

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in
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Development and Assessment of an Assertive Communication Training for Business Students
in higher Education with Focus on verbal Elements: *Evaluating the behavioral Outcomes
based on the Assertiveness Inventory and Self-Efficacy*

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Abstract

This work examines the effectiveness of an in-person assertive communication training program focusing on verbal elements, for business students in higher education. The paper aims to design and implement a 90-minute training program based on theoretical models such as Kolb's Experiential Learning and Gagné's Instructional Design. It integrates theoretical foundations, practical exercises and multiple feedback sessions. The training's impact is measured through changes in participants' perceived and actual assertive communication behaviors. The study employs an intervention and control group and measures results through pre-, post-training and a follow-up survey one week after the intervention. The results are evaluated using various statistical tests, to assess the program's effectiveness and its contribution to assertiveness training for business leadership.

Keywords

Assertive Communication, Verbal Communication, Non-Violent Communication, Assertive Communication Training, Training Design, Role-Play, Training Effectiveness, Behavioral Outcomes, Self-efficacy

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1. Introduction

Effective communication is widely recognized as one of the most essential soft skills in professional environments. Robles (2012) identifies it as the second most critical soft skill named by employers. Among the different communication styles, a rather aggressive form of assertive communication was frequently used for a long time (Rector 2001). Since communication is highly contextual it is sensitive to shifts in societal values. These changes influence communication styles, and therefore also communication within organizations, leading to developments in leadership styles (Prince-Paul & Kelley 2017). Recently, leadership styles have been evolving from dominant, directive approaches to more inclusive and participative frameworks. A global survey revealed that 83% of leaders recognize this change, favoring democratic leadership over authoritarian styles (The Evolution of Leadership 2019). Consequently, assertive communication is shifting from a rather dominant to a highly contextual communication style, suggesting a fundamental shift in its relevance for leaders (De and Bakhshi 2023). Hence, the ability to articulate one's needs and opinions without aggression is a skill which belongs to a modern leader's skillset.

Current research highlights that assertive communication is not an innate ability but a skill that must be learned, highlighting the need for structured trainings (Pipas and Jaradat 2010). Reviewing relevant literature exposes two major obstacles. First, a recent study by Speed, Goldstein, and Goldfried (2017) reveals a decline in publications addressing assertiveness training since the 1980s. In particular, they dropped from over 450 annual papers to fewer than 50 by 2017. Secondly, a systematic literature review conducted by Nuha, Hidayah, and Wahyuni (2024) demonstrates a research gap, as existing literature predominantly focuses on assertive communication training in healthcare and clinical psychology. While the current research landscape provides valuable insights into training methods, it leaves a gap in applying them within business contexts.

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Therefore, this work project aims to bridge the existing gap by 1. developing an in-person training on assertive communication for higher education business students and 2. assessing the impact of this intervention. The research consists of:

- **Design and Implementation:** Develop and deliver an in-person assertive communication training program tailored to higher-education business students, focusing on verbal elements.
- **Behavioral Outcomes:** Measure the training's impact on participants' communication behavior using self-efficacy scales and validated assessment tools, such as the assertiveness inventory.
- **Contextual Application:** Explore how and in which fields assertive communication training can be applied.

A detailed literature review was conducted to identify the most effective training and build upon them. Based on these findings, a 90-minute training was designed, integrating Kolb's *Experiential Learning Model* (1984) and Gagné et al.'s *Instructional Design Principles* (2005). The training combines theoretical frameworks, such as the *Nonviolent Communication model*, with practical exercises in realistic business scenarios and above that includes multiple feedback sessions.

The study employs an intervention and control group to isolate the training's effects and minimize external factors. Results are measured through pre- and post-training as well as a follow-up survey one week after the intervention and evaluated using various statistical tests. In the final section, the training results are discussed, and the study's limitations and potential directions for future research are illustrated.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Communication Levels – Conceptualization

According to De Saussure and Rocci (2016), communication is divided into three levels: verbal, paraverbal, and non-verbal. The following chapter will elaborate on the conceptualization of each level and its respective characteristics.

2.1.1 Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is “the ability of human language to convey an infinite number of messages and to form and develop new concepts based on the unique and universal properties of the verbal code” (Jakobson 1972, 74). It serves as a fundamental component of human interaction and enables individuals to articulate their needs, share specific information, and ask questions. Moreover, it facilitates the expression and explanation of emotions, observations, and thoughts. Thus, it enables a deeper understanding between individuals and the exchange of complex ideas (Abdikarimova et al. 2021). Verbal communication is a fundamental mode of human interaction utilizing linguistic elements to convey meaning. It includes both written and spoken forms, where humans exchange information through words, voice, and linguistic expressions. This form of communication typically relies on a single, shared linguistic code and medium (Krauss 2002). Examples include face-to-face interactions, audio recordings, and video-mediated conversations, among others.

2.1.2 Non-verbal Communication

Among the three levels of communication discussed, non-verbal communication exerts the greatest influence on the effectiveness of interactions. Research estimates its influence between 55% (Benbenishty and Hannink 2015) and 93% (Mehrabian 1972). It encompasses non-vocal elements such as facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, body posture and -movements, physical touch, space usage, appearance, and even an individual’s clothes (Duncan 1969). Understanding the various elements of non-verbal communication enables individuals to interpret their own signals and understand those of others. By minimizing personal barriers

between conversation participants, the interpretation of non-verbal cues becomes more straightforward and effective (Rusu and Chiriță 2017). Moreover, effective non-verbal communication plays a central role in building trust (Benbenishty and Hannink 2015). Most non-verbal communication appears to happen unconsciously (Ambady and Weisbuch 2010). Therefore, it is essential to comprehend the impact each element has on the conversational partner to communicate effectively. Nevertheless, a universal framework for interpreting the manifestations of non-verbal communication elements in individuals does not exist, as cultural and gender differences must be acknowledged and considered (Coats and Feldmann 1996).

2.1.3 Paraverbal Communication

Paraverbal communication, often referred to as voice language, is a nuanced form of interaction that blends aspects of verbal and non-verbal expression. It involves sending coded information through voice qualities and speech patterns (Persky, Ferrer, and Klein 2016). Further, it encompasses vocal characteristics, pronunciation styles, volume, intensity, rhythm, speech flow, intonation, and the strategic use of pauses. This type of communication is particularly important when visual elements are unavailable, such as during phone calls. Paraverbal communication primarily relies on the auditory channel to convey its meaning (Rusu and Chiriță 2017). It accounts for 38% of human communication effectiveness (Benbenishty and Hannink 2015). This communication level emphasizes not just what is said but how it is said. Hence, it deals with details, playing a key role in personalizing interactions and helping its listeners to grasp the true intent of messages. This approach allows for a more authentic understanding of a speaker's intent. Consequently, this communicative mode operates with nuanced subtleties, which serve as a crucial factor in personalizing communication and enabling an authentic perception of the conveyed message. This skill is valuable in various settings, from personal conversations to professional environments, where conveying the right tone and emotion can be as crucial as the words themselves (Rusu and Chiriță 2017).

2.2 Communication Styles – Definition of Terms

Communication has several dimensions and can be divided into four major styles namely passive, aggressive, manipulative, and assertive. The following chapter elaborates on the characteristics and differences of each style.

2.2.1 Passive Communication

Passive communication is often characterized by an indirect approach and a tendency to agree with others (Bocar 2017). This communication style avoids articulating thoughts, feelings, and needs directly. As a result, the desires of others are usually prioritized over one's own, leading to feelings of helplessness and frustration (Princeton University-Umatter n.d.). Furthermore, it is often marked by a reluctance to engage in conflict or assert one's rights, leading to a tendency to agree with others even when it contradicts personal beliefs or desires (Shermann 1999).

At the non-verbal level, passive communication encompasses behaviors such as avoiding eye contact, speaking in a soft manner, and frequent apologizing. This can create misunderstandings and lead to needs not being met because emotions are rather suppressed than articulated openly (Bocar 2017). Moreover, it can hinder effective collaboration in group settings, as individuals may defer decision-making to more assertive counterparts (Shermann 1999). Their ideas may go unheard and their reluctance to say no might burden them with excessive responsibilities. This dynamic can disrupt team cohesion and productivity. However, research indicates that females tend to engage in more passive communication than males (Pânișoară et al. 2015).

2.2.2 Aggressive Communication

The aggressive communication style is characterized by confrontational and hostile behavior used to dominate or control others (Shermann 1999). In contrast to passive communication, individuals often express their needs, desires, and opinions without caring for the feelings or rights of their counterparts. This can lead to potential harm in their interpersonal relationships (Infante and Wingley 1986). This communication style is expressed through the use of verbal

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and non-verbal elements, such as raised voices, intense eye contact, and aggressive body language, which creates an intimidating atmosphere (Rancer and Avtgis 2006).

Additionally, aggressive communication often involves interrupting others, disregarding different perspectives, and using threats to achieve goals (Infante and Wingley 1986). Research indicates that this communication style often arises from underlying feelings of inadequacy or frustration. It leads individuals to adopt aggressive behaviors to exert control over their interactions (Infante 1987). Consequently, aggressive communication can cause damaged relationships and create toxic environments. It enhances conflict and creates tension, making others feel uncomfortable or fearful during interactions (Martin, Anderson, and Thweatt 1998).

2.2.3 Manipulative Communication

The manipulative communication style uses subtle tactics for influencing or controlling an individual's thoughts, feelings, or actions without their explicit awareness (Carion 2022). Further, it often involves emotional elements, misleading information, and dishonesty. In contrast to aggressive communication, indirect speech is used to achieve the desired outcomes while hiding the communicator's true intentions (Oswald 2010). Manipulative communicators typically prioritize their own needs and goals at the expense of others, which can lead to ethical dilemmas and relational conflicts (Maillat and Oswald 2011). Another commonly used element in manipulative communication is *gaslighting*. Sweet (2019, 851) describes it as “a type of psychological abuse aimed at making victims seem or feel ‘crazy,’ creating a ‘surreal’ interpersonal environment”.

While manipulative communication might be a handy solution for uncomfortable situations, such as calming a dissatisfied or rude customer, it carries significant risks. If the counterpart discovers the manipulation or dishonesty, they may feel betrayed. Therefore, manipulative communication may foster toxicity and undermine interpersonal connections over time (Carion 2022).

2.2.4 Assertive Communication

Research on assertive communication is complex and does not provide one unified definition. Early publications in the area of clinical psychology date back to the 1940s (Speed, Goldstein, and Goldfried 2017). Assertive communication evolved from a concept to protect individual rights during the American civil rights movement of the 1970s towards a tool for personal growth and self-improvement in the '80s and '90s. Nowadays it is recognized as an important social skill and a key component of effective leadership communication (Peneva and Mavrodiev 2013). Thus, St. Lawrence (1987) already recognized at least 20 different commonly used definitions in the literature about assertiveness and assertiveness training. As a result, findings across studies seem to be inconsistent and contradictory. The terminology of assertiveness has constantly developed. Lazarus (1973, 697) initially described it as "the ability to say no, the ability to ask favors or make requests, the ability to express positive and negative feelings, the ability to initiate, continue and finish a general conversation". The theory of assertive behavior was further developed as an interpersonal behavior involving relatively honest and direct expression of thoughts and feelings that are socially appropriate and consider the feelings and welfare of other people (Rimm and Masters 1979).

Besides the aforementioned, assertiveness requires individuals to adapt their behavior to various interpersonal situations in a way that maximizes positive outcomes while minimizing the negative consequences (Pipas and Jaradat 2010; Schwartz 2001). More recent literature by Green et al. (2018) describes assertiveness as the communication of thoughts, feelings, and needs in an honest, appropriate, respectful, and direct way, where both individuals are respected and considered equally important. Furthermore, assertive communication combines the passive and aggressive styles, while it tends to be closer to the aggressive one (Schwartz 2001). Additionally, assertive communication focuses on analyzing and addressing behaviors rather than individuals, which distinguishes it from manipulative communication styles (Pipas and Jaradat 2010).

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Research by Pfafman and McEwan (2014) points out the importance of context in assertive communication and its complexity. They argue that assertiveness needs to be perceived as appropriate by the recipient in order to be effective. Hence, any expression which goes against cultural, situational, or relational norms might be interpreted as aggressive rather than assertive. This perspective suggests that individuals need to adjust their level of assertiveness based on their objectives, the specific circumstances, and their relationship with the other party. The authors further propose that reducing the degree of assertiveness when required by the situation is not a sign of non-assertion. Instead, it demonstrates appropriate assertion and social awareness. In fact, this view reframes assertive communication as a flexible skill which requires situational judgment, highlighting the complexity of effective interpersonal communication (Pfafman and McEwan 2014).

2.3 Deep-Dive into Assertive Communication

2.3.1 Verbal Elements of Assertive Communication

Assertive communication is not an innate human behavior. Rather, individuals tend to use a passive or aggressive communication style. Consequently, assertiveness represents a learned form of communication which educates specific behavioral patterns (Pipas and Jaradat 2010). In order to confidently use assertive communication, it is vital to understand its elements. Lazarus (1973) points out four key verbal elements: (1) requesting favors, (2) rejecting unsuitable demands, (3) expressing positive and negative feelings, and (4) initiating, continuing, and concluding a general conversation. These elements are associated with confidently advocating for oneself in social exchanges.

To communicate assertively, Nonviolent Communication (NVC), developed by the American psychologist Marshall Rosenberg in the 1970s, can be a useful tool for expressing thoughts and needs clearly without appearing aggressive. NVC is designed to support individuals in expressing themselves with honesty and clarity while at the same time remaining respectful and

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empathetic (Rosenberg, 2015). Additionally, NVC aims at replacing behavioral communication patterns of defending, withdrawing, and attacking by observing, identifying, and articulating what a person wants in a specific situation. Rosenberg (2015) points out that NVC promotes values such as respect, attentiveness, and empathy. NVC is composed of four components: (1) *Observations*, (2) *Feelings*, (3) *Needs*, and (4) *Request* (see Figure 1), and incorporates *I-Statements*.



Figure 1 – The Nonviolent Communication model (4-step model): (adapted from Rosenberg 2015)

During the initial step, the individual objectively communicates the *observed situation*, while avoiding any judgment or evaluation. Thus, the focus is on clearly expressing facts that have occurred without attributing blame on another person (Rosenberg 2015). By keeping observations neutral, the communicator allows the listener to receive the message without perceiving it as an attack. Starting with phrases such as ‘*When I see...*’ or ‘*When I hear...*’ can introduce the context for the communication effectively. This supports setting a constructive tone for the conversation (Ferré 2022).

