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The Influence of Social and Demographic Characteristics on Modern Students' Self-confidence and Assertiveness

Svetlana RUSNAC¹, Diana ROSCIUPCHIN²

Abstract

The aim of this article is to study, using various methods, the influence of gender, level of economic well-being, university status, origin and year of study on the self-confidence and assertiveness of modern students studying within the Bologna system (from 1 to 3 courses). As a result of the analysis of theoretical, scientific and practical bibliographic sources on the research problem, we present foreign researchers' various points of view on the concepts of «self-confidence», «assertiveness» and what influences them. The research sample consisted of 315 participants, 110 men and 205 women, aged 18 to 30 years (M = 20.5). The participants were the representatives of higher educational institutions from the Republic of Moldova (Western Europe) and volunteers from the Internet, students of full-time and part-time education. The results of the study showed that students of private universities are more self-confident and assertive than students of state ones; male students are more self-confident than female students, but equal in assertiveness; students with a high level of economic well-being turned out to be the most confident and assertive, students with an average level of economic well-being were slightly less self-confident and assertive, and students with a low level of economic well-being turned out to be the least confident and assertive; students from rural areas are more self-confident, but equal in assertiveness with urban ones; 2nd year students are more self-confident and assertive than students 3 and 1, whose assertiveness is equal. Self-confidence has long been of growing interest among researchers, because this quality makes people happy, promotes all-round development, increases communication efficiency, and its absence impedes personal development and reduces efficiency. Assertive behavior is also important for modern students because it is based on balance. A person is frank about his intentions, but at the same time he/she considers the rights and needs of other

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people. In this case, the student is confident and draws from this the strength to state his/her point of view in a firmly fair and balanced way.

Keywords: assertiveness, assertive behavior, self-confidence, well-being.

Introduction

Self-confidence and assertiveness affect all spheres of life and are important aspects of the human personality, especially at a young age, and, in accordance with our research, particularly during university studies, at the age of entry into adulthood, active communication with other people, the implementation of important plans, and development in the chosen professional field. A healthy sense of self-confidence and assertiveness is essential for a student to develop social skills, become more resilient, and reach their full potential in and out of the classroom. Many students face problems that have never occurred in their lives before. And in general, it is a time when students frequently face various challenges, both academic and personal, which require confidence and assertiveness to solve them. Students constantly and actively make efforts to achieve their academic goals; they are often assessed by teachers which greatly affects their self-esteem, because the university is the last stage before adulthood, which influences the fate of a person. In addition, as stated by researchers, students are psychologically affected by situations such as exams, a large number of assignments, lack of free time and long-term study (Moshki & Ashtarian, 2010).

Literature review

Nowadays there are different definitions and interpretations of self-confidence and assertiveness, which creates confusion when studying these social skills. Some authors put an equal sign between these concepts; others correlate them with different sides of the self-concept.

Thus, self-confidence is equated with self-efficacy or self-esteem, and at the same time, these concepts are not interchangeable for authors who seriously study them (Druckman & Bjork, 1994; Oney & Oksuzoglu-Guven, 2015). Self-confidence in scientific research is interpreted in different ways, but for us the most significant will be the position according to which “a self-confident person is full of calm awareness of his/her strength and abilities, capable of decisive action, inspires confidence and ingratiate himself/herself to other people” (Chisholm, 1994). Norman & Hyland (2003), argue that confidence is a factor in the learning process that influences student engagement and achievement. Self-confidence is necessary for the student to challenge himself, take risks and actively participate in learning activities. With confidence in themselves and their abilities, students can set goals

and work hard to achieve them without worrying about results (Djehiche, 2016). According to Perkins (2018), self-confidence is associated with success and well-being, with achievement in the learning process, and uniting with a team to achieve common goals. In this case, it is suggested that the members of the group agree in the course of communication on the goals, norms, means, style and methods of joint activity (consolidation). Self-efficacy, self-esteem and caring attitude can also affect the level of self-confidence. Kahneman divides self-confidence into 2 categories: reasoned, based on one's own knowledge, and direct, which is related to stimulation. In his view, self-confidence is a metacognitive process that controls judgment by increasing the accuracy of responses while limiting a person's ability to see his/her mistakes (Kahneman, Slovic & Tversky, 2005).

Confidence at the level of self-trust is manifested in a person's desire to openly and spontaneously express his/her feelings, desires and needs from a position of non-violence: "behaves firmly, but correctly, knows how to express discontent and joy, and not anger or malevolence, strives for people, but not against people" (Horney *et al.*, 1991).

In addition to all this, self-confidence includes self-esteem, awareness of what a person thinks of himself/herself, how he sees himself/herself, and also how and to what extent a person takes into account the opinions of other people about himself/herself (Muntoyo, 2007).

Self-confidence can be defined as a form of self-acceptance, self-assessment, and subjective respect for oneself (Morganett, 2005).

Self-confidence lies in understanding the difference between the Real Self and Ideal Self. We infer the level of self-confidence of an individual by observing the discrepancy between how people perceive themselves at the moment and how they would like to be (Pişkin, 2004).

