Same is the findings of Melgoza et al. [15] and Roll et al. [16] as both disagreed to the significant relationship of

assertiveness and ethnicity. The findings of Parham, Lewis, Fretwell, Irwin, and Schrimsher [17] also suggest that individuals who are alike in level of education and status demonstrate similar level of assertiveness, regardless of ethnicity. The findings in this study runs counter with that of Comas-Diaz and Duncan [18] who claimed that ethnicity affects assertiveness. They found out that Puerto Rican women exhibited difficulties in asserting themselves because they were aware of the differences between Puerto Rican norms and Anglo assertiveness norms.

In terms of ethnicity and self-esteem, Su, Farver, and Pauker [19] found that ethnicity was significantly associated with self-esteem. Similarly, Groark, McCall, and Fraser [20] reported that parent messages that encourage minority children to blend with the mainstream culture have in some cases been associated with children having lower self-esteem in school.

As regards ethnicity and academic performance in speech and oral communication, both Popp et al.'s [21] research and Filardo's [22] research indicate that ethnicity allow African American females to display more assertiveness in their language use than the normatively more tentative Caucasian females.

Table 5. Difference in the Assertiveness, Self-esteem and Academic Performance in Speech and Oral Communication of the Respondents When Grouped according to Religious Sect

Religious Sect vs.	F	Sig.	Remarks
Assertiveness	0.958	0.499	Not Significant
Self-esteem	2.105	0.043	Significant
Academic Performance	0.555	0.852	Not Significant

*df*=50

It is interesting to note that religious sect emerged to have significant relationship with self-esteem. Their difference is .043 which is lower than the critical value of .050, hence the significant relationship. Meanwhile, the difference of assertiveness and religious sect is .499 and academic performance and religious sect is .852 which are both higher than the critical value of 050 qualitatively described as not significant.

Although religious practices differ by culture, political boundary, local community, and individual, some form of religion is influential, even central, in the lives of many people across the globe. Religion is an important context for development because it

provides a means of socialization in areas such as moral behavior and offers emotional support to individuals from the cradle to the grave.

In the article published by Searles, [23] she deduced from previous researches that God-fearing folks tend to have higher self-esteem than nonbelievers; however, religious belief is linked to high self-esteem only in countries that emphasize religious belief. The researchers offered a possible explanation for their finding: religious people feel better about themselves in religious countries not because they are religious, but simply because they fit in with the crowd. Similar findings were claimed by Reiland and Lauterbach [24] who found that high religiosity group had higher mean self-esteem than the medium and low religiosity groups. As regards the influence of religion to assertiveness, the result of the analysis of Arigbabu, Oladipo, and Owolabi-Gabriel, [25] show that religious affiliation is not a significant predictor of assertiveness among education majors. This implies that an individual's religious affiliation does not have significant influence on his/her assertiveness. The assumption is that the participants might have viewed religion as a purely spiritual matter that has nothing to do with their assertiveness (which is a psychological variable).

In terms of the relationship of religious sect and academic performance, Habibi, et. al. [26] found that there is a significant positive relationship between spiritual health and academic success.

Same is true with the article published by Hosseini [27], in which he cited Bakhshayesh (2011), who studied the relationship between trust in God and academic achievement and concluded a non-significant relationship.

Hodge (2007), still in Hosseini, [27] also discovered that students who are allowed to absent and participate in religious activities do not gain lower academic scores for missing their classes. Instead, it seems that participating in this program enhances their academic achievements (p. 169). Williams et al.'s, also in Hosseini, [27] claim that church attendance among the African-American youths was significant in predicting positive academic outcomes.

Walker and Dixon [28] also found that students who participated in religious activities and/or had spiritual beliefs had better academic performance.

Tables 6 and 7 that follow present the significant influence of assertiveness and self-esteem on the academic performance in Speech and Oral Communication of the respondents, respectively.

Table 6. Influence of Assertiveness on Academic Performance in Speech and Oral Communication

Variables	r-value	r <sup>2</sup> (%)	Critical r-value	Interpretation
Academic Performance vs. Assertiveness	-.0908	8.25	.276	Not significant

Table 9 shows that the coefficient of correlation (Pearson r) is -.09082 which is lower than the critical r value of 0.276 indicating that assertiveness does not significantly influence the academic performance in Speech and Oral Communication of the respondents.

This led to the acceptance of the null hypothesis that there is no influence of assertiveness on the academic performance in Speech and Oral Communication of the respondents. This means that a person's level of assertiveness does not influence his performance in Speech and Oral Communication.

In numerous studies, no significant correlations of assertiveness and academic performance were also found. Miguelsanz, Martín, and Martínez [29] noted a statistically significant negative correlation between the variables assertiveness and academic performance in the diverse samples analyzed.

Table 7. Influence of Self-esteem on Academic Performance in Speech and Oral Communication

Variables	r-value	r <sup>2</sup> (%)	Critical r-value	Interpretation
Academic Performance vs. Self-esteem	-.0903	0.815	.276	Not significant

Table 7 shows the influence of self-esteem to the academic performance in Speech and Oral Communication of the respondents. The coefficient of correlation (Pearson r) is -.09032 which is lower than the critical r value of 0.276. This indicates that self-esteem does not significantly influence the academic performance in Speech and Oral Communication of the respondents. This led to the acceptance of the null hypothesis that there is no influence of self-esteem on the academic performance in Speech and Oral Communication of the respondents. This means that the level of self-esteem of a person has nothing to do with his academic performance.

The findings in this study find support from Abdullah [30] and Akinleke [31] who found out that self-esteem did not predict objective measure of students' academic performance. Vialle, Heaven &

Ciarrochi [32] likewise claimed a no correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement.

Various studies however are not in accord with the findings in this study. Bachman and Palmer [33] believe that self-esteem is the first and main factor in speaking performance. Same is claimed by Habibzade [34] who asserted that self-esteem played an important role in students' oral production. Also Muhammad [15] noted that high self-esteem makes people more willing to speak up in groups and to criticize the groups approach.

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Majority of the respondents are Ilocano and Roman Catholic. They are assertive and have slightly high self-esteem. Their grade in Speech and Oral Communication is above average. Their levels of assertiveness and self-esteem do not significantly influence their academic performance in Speech and Oral Communication. When they were grouped according to ethnicity and religious sect, and the influence of these variables on assertiveness, self-esteem and academic performance in Speech and Oral Communication were considered; only religious sect and self-esteem emerged to be significantly related.

It is recommended that since the respondents' assertiveness and self-esteem are at the midpoint of the scale, professors are encouraged to redesign their teaching activities by incorporating exercises meant to increase one's self-esteem and assertiveness.

Speech and oral communication professors are likewise encouraged to devise ways to improve their students' speech and oral communication skills inasmuch as teaching demands for a clear way of expression of lessons to facilitate understanding of subject matter.

Bible literacy may be incorporated in the different subjects to refresh the students with God's teaching especially on ways of living. Such may improve their level of self-esteem especially that religious sect is found to have significant relationship with it.

The respondents are encouraged to continue going to church and participating in church activities to make their self-esteem strongly high.

The quantitative nature of this study specifically the use of survey instrument created limitations. Hence, a replicate of this study may be conducted using mixed method or a combination of quantitative and qualitative research for a collection of in-depth information.

Since the findings in this study have substantiated the results of previous studies that one's assertiveness and self-esteem have nothing to do with performance in speech and oral communication, researchers are encouraged to consider other variables such as but not limited to phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

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