The second step in NVC emphasizes self-reflection to identify and understand one’s *feelings* triggered by the observed situation. This could include emotions such as anger, sadness, disappointment, frustration, impatience, or worry (Ferré 2022). According to Rosenberg (2015), language serves as a tool to express these needs effectively. Therefore, recognizing, analyzing, and articulating emotions is essential, as it enables clear and authentic self-expression. The

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example could evolve as follows: *‘When I heard the feedback on my contribution, I felt sad and useless’*.

The third step addresses unmet *needs and desires*. Rosenberg (2015) suggests that unmet needs often underlie emotions such as frustration or sadness, which signal personal dissatisfaction as a response to our internal assessment. Hence, the third step aims at identifying the reason which causes the emotion to articulate an unmet need. This enables clearer and more constructive communication. The example could evolve as follows: *‘When I heard the feedback on my contribution, I felt sad and useless because my work went unnoticed for the group report’*. By identifying the need for recognition, an individual can then formulate an open expression of the desire for acknowledgment (Ferré 2022).

The fourth and final step in NVC involves articulating a *clear and specific request* aimed at promoting mutual understanding and well-being within the relationship. This step establishes a constructive resolution which satisfies both parties’ needs in a supportive setting. However, the request should remain a suggestion rather than a demand to prevent the other person from feeling defensive or pressured. Therefore, requests should be expressed in a positive, clear, and precise manner, ensuring that they are easily understood (Rosenberg 2015). Nevertheless, individuals have unique needs. A negative response to a request might reflect their priorities or needs, rather than a personal rejection of the individual. If a response is unsatisfactory, asking for clarification or additional information can enhance the relationship and create a deeper mutual understanding (Ferré 2022). The example could evolve as follows: *‘When I heard the feedback on my contribution, I felt sad and useless because my work went unnoticed for the group report. I would appreciate it if we could discuss ways to improve my work so that it can be included in our report’*.

The use of *I-statements* in NVC enhances communication by reducing blame, accusations, and defensiveness. This method allows for the expression of concerns and feelings without

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sounding threatening. Framing the message from a specific perspective allows for effective communication of points and encourages the listener to remain open and engaged (Ferré 2022; Rosenberg 2015).

2.3.2 Relevance for Leaders

Since the 20th century leadership styles have undergone a significant evolution from rather dominant and directive approaches to more mindful and inclusive frameworks. A global survey by the Centre for Creative Leadership found that 83% of leaders perceive recent changes in the characteristics of effective leadership, moving away from authoritarian styles towards participative, democratic leadership (The Evolution of Leadership 2019). This shift reflects broader societal changes in values and attitudes, encouraging leaders to adopt a more passive communication style that fosters individual ownership and collaboration over rigid top-down control (The Evolution of Leadership 2019). Another indicator of this development are Millennials, having a more gender-agnostic view of leadership, softening the traditional agentic leadership style in favor of more communal traits (Sadler, Grabianowski, and Ashley 2020). In consequence, the assertive communication style and its relevance for leaders currently face a renaissance.

Assertive communication becomes highly contextual and idiosyncratic and is viewed as a dynamic instead of a static communication style (De and Bakhshi 2023). Leaders must adapt their attitude to efficiently guide a team (Pfafman and McEwan 2014). The authors state that assertive communication must be perceived as appropriate by the receiver. Therefore, any expression violating contextual, relational, or cultural norms would be considered aggressive. Current dynamics within the healthcare sector underscore this even more, where a shift to more mindful communication is advocated. This links assertiveness with timing and the context of dialogues to enhance patient-centered care (Prince-Paul & Kelley 2017).

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Further research indicates that effective leaders adapt their communication style and level of assertiveness based on the context of situations, cultural differences, and conversational partner. Adaptability in leadership enables leaders to adjust their communication style according to organizational needs and environmental changes, particularly in global business settings (Sutrisno, Suherlan, and Murthada 2024). Nevertheless, good leaders also need to be able to express their opinions, feelings, and needs, to clearly state what they want to say (Susanto and Sofyan 2024). A leader's ability to balance assertive communication efficiently yields several advantages, outlined in the following.

Susanto and Sofyan (2024) suggest that using a balanced communication style - avoiding extremes of aggressive and passive communication - enables leaders to build respectful relationships within their teams, thereby enhancing their trustworthiness. By communicating assertively, leaders are perceived as role models, strengthening their integrity, which positively influences employee behavior, as they often replicate their supervisors' traits (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). Moreover, assertive communication enables leaders to express their thoughts and expectations clearly and straightforwardly, ensuring that their messages are properly understood. This potentially enhances leadership effectiveness and, therefore, saves time which in return increases productivity within an organization (Susanto and Sofyan 2024).

However, failures in leadership styles can arise from either too little or too much assertiveness. Leaders who tend to be aggressive could be perceived as too hostile and offensive. However, those being too passive may be seen as weak and not able to take charge in situations requiring initiative and conviction. Thus, finding the right balance of assertiveness is crucial for leaders to avoid appearing ineffective while maintaining authority and respect (Ames and Flynn 2007). Overall, developing assertive communication skills can be summarized as essential for leaders to effectively manage conflicts, enhance productivity, and foster organizational commitment.

2.3.3 Cultural Aspects

Cultural aspects play a crucial role in the development of communication styles, as the perception of communication varies significantly across different cultures (Singhal and Nagao 2009). Cultural influences impact our norms, values and beliefs and consequently our communication and leadership styles. Hence, understanding and adapting to these differences is important for leaders, as misunderstandings and misinterpretations may lead to conflicts (Plaister-Ten 2022), especially in multi-cultural environments. In their study, Singhal and Nagao (2009) compare the differences between American (Western) and Japanese (East Asian) students' attitudes toward performing assertive behaviors and their perceptions of it. The findings reveal significant cross-cultural differences in the level of assertiveness, underscoring the enormous influence of cultural dimensions on the communication style. Overall, each culture holds distinct norms and traditions, shaping the communication style and expectations around assertiveness. Leaders, especially in cross-cultural environments, should be aware of these differences and should try to adapt to the respective communication preferences to minimize misunderstandings and support effective interactions and teamwork.

2.3.4 Implications for Employees and the Organization

Assertive Communication is highly important not only for leaders and to overcome cross-cultural differences, but also to increase overall employee and organizational satisfaction. It shows great potential to improve communication satisfaction, self-esteem, job satisfaction and to create a positive working environment.

Maheswari and Kaur (2015) outline the strong correlation between assertive behavior and satisfactory communication. Their study on the behavior of nurses demonstrates that assertive individuals experience a higher level of satisfaction in their interpersonal communications, while non-assertive ones experience significantly lower levels of satisfaction. This indicates that communicating directly and respectfully strengthens relationships within an organization.

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Additionally, assertive communication training programs play a crucial role in enhancing self-acceptance (Maheswari and Kaur 2015), self-esteem (Lin et al. 2004) and job satisfaction (Abdollah, Kobra, and Tayyebbeh 2012). When individuals acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, they may develop a stronger sense of self-worth. This potentially enhances communication satisfaction (Maheswari and Kaur 2015). The positive relationship between assertive behavior and communication satisfaction may result from assertive individuals tending to experience greater psychological well-being and fewer emotional challenges. One reason is that assertive individuals are more skilled at managing situations, setting boundaries, and confidently refuse undesired tasks (Jamie, Ortiz, and Vazquez 1998).

A study by Dasgupta, Suar, and Sing (2012) compares assertive with passive and aggressive communication across 400 employees of ten manufacturing organizations in India. It found the assertive communication style to support and promote positive relationships between supervisors and employees. In contrast, an aggressive communication style tended to be perceived as detrimental, potentially decreasing employee support. This underscores the importance of adaptability within communication styles to promote employee well-being and a sustainable working environment. Additionally, research links assertive behavior in communication to reduced fear and anxiety, enhanced self-confidence, and increased respect for each other. This facilitates more effective interactions between colleagues and contributes to a constructive workplace environment (Susanto and Sofyan 2024).

In summary, assertive communication is likely to boost communication satisfaction, self-acceptance, and self-esteem (Maheswari and Kaur 2015) within an organization and likely to create a respectful and productive work environment (Dasgupta, Suar, and Sing 2012; Susanto and Sofyan 2024). Therefore, emphasizing assertive communication practices is highly recommended for organizations within the business context.

2.3.5 Examples of Assertive Communication Training

Research by Pipas and Jaradat (2010) demonstrates that assertive communication is not an innate human behavior but rather a learned communication form which builds upon specific behavioral patterns acquired via education. This finding highlights the need for and importance of assertive communication training and courses to acquire and effectively develop this skill. Therefore, this chapter explores two key examples of verbal assertive communication training in healthcare and business, highlighting their methodologies, objectives, and impact on professional practice to understand the status quo of assertive communication training.

Omura, Levett-Jones and Stone (2019) designed a 90-minute workshop for third-year Japanese nursing students, focusing on enhancing assertive communication effectiveness for patient safety. The workshop length was chosen to fit into established university timetables. This promotes convenience and acceptance among students and academic staff. Moreover, the authors used Gagné et al.'s *Instructional Design Principles* (2005) embodying the following nine steps to target the learning conditions: (1) *Gain attention*, (2) *Inform learners of objectives*, (3) *Stimulate recall of prior learning*, (4) *Present the content*, (5) *Provide learning guidance*, (6) *Elicit performance*, (7) *Provide feedback*, (8) *Assess outcomes*, and (9) *Enhance retention and transfer to the job* (Gagné et al. 2005) (see Appendix 1). A multi-method approach is used, incorporating audio-visual recordings, didactic instructions, group discussions, and role-plays. While the recording functioned as an attention-grabbing tool, the didactic instructions provided an understanding of communication principles. This was followed by an in-depth exploration of the definition and key elements of assertive communication. Additionally, role plays enabled students to cognitively practice the previously learned communication techniques (Omura, Levett-Jones and Stone, 2019). Students discovered differences between aggressive and assertive communication and were provided with nursing-related communication techniques. Lastly, participants applied their newly gained theoretical knowledge during role-plays.

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Omura, Levett-Jones and Stone (2019) measured the students' satisfaction with the workshop using a five-point Likert-type scale. The overall mean satisfaction score was 4.12, indicating a high level of agreement. Students especially expressed their satisfaction with the provided PowerPoint slides for the delivery of theoretical input. Nevertheless, the satisfaction with role-plays scored among the lowest, which the authors attributed to the specific cultural differences of Japanese students as they are more familiar with passive learning than active participation. In conclusion, this study offers valuable implications regarding the optimal duration of the workshop, the effective delivery of theoretical concepts via visualization tools such as PowerPoint, and the importance of linking theoretical concepts with adequate opportunities for the practical application during the training.

De and Bakhshi (2023) identified a research gap in the limited focus on assertiveness training within business school curricula. They present assertive communication as a key soft skill in a rapidly changing and highly contextual business environment. The authors developed two 80-minute workshops for Indian management students which are adaptable for both online and in-person settings. The workshop conceptualization is based on experiential learning and learning by doing which is recognized as the most effective method for internalizing material (Aggarwal and Goodell 2014). Moreover, the authors reference Kolb's *Experiential Learning Theory* (1984), which states that learning occurs through the transformation of experience into knowledge (Kolb 1984). The first workshop session starts with a 20-minute discussion on techniques of assertion and the ABC framework by Albert Ellis (1991). The ABC framework is part of Rational Emotional Behaviour Therapy (REBT) which is designed to help individuals confront their irrational beliefs and manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors more sustainably and effectively. The primary goal of REBT, particularly through the ABC framework, is to assist individuals in recognizing these beliefs and reflecting on their emotional

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responses (Ellis 1991). The theoretical input is followed by a role-play, as well as a reflection and feedback session. The role-plays were observed by workshop participants from other groups who gave feedback right after. During the observation phase, they were tasked with analyzing the conversation dynamics, assessing the level of perceived assertion, and determining the effectiveness of their ability to adjust their position along the assertiveness continuum (De and Bakhshi 2023). The second workshop session fully focused on developing, performing, and critically discussing role-plays in small groups again without any new theoretical input.

The value of role-plays is especially highlighted by the authors. They argue that due to the ability to practice, observe, and receive feedback participants gained a better understanding of the differences between aggression and assertion. Additionally, the role-plays generate a realistic learning environment which reflects the complexities of cross-cultural interactions, and the challenges faced by business professionals. This study underscores the importance of role-plays with business contexts to create realistic scenarios. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of observation and open feedback for other participants as it enables students to develop a deeper understanding of various contexts, cultures, and communication styles.

In summary, the two studies represent successful examples of assertive communication training in a healthcare and business context. Omura, Levett-Jones, and Stone (2019) demonstrate the importance of linking structured and visualized theoretical input with interactive exercises such as role-plays to enhance engagement and deepen the participants' understanding. Meanwhile, De and Bakhshi (2023) underscore the importance of experiential learning and peer feedback, especially through business-related role-plays, as effective for developing assertive communication skills. These findings build the foundations for the development of our business-related assertive communication training.

2.4 Research Gap Analysis

Research by Robles (2012) identifies communication skills as the second most important soft skill for hiring new employees. For higher education students in business who are preparing to enter careers which usually require frequent interaction with colleagues, developing assertive communication skills is essential to ensure their professional readiness. This requires training opportunities within or outside of university curriculums. The analysis of existing materials suggests that training should provide a brief overview of communication fundamentals, introduce assertive communication, and provide useful frameworks such as the *NVC-model* (Omura, Levett-Jones and Stone 2019; De and Bakhshi 2023).

However, the number of publications on assertive communication training has shown a consistent decline. Speed, Goldstein, and Goldfried (2017) illustrate this trend, noting a decrease in 'assertiveness training' publications from around 450 per year in the 1970s to just 50 per year today (see Appendix 2). Furthermore, a recent systematic literature review by Nuha, Hidayah, and Wahyuni (2024) indicates a potential research gap in assertive communication training within business contexts for higher education students, as most publications remain concentrated in the fields of psychology and healthcare. Apart from the assertive communication training developed by De and Bakhshi (2023) for Indian management students, there is limited literature available on similar programs. To address this gap, the study aims to extend existing research by developing a training, which focuses on verbal elements of assertive communication. The training provides an overview of assertive communication fundamentals and specifically integrates the *NVC-model* within a business context for higher education students.

3. Methodology

The methodology aims to provide a profound overview of the assertive communication training and the survey design. In the following the training implementation is illustrated and data collection as well as the assessment logic are explained.