Most researchers tend to believe that the main difference between self-confidence and assertiveness lies in the form of application of these skills. Assertiveness, therefore, is the ability to speak and interact in a way that considers and respects the rights and opinions of others, and asserts one's own rights, needs, and personal boundaries (Pipas & Jaradat, 2010). Frankly speaking, there are many factors that influence self-confidence and assertiveness: age, background, income, and even the sufficiency of breastfeeding in infancy (Wahyuni, Handayani & Ramadani, 2016).

Studentship is a favorable age for the development and manifestation of self-confidence and assertiveness. The ability to defend one's own views, make independent decisions, show initiative and creativity, honesty, openness, courage, determination, etc. - all this is proof that at this age the skills mentioned above make a person competitive.

The life of a university student is an extremely difficult period with social and academic challenges, and as a result, many studies indicate high levels of anxiety and stress affecting student behavior (Zunhammer *et al.*, 2013). At this stage in their lives, students must cope with many psychosocial changes (Dyson &

Renk, 2006; Nerdrum *et al.*, 2006). Stressful events and changes in the academic environment can affect students' health, academic performance and behavior, that is why assertiveness skills are so important (Hamaideh, 2011).

Regarding the conceptual apparatus, behavior is the expression of a reaction through thinking, feeling or acting when people are faced with various stimuli and/or situations. In fact, behavior can be divided into: 1) hidden (non-observable) behavior such as beliefs, attitudes, faith, thinking, and 2) overt behavior, which means observable behavior, expressed in actions or deeds (Spence, 1956). In fact, returning to Bandura (1986), what people think, believe, and feel influences their behavior. People's thought patterns and emotional reactions, their entire inner essence, greatly influence the natural and external manifestations of their actions. Confidence is the foundation of assertiveness. There are two kinds of confidence, what people see and hear, i.e. our outer confidence (assertiveness), and our inner confidence. In this regard, the skills we are considering can be defined as those associated with hidden behavior (self-confidence) and open behavior (assertiveness).

Returning to assertiveness, it is necessary to consider that it is important not only in the educational environment, it is also a necessary skill for self-defense, useful throughout life. If students have assertiveness skills, it helps them to confidently say "no", to avoid violence towards themselves, to express their desires and intentions without being worried about how others will perceive it. If students do not express their thoughts, feelings and ideas, they may lose the sense of who they are, i.e. assertiveness helps them to be themselves. In turn, underdeveloped assertiveness skills lead to low levels of communication skills, lack of openness, and discomfort in communication, which affects relationships and can lead to stress, anxiety and depression (Soni, 2017).

Assertive people can grow and develop their skills and abilities, manage self-confidence, and can handle criticism and rejection. As assertiveness is an important social skill that promotes personal growth and well-being, it is worth developing (Eskin, 2003).

If we consider assertiveness as a way of student interaction with the environment, then this direction explores the external behavioral model of a successful person, where the main indicators are: (1) The ability to build relationships in the desired direction, and the ability to make a request or respond negatively to a request (Chisholm, 1994); (2) The ability to outwardly behave confidently: posture, gestures, facial expressions, non-verbal and verbal speech manifestations (Nikitin, 2000); (3) The ability to resist and attack, manifested in the direct and honest expression of one's own opinion, one's positions (Romek, 1999); (4) The ability of people not to act as it is dictated by the forces of the external environment, but in a situation of coercion to resist it (Bishop, 2001); (5) To be confident means to be able to resist various kinds of manipulation and aggression (Romek, 1999), (6) Self-confidence and assertiveness are the presence of positive self-esteem,

which determines all human activity, as well as his/her desire for self-improvement and self-development (Anthony, 1994).

Methodology

Aim of the Study & Hypothesis

The aim of the study is identification of the influence of such socio-demographic characteristics as university status, gender, level of economic well-being, origin and year of study on self-confidence and assertiveness of modern students.

The following hypotheses arose from the theoretical background:

H1: There are differences in self-confidence and assertiveness depending on university status.

H2: There are differences in self-confidence and assertiveness between men and women.

H3: There is a significant difference in self-confidence and assertiveness depending on the level of economic well-being.

H4: There are differences in self-confidence and assertiveness depending on one's background.

H5: There are significant differences between first-year students, second-year students and graduates.

Participants

The study of participants was conducted between March and June 2021. The empirical sample consisted of representatives of higher educational institutions of the city of Chisinau and volunteers from the Internet, full-time and part-time students. The respondents' age ranges from 18 to 30 years. The participants' average age is 20.5 years, with the majority of participants ranging in age from 19 to 25 years old. The total number of respondents was 315 people, 150 people (47.6%) from state universities, 165 (52.4%) from private ones, 110 students (34.9%) are male, 205 (65.1%) are female. 119 people (37.8%) are of rural origin, 196 (62.2%) are urban residents. 53 people (16.8%) subjectively rated their economic well-being as low, 226 (71.7) as medium and 36 (11.4) as high. There are 99 first-year students (31.4%), 112 second-year students (35.6%) and 104 third-year students (33.0%). Statistical calculations were performed using JASP (Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program). The study took place in the classrooms of institutions and online. The study was agreed in advance with the administrations of the institutions and with the teaching staff. The survey participants were provided with conditions for work, as well as became familiarized with the objectives of the study, a detailed description of the proposed methods was presented, and the instructions were given. The time to complete all questionnaires took an average of 1 hour.