3.1 Training Program Design

This work aims to address the gap in existing training programs for verbal elements of assertive communication within a business context. The objective is to equip higher education business students with basic theoretical backgrounds and practical tools, to effectively communicate in their current roles as well as throughout their upcoming professional career.

The training program is structured in three main phases: (1) *Pre-Training*, (2) *Training*, and (3) *Post-Training* (see Figure 2). This falls back on Salas et al. (2012), who emphasize that effective training is not a one-time event but rather an iterative process with critical steps both before and after the main session. To assess learning progression throughout the three main stages, the participants were provided with three feedback surveys. The first survey was distributed immediately before the assertive communication training session began (T1), the second survey was provided immediately after the training session (T2), and the third survey was provided one week post-training session (T3).

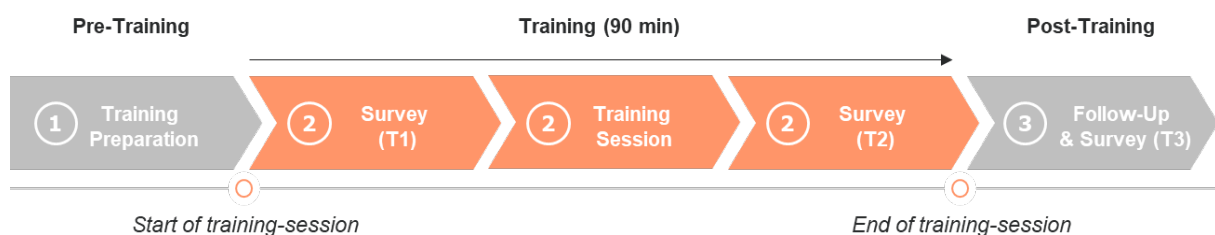


Figure 2 –Training Program Overview: (Own illustration)

To promote sustainable learning among participants, this assertive communication training is primarily based on the combination of the two holistic learning models *Experiential Learning Theory* by Kolb (1984) and Gagné et al.'s *Instructional Design Principles* (2005) (see 2.3.5 Examples of Assertive Communication Trainings; see Appendix 1). The experiential learning

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theory consists of a four-stage learning cycle. The main idea is that effective learning occurs through a continuous cycle of (1) *Concrete Experience (CE)*, (2) *Reflective Observation of the new Experience (RO)*, (3) *Abstract Conceptualization (AC)*, and (4) *Active Experimentation (AE)* (see Appendix 3). According to Bull and Clausen (2000), combining structured and experiential learning methods creates a balanced and effective educational approach for graduate courses. While Gagné et al.'s model (2005) provides a detailed and structured approach, ensuring that each training sequence is purposefully designed, Kolb's (1984) model introduces a dynamic, iterative learning cycle which adapts to participant experiences, making the training more practical. Together, these models support diverse learning needs, combining structured training with reflective practice, to sustainably teach assertive communication skills. However, the main content taught in the training session is based on the *NVC-model* (Rosenberg 2015), which explores fundamental parts of verbal assertive communication.

Training structure

The structure of the assertive communication training is derived from *Carliner's Training Design Basics* (Carliner 2015). The author considers the four following design elements to structure a training program optimally: (1) *An appropriate intervention for achieving the objectives*, (2) *An appropriate communication medium*, (3) *The structuring of the instructional material*, and (4) *The presenting of the instructional material*.

Considering the resources available for this work project, a 90-minute live training session on assertive communication was chosen as the *appropriate intervention for achieving the objectives*. Carliner (2015) argues that live training sessions allow trainees to practice the learned skills, receive immediate feedback, collaborate with other trainees, and engage in discussions with instructors. Furthermore, Dutt, Cheng, Ang and Nair (2023) found that live training is more effective than web-based training in enhancing participants' theoretical

Group part

knowledge and their perceived ability to apply functional behavior assessment. Therefore, this format was seen as most suitable for single-session training, as it facilitates experiential and interactive learning. The training's focus was to foster assertive communication skills, allowing participants to engage in discussions, ask questions, and practice through a collaborative written exercise as well as a role-play. Also, given time and resource constraints, the chosen format of a free, one-time, 90-minute live session was seen as the most appropriate.

The most *appropriate communication medium* for the training was found to be a face-to-face format. According to *Carliner's Training Design Basics* (2015), this is often preferred when building relationships is crucial for a successful learning process, which is the case for assertive communication training. Moreover, face-to-face training enables instructors to adapt materials in real time to the training dynamics and to ensure comprehension by observing participants' verbal and non-verbal communication. Additionally, Charoensap-Kelly, Broussard, Lindsly, and Troy (2016) found that face-to-face soft-skills employee training programs result in greater behavioral change compared to online soft-skills training programs. Since communication, by its nature, requires interaction, an interactive and dynamic medium provides optimal conditions to be successful. Besides this, the session was conducted in classrooms at Nova School of Business and Economics (Nova SBE), offering the necessary equipment, such as projectors or desks.

The structuring of the instructional material plays a crucial role in the overall training objectives. Considering Carliner (2015), a clear structure and agenda are essential for an effective training program. They formally organize the training, present the material in a clear sequence that helps trainees understand and connect concepts. This breaks the content into manageable sections to prevent overwhelming. To guide trainees successfully through the training, the agenda is broken down into four core chapters: (1) *Introduction*, (2) *Theoretical*

Group part

Background, (3) *Practical Application*, and (4) *Discussion and Wrap-Up* (see Appendix 4; Slide 4)

To appropriately guide through the training in general, to present the theoretical background, and to support the practical application, a PowerPoint presentation was designed (see Appendix 4). Each of the four core chapters was assigned a time sequence based on its length and relevance to the overall learning objectives. This helps ensure adherence to the 90-minute time limit. Due to its time intensity, the *Practical Application* chapter was allocated 40 minutes (see Appendix 5), which is almost half of the training session. This reflects the focus on Kolb's *Experiential Learning Theory* (1984), which requires a practical component for trainees.

Selecting an instructional strategy is a key part of *presenting the instructional material*, as it enables instructors to deliver the content in a way that encourages development and retention among the intended skills (Carliner, 2015) Furthermore, Carliner (2015) claims that an instructional strategy should be chosen based on a balance of three factors: (1) *Suitability for the training material* (2) *The learning environment of the training* (3) *The instructors' level of comfort with the strategy*.

The selected instructional strategy is based on the two different approaches of *Instructional Collaborative Learning* and *Experiential Learning*, being implemented within the third chapter 'Practical Application'. The chapter contains a written exercise, which is based on *Instructional Collaborative Learning*, as it focuses on learning through group interactions and shared problem-solving. Moreover, working in pairs encourages active discussion, joint problem-solving and enables trainees to learn from each other by sharing ideas and reasoning. Even more, partners can provide instant feedback and clarification on each other's ideas (Carliner 2015). Besides the written exercise, the chapter contains a roleplay, which is based on *Experiential Learning*. This encourages trainees to gain knowledge through direct experiences and reflection on those experiences. Thus, trainees are immersed in realistic scenarios

Group part

throughout the roleplay. They actively engage with the content, instead of only absorbing information passively (Carliner 2015).

Training Materials

According to Carliner (2015), the preparation of a live training program requires a guide for trainees, typically including copies of all slides used during the session, materials for training activities, and supplementary information such as fact sheets. To optimally support the participants throughout the training session, they received: a printed version of the presentation with space for notes, a handout with key takeaways (see Appendix 6), a sheet for the written exercise (see Appendix 7) and a pen. Above that, the trainers shared a link and a barcode to conduct the surveys and participants were asked to bring a mobile device. These materials were provided to support trainees in actively following along and making relevant notes throughout the session.

3.2 Data Collection and Assessment Logic

Kirkpatrick (1998) emphasizes that evaluating the impact of training is crucial for determining its overall effectiveness. Furthermore, analyzing the outcomes identifies areas for improvement in both the methodology and training materials before implementing future sessions. To do so, the *Kirkpatrick model* is commonly used among researchers. The model is displayed in Appendix 8 and considers four levels: (1) *Reaction*, (2) *Learnings*, (3) *Behavior*, and (4) *Results*, where each level continuously reveals more precise insights into the training's effectiveness (Kirkpatrick 1998). The evaluation of this work project will exclude levels three and four of the *Kirkpatrick model* (1998) because they focus on trainees' behavioral changes within their working environment and the achievement of specific Key Performance Indicators or organizational objectives. These levels are outside the scope of the study, because participants have not yet transitioned into full-time employment. Instead, the assessment will focus on levels one and two, which include trainee engagement and the improvement of their

Group part

communication skills. However, Bandura (1977) indicates that measuring self-efficacy is an additional way to evaluate a training's impact. According to her social cognitive theory, self-efficacy influences behavior, effort, and thought processes, which makes it a valuable metric when behavioral changes cannot be directly assessed. Thus, level three will be substituted with self-efficacy measures.

To evaluate participants' behavioral self-assessment and actual communication behavior three identical feedback surveys were distributed to the participants via Microsoft Forms during the (1) *pre-training* (immediately before the training), (2) *post-training* (immediately after the training), and (3) *follow-up* (one week after the training) phases. The control group received an identical survey during the (1) *pre-training* and (2) *follow-up* phases to ensure consistent data collection across both groups. The following abbreviations will be used to denote the time points and their corresponding groups: for the intervention group, T1 represents *pre-training*, T2 represents *post-training*, and T3 represents the *follow-up training*. For the control group, CT1 corresponds to *pre-training*, and CT2 refers to the *follow-up training*.

The questionnaire used in this training program (see Appendix 9) comprised multiple sections. It starts with a *Demographic Section* to collect information on participants' age, gender, nationality, current university, and their enrolled master's program. Additionally, a *Behavioral Competence* section is included, containing five self-assessment items supposed to measure the participants' comfort levels in using assertive communication and NVC across various contexts. The responses are collected on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) *Totally Disagree* to (5) *Totally Agree*. Moreover, the *Assertiveness Inventory* questionnaire, originally developed by Alberti and Emmons (2017), is included. It consists of 35 situational items to evaluate participants' levels of assertiveness based on their self-efficacy. For consistency reasons, it is adapted to use a five-point instead of a four-point Likert-type scale.

3.3 Implementation of Training

Pre-Training:

The recruitment of trainees was accomplished voluntarily via personal communication channels such as e-mail, WhatsApp student groups, mouth-to-mouth, and various Nova SBE student clubs. A suitable date was selected with potential trainees, and they were kindly asked to bring a mobile device for filling out the surveys. According to Carliner (2015), it is important to offer adults several dates to choose between because even if they are eager to learn, they may be busy or limited in time. To offer the best possible facility for a face-to-face training session, a room at Nova SBE was booked via the teaching support team. As soon as the training date was scheduled, the room was booked in advance for two hours, offering enough time to prepare the session and answer all open questions after the training. To sufficiently prepare the training materials, a PowerPoint presentation, the materials handed out during the session, and the surveys were designed.

Training:

The training itself is based on Kolb's *Experiential Learning Theory* (1984) and Gagné et al.'s *Instructional Design Principles* (2005). As previously outlined in 3.2.1 Training Program Design, the combination of an experiential learning method and a structured approach offers a balanced and effective educational approach for graduate courses (Bull and Clausen 2000).

To begin the training, trainees were welcomed, printed training materials were handed out and trainees were kindly asked to fill out the *pre-training* survey (T1) with their mobile devices. Starting with chapter one *Introduction* of the agenda, trainers introduced themselves, showed an icebreaker in the form of a video, and clarified the overall objective: 'Evaluating the effects of a 90-minute assertive communication training, on higher education business students' communication behavior'. This was communicated via a written message on the smartboard.

Group part

This aligns with step (1) *Gain Attention* and step (2) *Inform learners of objective* of Gagné et al.'s *Instructional Design Principles* (2005) (see Appendix 1).

During chapter two *Theoretical Background* trainees faced a *Concrete Experience*. The trainers explained relevant concepts of communication styles and asked trainees to interactively enrich already prepared *post-its* to respective elements of passive, aggressive, manipulative, and assertive communication on the smartboard. Afterwards, trainees were familiarized with the *NVC-model* and the use of *I-Statements*. The trainees were able to *Feel and Watch* the theoretical background within the first 25 minutes by experiencing this live and in-person. They learned about different dimensions of assertive communication and were able to apply these. This aligns with step (4) *Present the content* of Gagné et al.'s *Instructional Design Principles* (2005) (see Appendix 1).

Following the *CE* in the form of concepts and model explanation, as well as discussing results, trainees were given five minutes for the *Reflective Observation*. Therefore, trainees formed groups of two and familiarized themselves with their partner, which also plays an important role in the third chapter *Practical Application*. After sharing names, origins, and studies, trainees were given time to *Think and Watch*, by reflecting together on the information they had learned, as well as their personal experiences with assertive communication (see Appendix 1). Additionally, instructors used the *RO* to clarify open questions or comments of trainees. This aligns with step (3) *Stimulate recall of prior learning* of Gagné et al.'s *Instructional Design Principles* (2005) (see Appendix 1).

The *RO* is followed by the *Abstract Conceptualization*, which involves a 10-minute written exercise (see Appendix 7). The trainers handed out two staged scenarios, in which inefficient communication took place and trainees were asked to reformulate one of the given scenarios, using the *NVC-model* and incorporating elements of assertive communication, such as *I-*

Group part

Statements. The written exercise aimed at encouraging trainees to *Think & Do*, by building on the *CE* and *RO* and coming up with new approaches. Afterwards, the groups presented their results in front of the observing groups and received feedback on their approach. Moreover, the instructors shared a possible solution on a slide (see Appendix 4; Slide 16). This aligns with step (5) *Provide learning guidance*, step (6) *Elicit performance* and step (7) *Provide feedback* of Gagné et al.'s *Instructional Design Principles* (2005) (see Appendix 1).

To implement an *Active Experimentation*, trainees participated in a 30-minute interactive roleplay. Instructors presented a business-related scenario with two separate roles, designed to reflect a conflict situation (see Appendix 4; Slide 17). Each group was given time to familiarize themselves with the scenario, before voluntarily presenting it in front of observing groups, applying the *NVC-model*, and incorporating elements of assertive communication. This allowed trainees to actively *Feel & Do* regarding the learned content and to experiment with the newly developed skills. After the roleplay, trainees gave feedback to each other on how they felt during the roleplay and whether elements of assertive communication were used sufficiently. To do so, the trainers provided four guiding questions, divided into *Observation and Feedback* (see Appendix 4; Slide 18). Additionally, the observing groups and trainers provided constructive feedback to the presenting group, highlighting the successful application of assertive language, what went well, and areas of improvement. This aligns with step (5) *Provide learning guidance*, step (7) *Provide feedback* and step (8) *Enhance retention and transfer to practice* of Gagné et al.'s *Instructional Design Principles* (2005) (see Appendix 1).

The training ended with a 10-minute *Discussion & Wrap-Up* session, summarizing the key takeaways (see Appendix 4; Slide 20), discussing trainees' overall feedback based on five guiding questions (see Appendix; Slide 21), and answering all open questions. Lastly, trainees

Group part

were provided with the *post-training* survey (T2). This aligns with step (9) *Assess outcomes* of Gagné et al.'s *Instructional Design Principles* (2005) (see Appendix 1).

Post Training:

After the *Discussion & Wrap-Up* chapter, instructors thanked the participants for their engagement and handed out small thank-you goodies such as chocolate. Further, they informed them that another *follow-up* survey would be sent one week later via e-mail. Additionally, the instructors shared their contact details, in case the trainees wanted to reach out with any further questions or to request supplementary materials. After one week, participants received an email to thank them once again for their engagement in the training session. Moreover, the e-mail included a link to the *follow-up* survey (T3), with a request to complete it within the next two days.

4. Analysis and Discussion of Results

The following chapter contains a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the results obtained from the surveys conducted. First, the characteristics of the intervention and control group are described. Afterwards, the assessment of outcomes is divided into two sub-chapters: (1) *Behavioral self-efficacy*, and (2) *Assertiveness Inventory*. Therefore, each level is discussed separately to provide an in-depth analysis. Within the analysis, normality tests were carried out for the survey items (see Appendix 10). Since not all assumptions of normality were fully met, the sample size was below 30 and convenience/ self-selection sampling was used, non-parametric tests were considered more appropriate. All statistical tests were conducted via Jamovi or SPSS, assuming a significance level of 0.05.

4.1 Participants' and Control Groups' Characteristics

The intervention group consisted of 16 participants, evenly split between males and females. Ages ranged from 23 to 26 years, with an average of 24.69 years. In terms of nationality, 68.7% of participants were German, 12.5% Austrian, 12.5% Norwegian, and 6.3% Brazilian. Most participants (87.5%) were enrolled at Nova SBE, and the remaining 12.5% attended Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics (CLSBE). Regarding academic focus, 62.5% were pursuing a master's degree in management, 25% in Finance, and 12.5% in Business Analytics (see Appendix 11). The control group also consisted of 16 participants, with a gender distribution of 56% male and 44% female. Regarding nationality, 68.7% were German, 12.5% French, 6.3% Norwegian, 6.3% Chinese, and another 6.3% Italian. Most participants (81.3%) were enrolled at Nova SBE, while the remaining 18.7% attended CLSBE. Regarding academic programs, 62.5% pursued a master's degree in management, 18.7% in Finance, 12.5% in Business Analytics, and 6.3% in Economics (see Appendix 11).

4.2 Behavioral Self-Efficacy Assessment

To assess changes in participants' comfort level with the usage of assertive communication resulting from the training, five self-efficacy questions were administered during the *pre-training*, *post-training*, and *follow-up-test* phases using a five-point Likert-type scale (see 3.2 Data Collection and Assessment Logic). These questions evaluated participants' confidence in using verbal communication tools, such as the *NVC-model*, and their ability to express feelings and emotions effectively. Additionally, the questions evaluated participants' use of assertive communication across different contexts and settings, including professional environments. For comparison, the control group answered the same questions during the *pre-training* and *follow-up* phases.

First, descriptive statistics were computed for both the intervention and control groups across the *pre-test*, *post-test*, and *follow-up-test* surveys. As shown in Table 1, the intervention group demonstrated a notable increase in mean scores, rising from 2.89 *pre-test* to 4.15 *post-test* and stabilizing at 4.03 during the *follow-up-test* survey. In contrast, the control group kept a nearly consistent mean score, slightly decreasing from 2.94 *pre-test* to 2.86 *follow-up-test*. The results suggest that the training positively influenced participants' perceived comfort with assertive communication, as the control group showed no substantial changes. However, the significance of the observed changes must be statistically proven to attribute them to the training.

Table 1 - Descriptive Statistics for behavioral Self-Efficacy Assessment

Measures	Group	N	Pre-Test		Post-Test		Follow-up-Test	
			Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Behavioral	Intervention	16	2.89	0.842	4.15	0.354	4.03	0.556
	Control	16	2.94	0.882	n/a	n/a	2.86	0.809

Table 2 presents the progression of mean scores for the five self-efficacy questions across all time points for both the intervention and control groups. Notably, the intervention group

demonstrated a rise in mean scores for all questions. Participants felt most comfortable in using *I-statements* as part of NVC and assertive communication in general in the *follow-up-test*, with a mean score of 4.13. However, participants felt slightly less comfortable employing assertive communication in difficult conversations, resulting in a mean score of 3.88. Notably, the level of comfort experienced a minor decrease for all questions *post-test* to *follow-up-test*.

Table 2 – Descriptive Statistics: Mean Scores of behavioral Self-Efficacy Results at T1, T2, T3, CT1 and CT2

Question	Intervention			Control	
	Mean T1	Mean T2	Mean T3	Mean CT1	Mean CT2
1. I feel comfortable using assertive language in general	3.06	4.31	4.13	3.06	3.13
2. I feel comfortable expressing my thoughts and needs using "I-Statements"	3.25	4.31	4.13	2.88	3.19
3. I feel comfortable using assertive communication in a business context	2.81	4.19	4.00	2.94	2.25
4. When dealing with difficult conversations I feel comfortable asserting myself	2.56	4.00	3.88	2.75	2.75
5. In conflict situations I feel comfortable expressing my feelings and needs	2.75	3.94	4.00	3.06	3.00
Average	2.89	4.15	4.03	2.94	2.86

To evaluate the significance of the training’s effect on participants' scores across all three time points, a Friedman test was conducted. This non-parametric statistical test is appropriate for analyzing dependent measures collected from the same group of participants over multiple time points when the assumption of normality may be violated. The results of the Friedmann test (see Table 3) revealed a statistically significant impact with a *p*-value < .001, demonstrating that participants’ scores differed significantly across the three time points. This suggests that the training intervention had a notable positive impact on participants' perceived level of comfort using assertive communication.

Table 3 – Friedman and Durbin-Conovor Test: Comparison for behavioral Self Efficacy at T1, T2, and T3

Friedman Test					Durbin-Conover Post-Hoc Test			
Comparison	Group	Chi-squared (χ^2)	df	p	Comparison	Group	Test statistic	p
Pre-Test (T1), Post-Test (T2) & Follow-up-Test (T3)	Intervention	17.8	2	< .001	T1 - T2		5.667	< .001
					T1 - T3	Intervention	4.857	< .001
					T2 - T3		0.81	0.425

Moreover, a Durbin-Conover post-hoc test was conducted to analyze the different scores between each time point. The results in Table 3 illustrate positive and statistically significant effects between *pre-* and *post-test* as well as the *pre-test* and *follow-up-test* (test statistic = 5.667; 4.857 and *p*-value < .001). The comparison between the *post-training* and *follow-up-test* does not illustrate any statistically significant changes (test statistic = 0.81 and *p*-value = 0.425). It might be derived that there is no sign of a significant decline in the participants' perceived comfort level in using assertive communication one week after training.

Additionally, the differences between the responses from the control groups before the training and one week after the training were analyzed using a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test. This test is commonly used among researchers for dependent samples when two related time points are compared. Nevertheless, no significant differences were expected between both time points because the control group did not participate in the training. Six out of 16 responses showed decreasing scores and only two participants demonstrated an increase (see Table 4). The majority (eight participants) had unchanged scores. The *Z*-value was -1.149 and the *p*-value was 0.251 which is greater than the level of significance. This suggests that the slight decline between the *pre-test* and *follow-up-test* scores was not statistically significant. The *r*-value of 0.287 further indicates a rather small effect size which is unlikely to be practically meaningful.

Table 4 – Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test: Comparison of behavioral Self-Efficacy at CT1 and CT2

Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

Comparison	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	p	r
Pre-Test (CT1) & Follow-up-Test (CT2)	Negative Ranks ^a	6	4.33	26	-1.149	0.251	0.287
	Control Positive Ranks ^b	2	5.00	10			
	Ties ^c	8					

a) Follow-up-Test < Pre-Test; b) Follow-up-Test > Pre-Test; c) Follow-up-Test = Pre-Test

This analysis is important to isolate the training's impact. The results align with the expectations as the control group did not participate in the assertive communication training. However, between-group tests for both groups before the training and during the follow-up phase are

necessary to statistically prove the training’s positive impact. The *pre-test* comparison was conducted to determine whether both groups initially had a similar score regarding their level of comfort in their assertive communication behavior to ensure comparability. Additionally, the *follow-up* comparison was performed to evaluate the statistical significance of the different scores among both groups and to prove the training’s positive effect on participants’ level of comfort in using assertive communication. Thus, a Mann-Whitney-U test was performed for both comparisons (see Table 5). When comparing the intervention and control group in the *pre-test* phase, a rather high *U*-value of 123.5 can be observed indicating strong similarities between the mean scores of both groups. Further, the *p*-value equals 0.865 which suggests no statistically significant difference between the groups’ scores. The *Z*-score of -0.171 further confirms that there were no substantial differences between the groups at the start of the study. Hence, both groups were comparable at the baseline before the training.

Table 5 – Mann-Whitney-U Test: Comparison for behavioral Self-Efficacy at T1/CT1 and T3/CT2

Mann-Whitney-U Test							
Comparison	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p	Z
Pre-Test (T1)	Intervention	16	16.22	259.5	123.5	0.865	-0.171
Pre-Test (CT1)	Control	16	16.78	268.5			
Follow-up-Test (T3)	Intervention	16	22.63	362	30	< .001	-3.712
Follow-up-Test (CT2)	Control	16	10.38	166			

The second comparison between the intervention and control groups during the *follow-up-test* revealed a larger gap between the mean ranks. The intervention group had substantially higher ranks (mean rank= 22.63) than the control group (mean rank= 10.38), indicating that participants who underwent the training achieved improved scores compared to those who did not receive the training. Moreover, a *p*-value of < .001 was observed (see Table 5), suggesting a statistically significant difference between the groups. In conclusion, the *pre-test* comparison showed that both groups were equivalent at baseline, suggesting that the intervention group’s observed improvements might be attributed to the training. This reinforces the positive impact of the training on participants' perceived level of comfort when using assertive communication.

4.3 Assertiveness Inventory Assessment

To assess changes in participants' actual communication behavior resulting from the training, the *Assertiveness Inventory* developed by Alberti and Emmons (2017) was included. This tool aims to measure an individual's level of assertiveness based on 35 situational self-efficacy questions using a five-point Likert-type scale (see 3.2 Data Collection and Assessment Logic). The scores were cumulated to calculate the overall scores for each participant. The intervention group answered these questions during the *pre-*, *post-*, and *follow-up-test* phases. For comparison, the control group answered the same questions during the *pre-* and *follow-up-test* phases.

First, the internal consistency of the 35 items was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega tests. These tests assess how well the individual items collectively measure assertive communication skills. Establishing a reliable scale was crucial to accurately determine the training's effectiveness. The analysis demonstrates a Cronbach's alpha of 0.811 and McDonald's omega of 0.837, which indicates a good internal consistency for the 35 items in the assertiveness inventory for both indicators (see Appendix 12). Hence, both measures indicate good reliability, with omega providing a more robust estimate given potential item load variations.

Second, descriptive statistics were computed for both the intervention and control groups across the *pre-*, *post-*, and *follow-up-test* surveys. As shown in Table 6, the intervention group demonstrated a notable increase in mean scores, rising from 114.38 out of 175 *pre-test* to 124.38 out of 175 *post-test* and 125.38 during the *follow-up* survey. However, the control group's mean score slightly decreased from 118.06 *pre-test* to 113.69 during the *follow-up-test* survey. This suggests that the training had a positive impact on participants' actual communication behavior towards more assertiveness, which must be statistically proven first.

Table 6 - Descriptive Statistics for Assertiveness Inventory Assessment

Measures	Group	N	Pre-Test		Post-Test		Follow-up-Test	
			Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Assertiveness Inventory	Intervention	16	114.38	13.1	124.38	10.3	125.38	11.1
	Control	16	118.06	10.7	n/a	n/a	113.69	12

To do so, a Friedman test (see Table 7) was conducted to evaluate the training's impact on the assertiveness inventory scores within the intervention group. The test results yielded a *p*-value of 0.039, indicating a statistically significant difference in assertiveness scores across the three time points. This finding suggests that the training positively influenced participants' communication behavior by enhancing their assertiveness skills.

Table 7 – Friedman and Durbin-Conover Test: Comparison for Assertiveness Inventory at T1, T2, and T3

Friedman Test					Durbin-Conover Post-Hoc Test			
Comparison	Group	Chi-squared (χ^2)	df	p	Comparison	Group	Test statistic	p
Pre-Test (T1), Post-Test (T2) & Follow-up-Test (T3)	Intervention	6.5	2	0.039	T1 - T2		1.917	0.065
					T1 - T3	Intervention	2.684	0.012
					T2 - T3		0.767	0.449

To gain a deeper understanding of the differences between each time point, a Durbin-Conover post-hoc test was conducted. The test results are illustrated in Table 7. Comparing the *pre-test* and *post-test* results (test statistic= 1.917; *p*-value= 0.065), a positive trend can be observed. However, the difference did not reach statistical significance because the *p*-value was slightly greater than 0.05. The comparison between the *pre-test* and *follow-up-test* yielded a test score of 2.684 and a *p*-value of 0.012, indicating a significant positive training impact one week after its completion. Lastly, there was no statistically significant difference found between the *post-test* and *follow-up-test* scores (*p*-value= 0.449), suggesting that the improvements in communication behavior achieved immediately after the training were maintained and even slightly enhanced over time. Nevertheless, these results highlight the need for cautious interpretation when working with small sample sizes (*N*= 16), as random variations in responses across the 35 questions may occur.

Furthermore, the control group’s assertiveness inventory scores between the *pre-test* and *follow-up-test* were compared using a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test. The test determined whether there were significant changes in the assertiveness inventory scores within the control group, which did not participate in the training. The results in Table 8 illustrate that twelve participants showed a decline in their assertiveness inventory scores with a mean rank of 8.75, while three participants exhibited an increase, with a mean rank of 5.00, and one participant had identical scores. Moreover, it demonstrated an effect size of -0.64, suggesting a large negative effect, and a *p*-value of 0.01 indicating statistical significance.

Table 8 – Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test: Comparison for Assertiveness Inventory at CT1 and CT2

Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test								
Comparison	Group		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	p	r
Pre-Test (CT1) & Follow-up-Test (CT2)	Control	Negative Ranks ^a	12	8.75	105	-2.56	0.01	-0.64
		Positive Ranks ^b	3	5.00	5			
		Ties ^c	1					

a) Follow-up-Test < Pre-Test; b) Follow-up-Test > Pre-Test; c) Follow-up-Test = Pre-Test

However, given the context, this result should be interpreted cautiously. The results suggest a significant decline in assertiveness inventory scores within the control group. Nevertheless, this change may not reflect a meaningful pattern. Likely, the observed decline occurred randomly due to the small sample size of 16 and natural variability in the responses over time. Unlike the intervention group, the control group did not participate in the training which could have influenced the score, and there is no theoretical or contextual basis, such as external factors, to expect a meaningful decline in their scores. Therefore, this finding may reflect the study’s limitations, such as a small sample size, and highlights the importance of careful interpretation.

However, between-group tests for both groups *pre-test* and during the *follow-up-test* phase are again necessary to statistically prove the training’s positive impact. The *pre-test* comparison aimed at evaluating whether both groups initially had a similar assertiveness inventory score to grant comparability. Hence, a Mann-Whitney-U test was chosen for both comparisons (see

Table 9). The *pre-test* phase comparison revealed a rather high *U*-value of 100.5, which suggests notable similarities between the mean scores of both groups. Supplementary, a *p*-value of 0.299 was observed, indicating no statistically significant difference between the intervention and control groups during the *pre-test* phase. It suggests that the group’s communication behavior regarding assertive communication was comparable. This further ensures the comparability of both groups’ scores for the *follow-up-test* phase.

Table 9 – Mann-Whitney-U Test: Comparison for Assertiveness Inventory at T1/CT1 and T3/CT2

Mann-Whitney-U Test							
Comparison	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p	Z
Pre-Test (T1)	Intevention	16	14.78	236.5	100.5	0.299	-1.038
Pre-Test (CT1)	Control	16	18.22	291.5			
Follow-up-Test (T3)	Intevention	16	20.66	330.5	61.5	0.012	-2.511
Follow-up-Test (CT2)	Control	16	12.34	197.5			

A statistically significant gap between the mean ranks was noted in the subsequent comparison between both groups during the *follow-up-test* phase (see Table 9). While the control group had a mean rank of 12.34, the intervention group had substantially higher ranks, with a mean rank of 20.66. Additionally, a *U*-value of 61.5 and a *p*-value of 0.012 was observed. This demonstrates that those who participated in the training achieved improved scores in the assertiveness inventory compared to those who did not participate. Hence, the results suggest that the training had a statistically significant positive impact on participants’ communication behavior enhancing their assertiveness, which persisted one week after the training.

Overall, the statistical analysis highlights the equivalence of the two groups before the training, ensuring a reliable baseline for evaluating the training’s impact. The significant difference observed in the *follow-up-test* comparison suggests a positive training impact on participants’ actual communication behavior, enhancing assertiveness one week after the training. Lastly, the absence of a similar improvement in the control group reinforces the conclusion that the training was the primary factor driving this change.

5. Implications for Management Practices

Reviewing existing literature in the field of assertive communication and especially assertive communication training has demonstrated a research gap within business contexts for higher education students, as most publications remain concentrated in the fields of psychology and healthcare (Nuha, Hidayah, and Wahyuni 2024). Thus, the 90-minute training presented in this study aimed at closing the gap by equipping higher education business students with awareness, knowledge, and useful tools to build assertive communication skills for their upcoming careers. Additionally, this study underscores the importance of training interventions in business contexts as assertive communication is not an innate skill but requires to be learned. Importantly, the emphasis on practical application through role-plays in realistic business scenarios allowed participants to practice communication techniques such as the *NVC-model* and handle potential workplace conversations with confidence and professionalism.

The positive behavioral results further confirm the effectiveness of a 90-minute training workshop that integrates Kolb's (1984) *Experiential Learning Theory* (1984) and Gagné et al.'s (2005) structured training approach in enhancing participants' assertive communication skills. Hence, the implementation of such training is highly feasible in academic and organizational settings. For managers and educators, it indicates that significant positive outcomes can be achieved with moderate time investment in a compact training format, including role-plays, interactive discussions, and open feedback sessions.

By implementing such an assertive communication training, educational institutions can prepare higher education students aiming to become future leaders to communicate effectively. Moreover, organizations can equip their employees with assertive communication skills, which they potentially did not receive through their past formal education or build upon existing skills during employee training. Thus, leadership styles and team collaboration might be improved, contributing to the overall organizational success.

6. Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

Although the training successfully enhanced participants' behavioral assertive communication skills, it is subject to several limitations. One key limitation is the rather small sample size, with 16 participants in both the intervention and control groups. Larger samples would likely provide more reliable and statistically robust results. Additionally, the training was mainly conducted with Master's Management students from Nova SBE, which limits how far the findings can be generalized to other universities, demographics, or cultural contexts. Another potential limitation is that participation in the study was voluntary. Thus, the intervention group may have included individuals with a pre-existing interest in assertive communication, potentially biasing the results. Furthermore, behavioral outcomes were measured through self-efficacy assessments. While it provides valuable insights into participants' abilities in applying assertive communication skills, there might be a gap between perceived ability and actual behavior. Finally, the follow-up period was limited to one week due to time constraints. Therefore, only a short-term view of the training's impact could be demonstrated. Future research could address these limitations in several ways. First, adding follow-up sessions to refresh and deepen the skills gained during the initial training could improve participants' long-term communication behavior. Hence, researchers should evaluate the long-term effects by increasing the follow-up assessment period. Second, the training should be conducted with working professionals to see if similar benefits are observed in different contexts. Third, future research could include observational methods to better capture participants' actual behavioral changes and compare them to the self-efficacy results. Furthermore, future studies should include more *between-group* comparisons to better isolate the effects of training and reduce the influence of outside factors. Finally, researchers might add paraverbal and non-verbal training elements and explore combining assertive communication training with other soft skills to create a broader, more integrated employee development program.

7. Conclusion

Reviewing today's research landscape has revealed a research gap for assertive communication within business contexts. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to develop and assess an assertive communication training for business students in higher education, focusing on the evaluation of participants' behavioral outcomes based on the assertiveness inventory and self-efficacy. To identify needs within current research a systematic literature review and a detailed research gap analysis were conducted. Building on this, a 90-minute assertive communication training was designed based on Kolb's *Experiential Learning Model* (1984) and Gagné et al.'s *Instructional Design Principles* (2005). The training included a theoretical background session, a written exercise, a role-play, as well as multiple feedback sessions. Training outcomes were measured by evaluating survey results from the intervention group and comparing them to those of the control group.

The results demonstrate statistically significant improvements regarding participants' perceived level of comfort using assertive communication and their actual communication behavior measured by the assertiveness inventory. Overall, the findings underscore the success of the training, with the intervention group making notable progress compared to the control group's steady outcomes.

These positive results are especially relevant in today's leadership landscape, where assertive communication has become an essential skill, which is often overlooked or underdeveloped. Despite its importance, there is a lack of research on assertive communication training in business contexts, leaving universities and organizations unequipped to teach these skills effectively. Hence, this study addresses the gap by offering practical insights that might help future leaders communicate confidently and effectively and adapt to the dynamic challenges of modern work environments. The training conducted in this paper already provides insights into the current practices of assertive communication training within business contexts. Thus, the

Group part

designed training and the chosen evaluation methods can be imitated in future research to draw comparisons and derive further recommendations. Therefore, the sample size should be increased to strengthen its explanatory power. Additionally, follow-up workshops might be implemented to refresh and deepen participants' skills, and the long-term effects should be evaluated by increasing the assessment periods and adding further observational methods.

In conclusion, this paper contributes to research by providing insights into the development and evaluation of assertive communication training with a focus on verbal elements for higher education students in business contexts. By addressing a critical research gap, it builds a foundation for designing effective training programs which equip future leaders with essential communication skills. The findings underscore the importance of integrating such training into academic and professional development programs, paving the way for more confident, adaptable, and effective leadership in the modern workplace.

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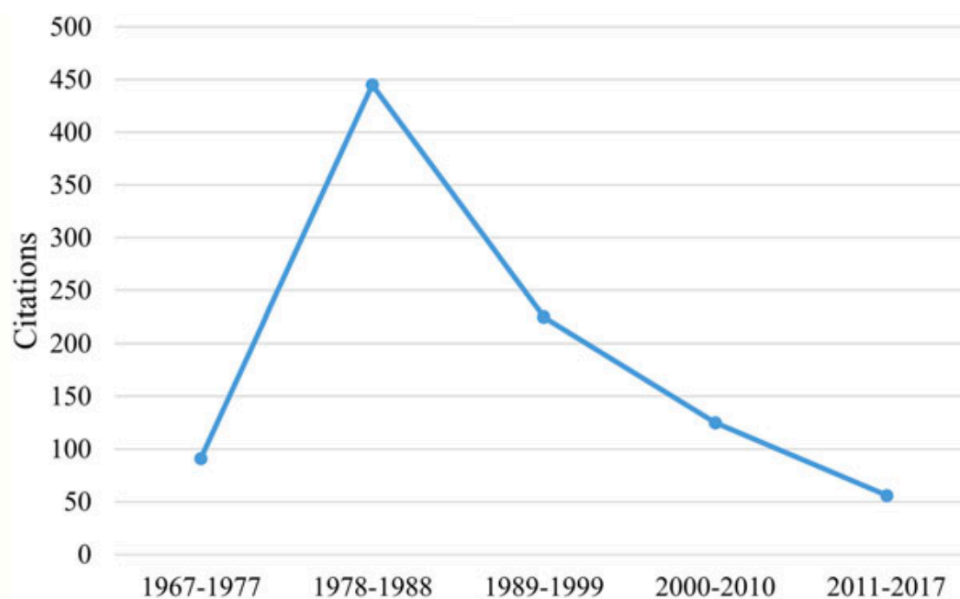
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Appendix

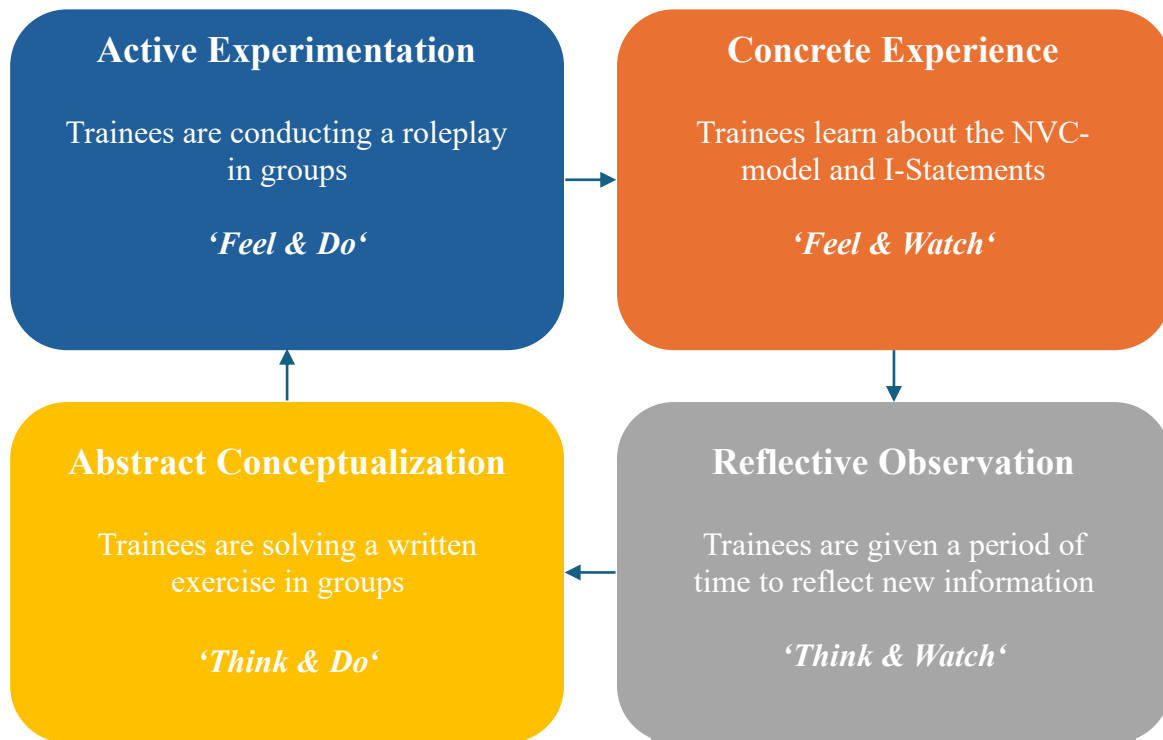
Appendix 1 – Principles of Instructional Design: (enlarged and adapted from (Gagné et al. 2005)

Steps	Description of steps in Training	Purpose
1. Gain Attention	Trainers introduced themselves and played an icebreaker video about miscommunication	Active receptors of of trainees and gain attention
2. Inform Learners of Objective	Trainers clarified the training's objective: Evaluating whether it is possible to teach assertive communication with a special emphasis on verbal communication, such as the NVC-model and 'I-Statements', to higher education students within a 90-minute workshop.	Clearly state what trainees will learn throughout the 90-minute workshop
3. Stimulate Recall of Prior Learning	During the Reflective Observation (RO) phase, trainees paired up, familiarized with each other and reflected on assertive communication experiences. Instructors addressed questions and comments to	Retrieval of trainee's memory, regarding prior practical experiences
4. Present the Content	Relevant communication concepts were explained, and trainees enriched prepared post-its with elements of passive, aggressive, manipulative, and assertive communication. Trainees learned about the NVCmodel and I-Statements in a structured 25-minute session.	Present relevan theoretical knowledge in a strutctred manner
5. Provide Learning Guidance	Trainees completed a written exercise, reformulating inefficient communication scenarios using the NVCmodel and assertive communication techniques. Trainers gave clear instructions and answered questions throughout the exercise and shared a possible	Provide trainees with clear instructions and support throughout the exercises
6. Elicit Performance	Groups presented their solutions to the written exercise in front of observing groups, applying their knowledge to reformulate	Practice the use of assertive communication and the NVC-model, to
7. Provide Feedback	During the written exercise and roleplay, trainees received feedback from each other, observing groups and trainers. Trainers used structured questions to guide the feedback with a focus on	Immediate assessment of exercise, to improve performance
8. Enhance Retention and Transfer to Practice	Trainees engaged in a 30-minute roleplay with a conflict-related scenario, applying the NVC model and assertive communication elements in realistic interactions. Constructive feedback from trainers and peers reinforced skill retention and application.	Transfer gained knowledge to practice, to ensure long-term benefits out of the wokshop
9. Assess Outcomes	The training concluded with a 10-minute discussion & wrap-up session, summarizing key takeaways, discussing trainees' overall feedback ans answering all remaining questions.	Evaluate the workshop and whether learning objective was achieved

Appendix 2 – The number of citations published per year, in 10-year increments, from 1967 to the present: (Speed, Goldstein, and Goldfried 2017)



Appendix 3 – Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model for Assertive Communication Training: (enlarged and adapted from Kolb 1984)



Appendix 4 – Presentation Assertive Communication Training: (Own illustration)

Slide 1:

The slide features a large orange triangle on the right side. The text on the left side is as follows:

**ASSERTIVE
COMMUNICATION
TRAINING**

04.11.2024

Supervisor: Prof. Helena Martins

Maurice Kasnitz 58388
Franz Burelbach 60362

NOVA
NOVA SCHOOL OF
BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

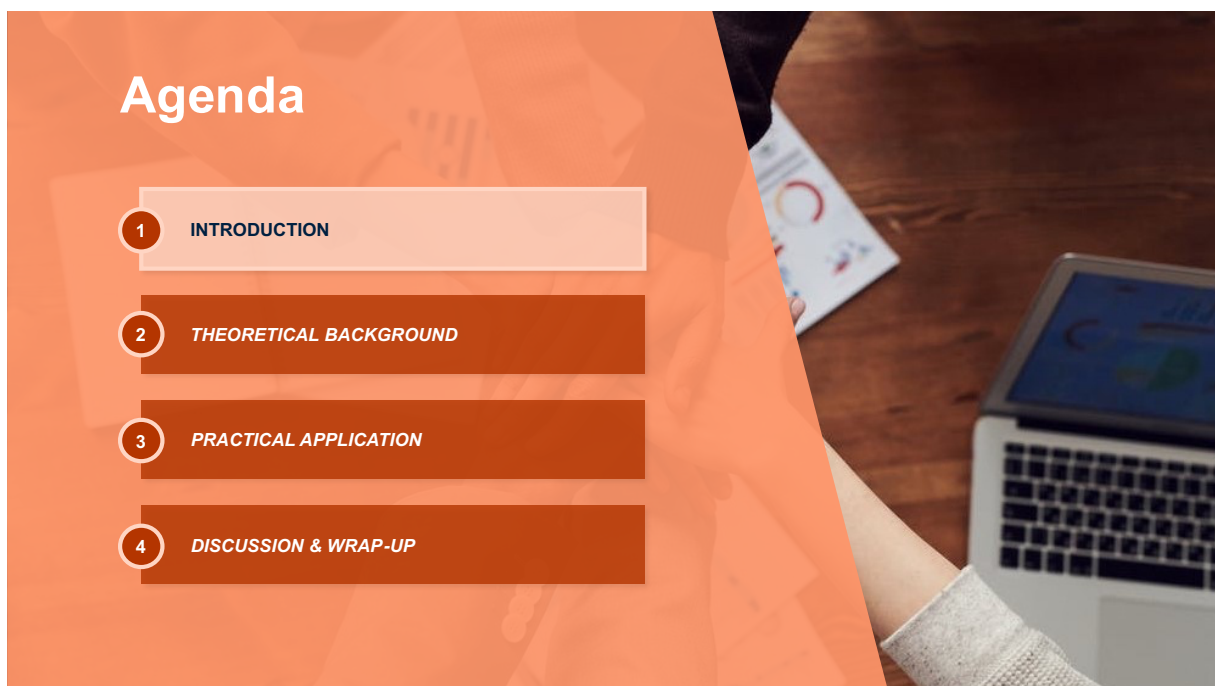
Slide 2:

1 Introduction

Please scan the barcode and fill out the survey!



Slide 3:



Slide 4:

1 Introduction

Who we are...



Franz Burelbach
M.Sc. Management



Maurice Kasnitz
M.Sc Management

So why are we here today?

4

Slide 5:

Agenda

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND
- 3 PRACTICAL APPLICATION
- 4 DISCUSSION & WRAP-UP

Slide 6:

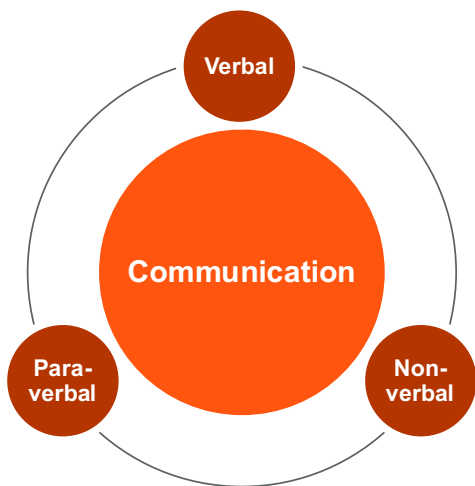
What is communication and why is it important?

“Communication is the process by which people create and share information with one another to reach a mutual understanding”



Slide 7:

Introduction to the three levels of communication



Verbal communication



The words and sounds coming out of our mouths when speaking, including tone of voice, sighs and groans

Paraverbal communication



Vocal elements such as pronunciation, volume, intensity, speech flow, intonation, and the strategic use of pauses

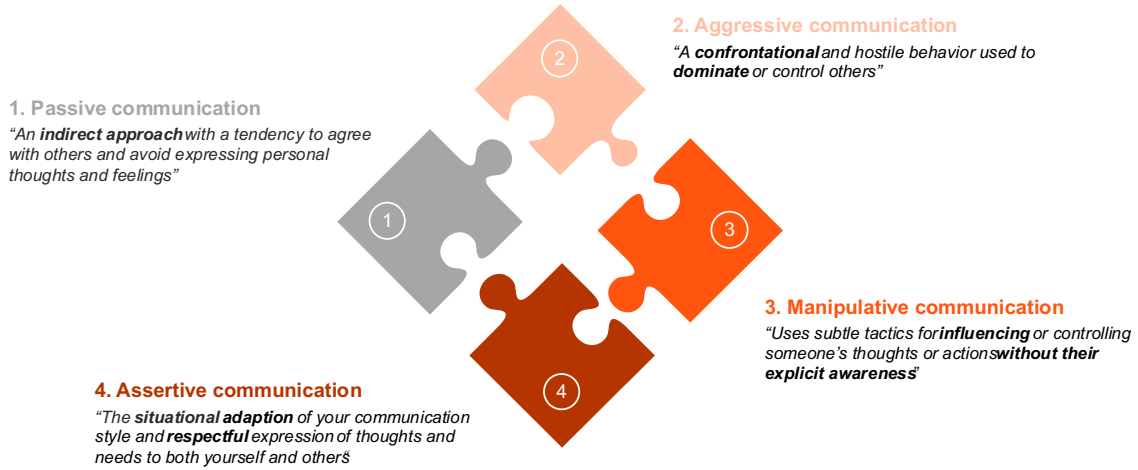
Non-verbal communication



Non-vocal elements such as facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, body posture space usage, appearance

Slide 8:

Introduction to the four communication styles



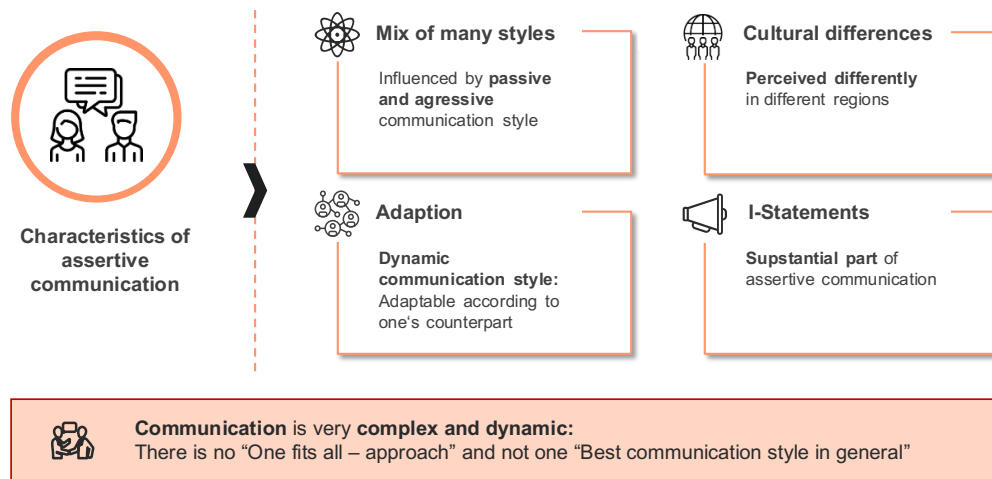
Slide 9:

Possible post-it matrix solution

	Passive	Aggressive	Manipulative	Assertive
Emotional expression	Avoid articulating your thoughts, feelings, and needs	Clearly prioritize your needs above those of others	Sneakily Prioritize your needs above those of others	Clearly communicate your needs and respect those of others
Eye-contact	Avoid eye contact as it makes you feel uncomfortable	Keep constant eye contact to assert dominance	Keep eye contact if useful and avoid it to create drama	The counterpart should feel comfortable with your use of eye contact
Voice characteristics	Silent, submissive voice with several breaks due to uncertainty	Loud, dominant voice with partial screaming and fast speech	Voice depends on the situation and aims at triggering emotions	Balanced tone adapted to the situation
Body posture	Shy, hunched posture with a lowered head and slumped shoulders	Dominant forward-leaning posture, solid stance, and body tension	Shifting body positions, hand & neck rubbing, foot tapping	A posture adapted to the situation, neither too stiff nor too relaxed
Respectfulness	Being respectful is the main goal even if own needs suffer from that	One's interests must be prioritized, regardless of disrespectful behavior	Pretended respectfulness to hide any form of manipulation	Being respectful is important but own needs should not suffer

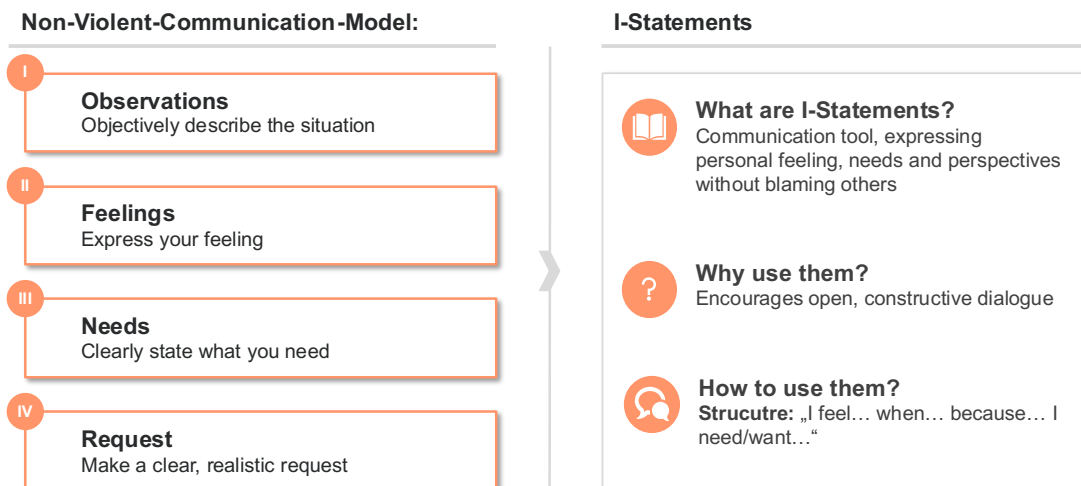
Slide 10:

Deep-Dive: Assertive communication



Slide 11:

Non-Violent-Communication-Model and the role of I-Statements



Slide 12:

Application of the Non-Violent-Communication-Model

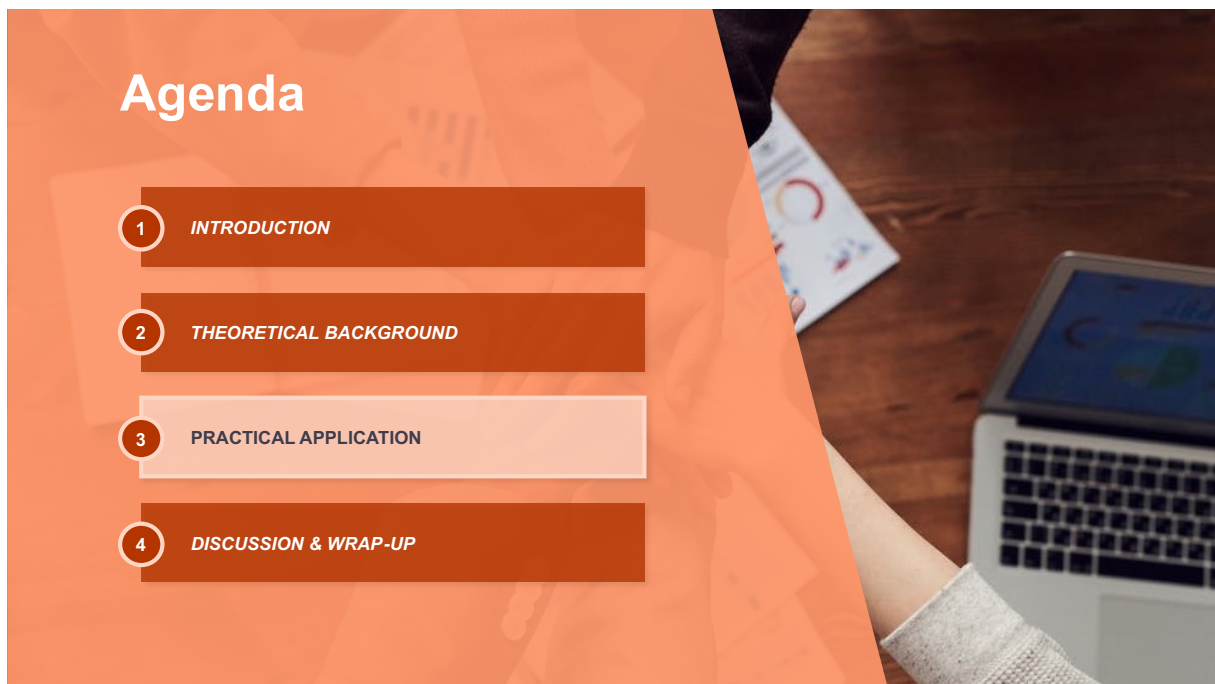
Example: Use without I-Statement

- I Observation:**
"During today's meeting, you always interrupted me when I was speaking."
- II Feelings:**
"You frustrate me!"
- III Needs:**
"It's important to ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak up, without being interrupted."
- IV Request:**
"Let me finish my thoughts before responding in the future, understood?"

Example: Use with I-Statement

- I Observation:**
"I noticed that during today's meeting, there were several interruptions when I was speaking."
- II Feelings:**
"I feel frustrated and overlooked when this happens."
- III Needs:**
"I need to feel heard and have the opportunity to express my ideas without interruption."
- IV Request:**
"Could you please allow me to finish my thoughts before responding in the future?"

Slide 13:



Slide 14:

3 Practical Application

Team-Building & Get-to-know

The next steps:

1. Build teams of two
2. Get-to-know your teampartner (5 min.)

Possible Guidingline:

1. What is your name, origin, and studies?
2. Reflect together about the 'Concrete Experience' you faced so far during the training



Slide 15:

3 Practical Application

Written exercise: Reformulate two business scenarios

Task:

Please reformulate the given scenarios based on NVC -Model using the elements of assertive communication to provide an improved solution for them



1. Scenario: Your team member consistently submits reports late

"You submitted the report after the deadline for the third time this month. You are always causing me trouble due to your delays. On-time submissions are important to ensure my tasks are completed efficiently. Make sure to submit the reports by the deadline in the future!"

2. Scenario: A colleague speaks loudly and disrupts your focus

"You are always listening to this annoying loud music during my phone calls. Do you want to distract me from my work? I need to work in a silent environment. This is the office and not a party. Listen to your music elsewhere when I am on the phone!"

Objective:

Practice the use of I-Statements by using the NVC-Model and familiarize yourself with the use of assertive communication



Slide 16:

3 Practical Application

NOVA UNIVERSITY OF THE ALPS

Discussion, feedback and possible solution of the written exercise

Let's discuss our results! Any volunteers?



Scenario 1

A team member consistently submits reports late

- 1.Observation:** "I noticed that your report was submitted after the deadline for the third time this month."
- 2Feelings:** "I feel stressed and concerned when reports are late."
- 3Needs:** "I need the reports on time to complete my tasks efficiently."
- 4.Request:** "Could you please submit your reports by the agreed deadline moving forward?"

Scenario 2

A colleague speaks loudly and disrupts your focus

- 1.Observation:** "I've noticed that you often speak loudly during phone calls at your desk."
- 2Feelings:** "I feel distracted and find it difficult to concentrate on my work."
- 3Needs:** "I need a quieter environment to focus effectively."
- 4.Request:** "Could you please lower your voice or take calls in a different area?"

16

Slide 17:

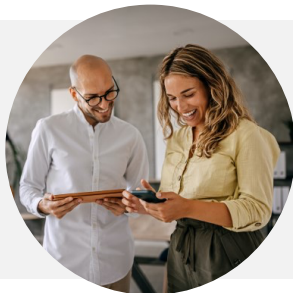
3 Practical Application

NOVA UNIVERSITY OF THE ALPS

Role Play: Reformulate the scenario and practice your knowledge

Task:

Please **create and perform a dialogue** solving the following business scenario, using the assertive communication style and keeping in mind the NVC -Model (give each other feedback afterwards)



Business scenario

"Sarah and Felix work together on a client project and share tasks. Recently, Felix has been frustrated because Sarah often changes parts of the project without discussing it first. On the other hand, Sarah perceives Felix as too stubborn with the project structure because he does not consider new ideas."

- I Observation**
Objectively describe the situation
- II Feelings**
Express your feeling
- III Needs**
Clearly state what you need
- IV Request**
Make a clear, realistic request

Objective:

Apply the theoretical concepts, you have learned during today's training, in a real -life scenario within a **safe space** with your teammate



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Slide 18:

3 Practical Application

Role Play: Observation and feedback

Observation:

1. Did you feel comfortable using the NVC-Model?
2. Which difficulties did you experience during your dialogue?

Feedback:

1. Did the written exercise help you prepare for the role-play?
2. How can you apply the acquired skills in your everyday life?



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Slide 19:

Agenda

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND
- 3 PRACTICAL APPLICATION
- 4 DISCUSSION & WRAP-UP

The background of the slide features a photograph of a person's hands. One hand is holding a white document with a colorful circular chart, while the other is near a laptop. The scene is set on a wooden desk, suggesting a professional or academic environment.

Slide 20:

4 Discussion & Wrap-Up

Three essential things to remember:

- 1 Complexity & Dynamic**
 - Communication is highly complex and depends on **personal characteristics** as well as the **cultural background**
 - There is **no "One fits all"** – approach" and not one "Best communication style in general"
- 2 Assertive communication**
 - **Situational adaption** of your communication style and **respectful** expression of thoughts and needs to both **yourself and others**
 - Focuses on analyzing and **addressing behaviors** rather than individuals
- 3 NVC-Model & I-Statements**
 - **Enhances communication** by reducing blame, accusations, and defensiveness
 - Enables individuals to respectfully demonstrate the **cause and effect** of another's person behavior on themselves



Slide 21:

4 Discussion & Wrap-Up

Overall session feedback



21

Slide 22:

4 Discussion & Wrap-Up

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

Contact Details:

✉ Maurice Kasnitz
58388@novasbe.pt

✉ Franz Burelbach
60362@novasbe.pt

Scan me!



Reminder:

**Please do not forget to fill
out the survey
in one week**

Appendix 5 – Time Plan Assertive Communication Training: (Own illustration)

Time	Duration	Agenda	Objective	Explanation	Tools	Slide
11:00	5 min	0. Preparation: Arrival of participants	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants enter the the room and take a seat Check list, if all participants are present 	Checklist	
11:00	5 min	0. Preparation: Pre-Training Survey (T1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect socio-demographic data and asses behavioral and cognitive knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome participants and thank them for their attendance Conduct pre-training survey 	Handouts of Pre-training survey	
11:05	5 min	1. Introduction: Trainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of trainers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainers introduce themselves and explain their backgrounds 	Power Point	3
11:05	5 min	1. Introduction: Icebreaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create familiar atmosphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show icebreaker video: Example of failed communication: Lowe Commercial - "Miscommunication" 	Power Point	3
11:05	5 min	1. Introduction: Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain overall objective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explanation overall objective: „Evaluating whether it is possible to sustainably teach higher education students in the elements of assertive within a 90-minute workshop (not on slide) 	Power Point	3
11:10	25 min	2. Theoretical Impact: Communication Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide relevant and necessary theory of assertive communication for the training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide general definition of „communication“ Ask participants which levels of communication they know and how they are characterized Show slide, illustrating the levels of communication and their elements, to wrap up open questions 	Power Point	5-6
11:10	25 min	2. Theoretical Impact: Communication Styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide relevant and necessary theory of assertive communication for the training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present definitions of communication styles Interactive exercise: Show communication styles on large post-its on a wall and ask participants to enrich them the respective elements Discuss results and wrap up the correct matching Explain communications characteristics and complexity and that it depends on context & culture 	Power Point Post-It's	7-8
11:10	25 min	2. Theoretical Impact: Deep-Dive: Assertive Communication;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide relevant and necessary theory of assertive communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> „I-Statements“ and why are they relevant? Based on NVC-model of Marshall Rosenberg on Presentation of practical example 	Power Point	9-11
11:35	5 min	3. Pracitcal Application: Introduction: Match Groups	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Match participants in groups of two 	Power Point	13
11:35	5 min	3. Pracitcal Application: Introudction: Icebreaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create familiar atmosphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One trainer shares his worst communication experience in a professional context to create safe space atmosphere 		
11:35	5 min	3. Pracitcal Application: Introduction: Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building trust between participants for role play by reflecting on acquired knowledge 	<p>Guideline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whats your name, origin, studies? Reflect together about the 'Concrete Experience' you faced so far during the training 	Power Point	13
11:40	10 min	4. Pracitcal Application: Written exercise – Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice use of I-Statements by using four-step model and familiarize with assertive communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand-out two staged scenarios, in which inefficient communication took place and individuals did not communicate their needs correctly, Each group is supposed to reformulate the given scenarios based on the NVC-model and elements of assertive communication 	Power Point Handouts	14
11:40	10 min	4. Pracitcal Application: Written exercise – Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss resluts to familiarize with assertive communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of scenarios: Group voluntarily provides their interpretation for it which is discussed with all participants Present possible solution on slide 	Power Point	15
11:50	30 min	4. Pracitcal Application: Roleplay - Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable participants to apply theoretical concepts learned in the training in a real-life scenario within a safe space with their teammate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present a business-related scenario on slide and hand them out on paper with two separate roles targeting a conflicting context Performance: Each group performs the scenario after each other, using assertive communication, keeping in mind the NVC-model 	Power Point Handouts	16
11:50	30 min	4. Pracitcal Application: Roleplay - Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss results to transfer theoretical knowledge in a real-life scenario 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual feedback: Group partners provide feedback to each other on how they felt during the roleplay and whether elements of assertive communication were used sufficiently Open performance & feedback: Obersving groups reflect on the roleplay 	Power Point Handouts	17
12:20	10 min	5. Discussion & Wrap-Up: Take-Aways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize key take-aways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize key elements of training Three key areas: 1. Complexity & Dynamic 2. Assertive Communication 3. Four-step-model & I-Statements 	Power Point	19
12:20	10 min	5. Discussion & Wrap-Up: Overall Participants Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get to know, how participants felt during the training 	<p>Five Guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did you like about the training? How could we improve the training? What did you not like about the training? What is you personal take-away today? What did you miss out on today? 	Power Point	20
12:20	10 min	5. Discussion & Wrap-Up: Post-Training Survey (T2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asses behavioral and cognitive knowledge and satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct post-training survey 	Power Point Forms	21
12:20	10 min	5. Discussion & Wrap-Up: Closing	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify open questions Provide trainers' contact details Conduct post-training survey Reminder for survey in 2 weeks (T3) 	Power Point	21

Assertive communication training

“Communication is the process by which people **create and share information** with one another to **reach a mutual understanding**”

Why is communication important?



Relationships

Sharing our experiences, and needs connects us to others



Leadership

Good leaders have excellent communication skills



Collaboration

Effective communication leads to efficient teams



Harmony

Effective communication prevents unnecessary conflicts

Three levels of communication:

Verbal communication



The **words and sounds coming out of our mouths** when speaking, including tone of voice, sighs and groans

Paraverbal communication



Vocal elements such as pronunciation, volume, intensity, speech flow, intonation, and the strategic use of pauses

Non-verbal communication



Non-vocal elements such as facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, body posture space usage, appearance

The four communication styles:

1. Passive communication

“An **indirect approach** with a tendency to agree with others and avoid expressing personal thoughts and feelings”

4. Assertive communication

“The **situational adaption** of your communication style and **respectful** expression of thoughts and needs to both yourself and others”



2. Aggressive communication

“A **confrontational** and hostile behavior used to **dominate** or control others”

3. Manipulative communication

“Uses subtle tactics for **influencing** or controlling someone's thoughts or actions **without their explicit awareness**”

Characteristics of Assertive Communication



Mix of many styles

Influenced by passive and aggressive style



Adaption

Adapt communication style to counterpart



I-Statements

Substantial part of assertive communication



Cultural differences

Perceived differently in different regions

NVC-Model



Observation

Objectively describe the situation



Feelings

Express your feeling



Needs

Clearly state what you need



Request

Make a clear, realistic request

Three levels of communication:



What are I-Statements?

Communication tool, expressing personal feeling, needs and perspectives without blaming others



Why use them?

Encourages open, constructive dialogue



How to use them?

Structure: „I feel... when... because... I need/want..“

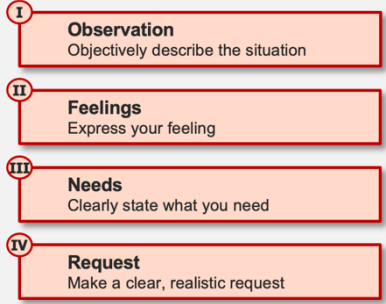
Communication is very complex and dynamic:

There is no “One fits all – approach” and not one “Best communication style in general”

Written exercise:

Task:

Please reformulate the given scenarios based on the NVC-Model using the elements of assertive communication to provide an improved solution for them



1. Scenario: Your team member consistently submits reports late

“You submitted the report after the deadline for the third time this month. You are always causing me trouble due to your delays. On-time submissions are important to ensure my tasks are completed efficiently. Make sure to submit the reports by the deadline in the future!”

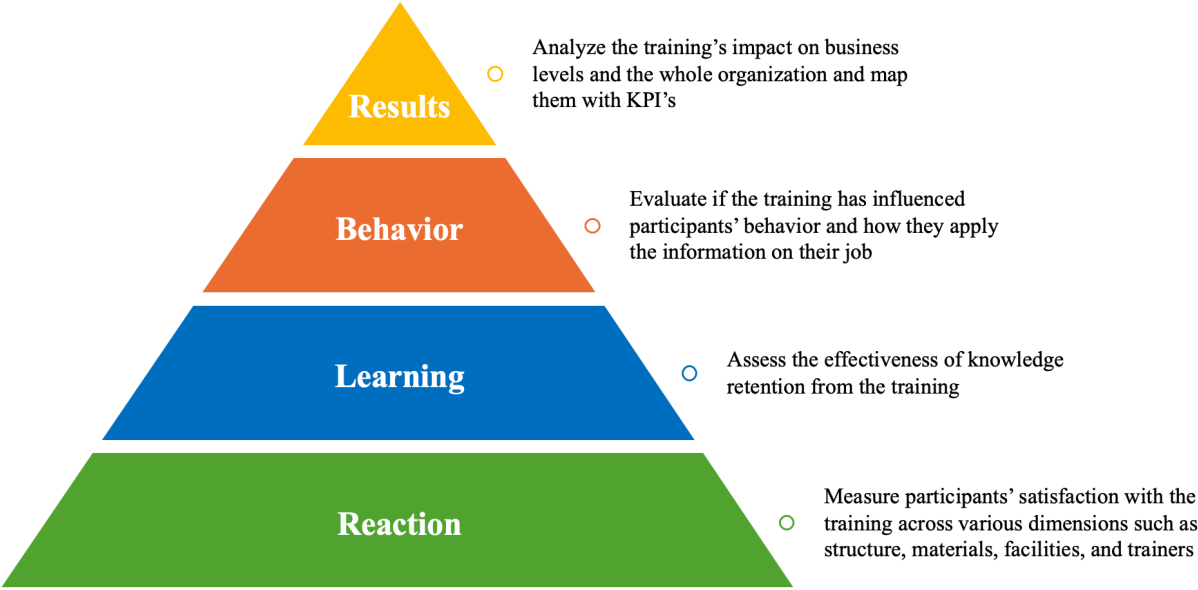
Answer:

2. Scenario: A colleague speaks loudly and disrupts your focus

“You are always listening to this annoying loud music during my phone calls. Do you want to distract me from my work? I need to work in a silent environment. This is the office and not a party. Listen to your music elsewhere when I am on the phone!”

Answer:

Appendix 8 – The Kirkpatrick Model: (enlarged and adapted from Kirkpatrick 1998)



Appendix 9 – Participant Post-training and Follow-up Feedback Survey: (TBD)

Assertive Communication Training - Master Thesis Post-Training

* Erforderlich

Data Privacy Information and Consent Form

1. Declaration of Consent

Dear Participant,

thank you for taking the time to support our research study. It should take **less than 10 minutes** to complete it.

We are Franz Burelbach and Maurice Kasnitz, Master's in Management students at Nova School of Business and Economics. Under the guidance of Professor Helena Martins, we are conducting research for our master's thesis to develop a **training for assertive communication** within a business context targeting higher education students.

The survey is fully **voluntarily** and the data collected will be used 100% **anonymously**. Personal data is collected for **analysis and comparison purposes only and will not be shared or published**. By continuing, you consent to participate in this survey and acknowledge that you have read and understood the purpose of the research. Rest assured, all responses will remain confidential and your input will be used solely for **academic research purposes**.

We kindly ask that you answer all questions **on your own**. Your participation is invaluable to us, and we greatly appreciate your participation.

For any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us at: 60362@novasbe.pt or 58388@novasbe.pt. Thank you once again for your time and support!

Best regards,
Franz and Maurice

Acceptance: By agreeing to participate you are indicating that: you are at least 18 years of age and that you have read and comprehend the declaration of consent.

2. I have read and comprehend the information above and give my consent to participate and fill out the survey *

Yes

No

Assertive Communication Training - Master Thesis Post-Training



* Erforderlich

Personal Information



3. Please indicate your full name *

Ihre Antwort eingeben

4. Please provide your email address (preferably NOVA address) *

Geben Sie Text ein, der @ enthält.

5. How old are you? *

Die Zahl muss zwischen 18 und 99 liegen

6. What gender describes you best? *

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

7. Please indicate your nationality *

Ihre Antwort eingeben

8. What do you study? *

- M.Sc. Management
- M.Sc. Finance
- M.Sc. Economics
- M.Sc. Business Analytics
- Something else
- I do/did not study

Zurück

Weiter

Cognitive Competences on Assertive Communication



10. Please answer the following questions: *

	1. True	2. False
1. Eye contact is part of para-verbal communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Effective communication styles depend on the context and situation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Assertive communication embodies elements from passive and aggressive communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Assertive communication is the ability to directly state your feelings and needs in a respectful manner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Speech volume is part of para-verbal communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. "You statements" are typically part of assertive communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Assertive communication focusses on analyzing and addressing individuals rather than behaviors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Assertiveness requires you to adapt your behavior to situations in a way which maximizes positive outcomes while minimizing the negative ones	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Assertive communication puts your own feelings above the feelings of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Rejecting unsuitable demands is part of assertive communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Assertive Communication Training - Master Thesis Post-Training



Behavioral Competences on Assertive Communication



11. Please answer the following questions:

	1. Totally Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Undecided	4. Agree	5. Totally Agree
1. I feel comfortable using assertive language in general	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I feel comfortable expressing my thoughts and needs using "I-Statements"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I feel comfortable using assertive communication in a business context	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. When dealing with difficult conversations I feel comfortable asserting myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. In conflict situations I feel comfortable expressing my feelings and needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Zurück

Weiter

Assertive Communication Training - Master Thesis Post-Training



* Erforderlich


Assertiveness Assessment



12. Please answer the following questions (1/2):
(be aware of the new options provided) *

	1. I never do that	2. I hardly do that	3. I usually do that	4. I often do that	5. I always do that
1. When a person is highly unfair, do you call it to attention?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Do you find it difficult to make decisions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Are you openly critical of others' ideas, opinions, and behavior?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Do you speak out in protest when someone takes your place in line?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Do you often avoid people or situations for fear of embarrassment?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Do you usually have confidence in your own judgement?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Do you insist that your spouse or roommate take on a fair share of household chores?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Do you tend to "fly off the handle"?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. When a salesperson makes an effort, do you find it hard to say "no" even though the merchandise is not really what you want?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>


10. When a latecomer is waited on before you are, do you call attention to the situation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Are you reluctant to speak up in a discussion or debate?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. If a person has borrowed money (or a book, garment, or thing of value) and is overdue in returning it, do you mention it?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Do you continue to pursue an argument after the other person has had enough?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Do you generally express what you feel?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Are you disturbed if someone watches you at work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. If someone keeps kicking or bumping your chair in a movie or a lecture, do you ask the person to stop?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. Do you find it difficult to keep eye contact when talking to another person?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. In a good restaurant, when your meal is improperly prepared or served, do you ask the server/waiter/waitress to correct the situation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. When you discover merchandise is faulty, do you return it for an adjustment?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. Do you show your anger by name calling or obscenities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Please answer the following questions (2/2):
 (be aware of the new options provided) * 

	1. I never do that	2. I hardly do that	3. I usually do that	4. I often do that	5. I always do that
21. Do you try to be invisible or escape in social situations?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. Do you insist that your property manager (mechanic, repairman) make repairs, adjustments, or replacements that are his/her responsibility?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. Do you often step in and make decisions for others?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. Are you able to express love and affection openly?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. Are you able to ask your friends for small favors or help?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. Do you think you always have the right answer?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. When you differ with a person you respect, are you able to speak up for your own viewpoint?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. Are you able to refuse unreasonable requests friends made by friends?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. Do you have difficulty complimenting or praising others?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. If someone smoking nearby disturbs you, can you say so?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. Do you shout or use bullying tactics to get others to do as you wish?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. Do you finish other people's sentences for them?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33. Do you get into physical fights with others, especially with strangers?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. At family meals, do you control the conversation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. When you meet a stranger, are you the first to introduce yourself and begin a conversation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Please answer the following questions: * 

	1. Totally Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Undecided	4. Agree	5. Totally Agree
1. The materials used (Powerpoint, Handout, Checklist) supported my learning experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The exercises helped me to apply the theoretical concepts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The materials used were visually appealing and comprehensive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The instructors presented all contents clearly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The instructors were encouraging	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. All open questions were answered by the instructors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. The written exercise helped me performing the roleplay later	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. The training was well structured	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. The exercises built upon each other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. The number of participants was appropriate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. The training facilities were appropriate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. The training was useful for my future career	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I can apply the training content well in my everyday life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Overall, I am satisfied with the assertive communication training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

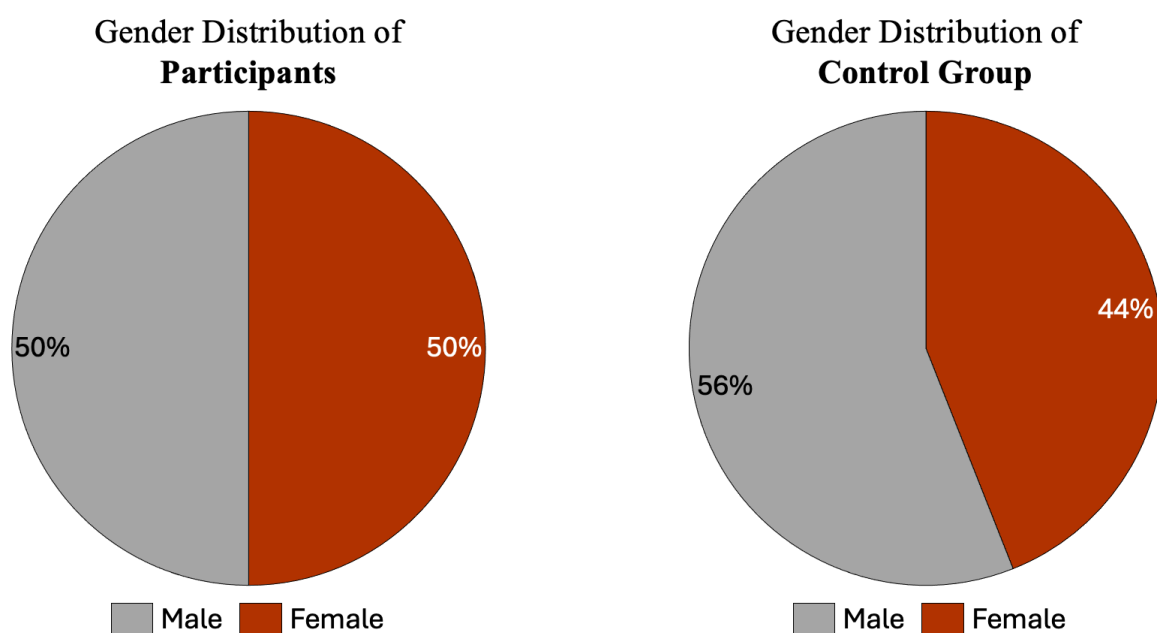
15. Feel free to share any additional feedback & comments! * 

Ihre Antwort eingeben

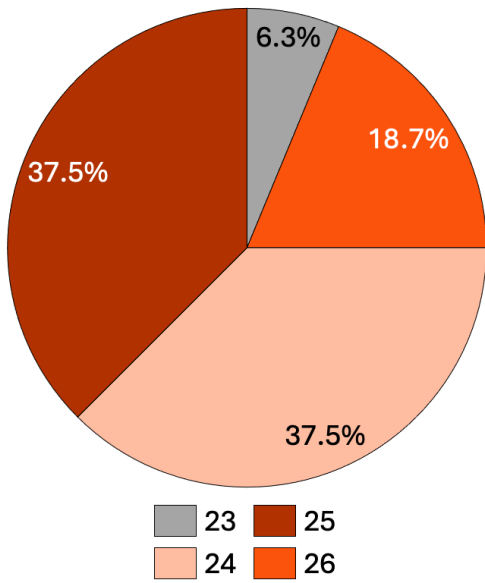
Appendix 10 – Normality Tests for the Statistical Results Analysis: (Own illustration)

n=16	Intervention Group						Control Group			
	T1		T2		T3		CT1		CT2	
	Shapiro-Wilk W	p-value	Shapiro-Wilk W	p-value	Shapiro-Wilk W	p-value	Shapiro-Wilk W	p-value	Shapiro-Wilk W	p-value
Satisfaction	n/a	n/a	0.962	0.690	0.896	0.069	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Knowledge Retention	0.916	0.145	0.81	0.004	0.933	0.269	0.919	0.164	0.922	0.183
Behavior	0.962	0.694	0.918	0.154	0.941	0.368	0.92	0.169	0.905	0.098
Assertiveness Inventory	0.966	0.766	0.971	0.858	0.93	0.242	0.95	0.491	0.924	0.197

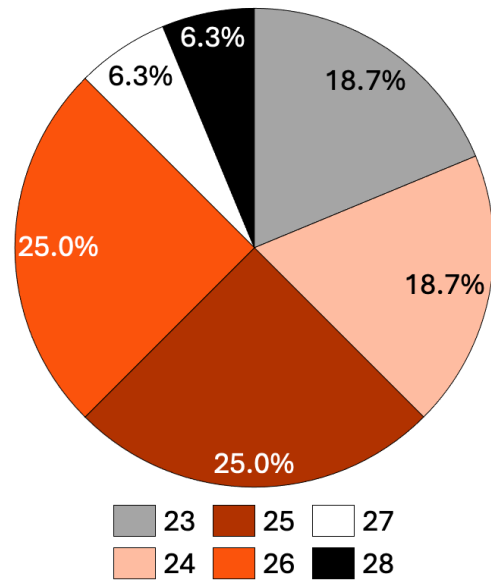
Appendix 11 – Participants’ and Control Groups’ Characteristics: (Own illustration)



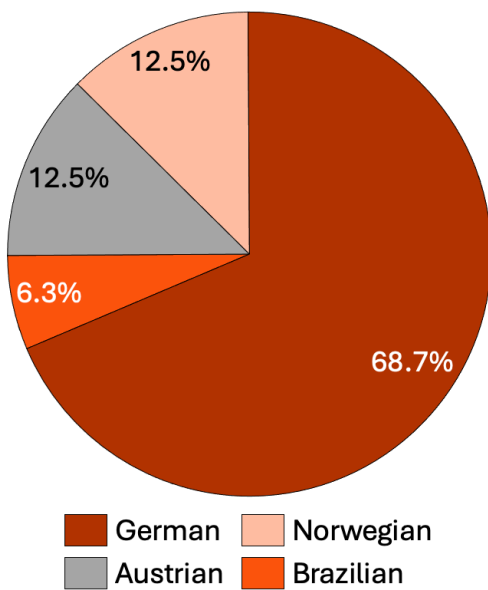
Age Distribution of Participants



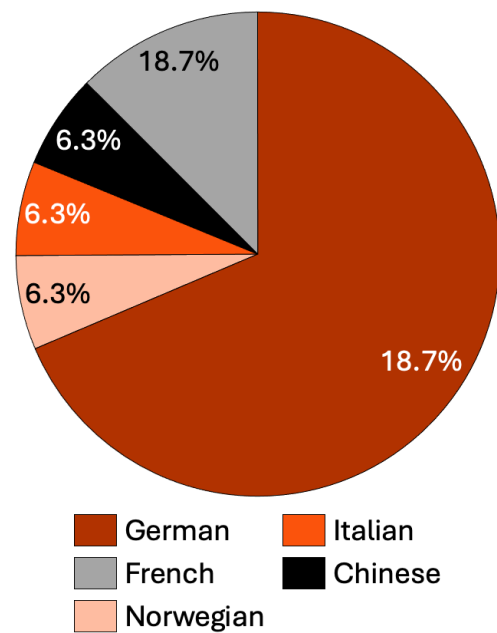
Age Distribution of Control Group



Nationality Distribution of Participants



Nationality Distribution of Control Group



Appendix 12 – Reliability Analysis for the Assertiveness Inventory: (Own illustration)

Reliability Analysis

Measure	Cronbachs Alpha	McDonald's Omega
Assertiveness Inventory	0.811	0.837