Measures

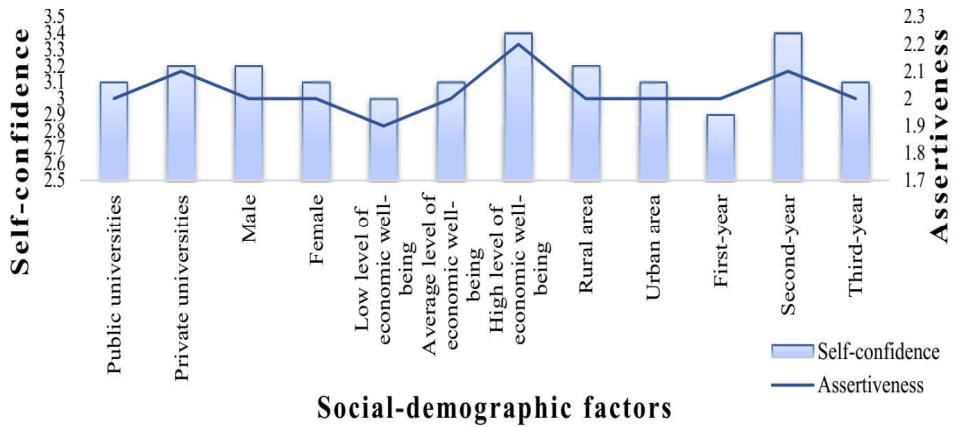
The following methods were used when carrying out the study:

Rathus Assertiveness Schedule test of assertiveness, or confident behavior, developed by Spencer A. Rathus in 1973 (RAS; Rathus, 1973). The method is designed to diagnose the degree of assertiveness and determine the degree of confident behavior. It contains 30 items: 17 are described as negative/passive and 13 of them are positive. Items are rated on a six-point Likert scale ranging from (-3) (i.e. very unusual for me) to (+3) (i.e. very typical for me). The score ranges from -90 (ie, the most insecure) to +90 (i.e, the most assertive). The threshold score is +10 points: scores below +10 indicate uncertainty, and scores above +10 indicate assertiveness. The scale has a relatively high internal consistency and stability. According to this method, too high coefficients indicate excessive self-confidence, bordering on aggressiveness in behavior. A meaningful analysis of the statements of the S. Rathus test shows that the coefficients can grow, for example, due to high scores for the statements: "When the food served in a cafe does not satisfy me, I complain about it to the waiter", "I prefer to use strong arguments and reasons", "Whoever tries to get in line ahead of me will get rebuffed", "I always speak my mind", etc. The internal consistency in the sample used in this study was measured by correlating all items with each other and with the overall score, with highly significant results ($p < 0.001$). The Cronbach alpha value = 0.714 illustrates the accuracy of the method.

The B. Davenport from Furman University USA Self-Confidence Questionnaire was developed to diagnose the degree of self-confidence. It consists of 10 statements with 4 response options to choose from. The task of the respondents is to complete each sentence by selecting one of the four options. Answers should reflect how the respondents are currently feeling related to their self-confidence. Example of items: "When it comes to achievement and success, I am"; "In social interactions, I feel"; "At work or in social situations, I"; "When it comes to my appearance and body image, I am"; "When making big decisions or solving problems, I will" etc. In translation into Romanian language Moldovan authorized bilingual translator from English to Romanian was involved. The translation was analyzed and correlated by the local and foreign researchers, who didn't find any cultural differences developing a reliable final version of the original document. The Cronbach's α index for the self-confidence questionnaire, as well as for determining its internal consistency, was 0.780, which demonstrates the internal consistency of the methodology. The average indicators of self-confidence according to the questionnaire are 1.72, and according to the Rathus confident behavior test they are 2.33.

Results

At the beginning the average indicators for all the studied demographic categories were calculated. The highest rates are among second-year students with a high level of economic well-being. Although the lowest score is 2.9, it is still within the average. For the first-year students there are basically no differences in demographic indicators. Self-confidence is the highest among male students from the second year, with a high level of economic well-being from private universities. With regard to assertive behavior, these are second-year students with a high level of economic well-being from private universities. However, for both of them, all indicators are within the average.



Note. *The level of economic well-being was subjectively assessed by the students themselves.

Figure 1. Influence of Social-Demographic Factors on the Manifestation of the Cognitive and Behavioral Components of Confidence

Analyzing the results of the study further, it can be seen that students of public universities are less self-confident (3.1%) than students of private universities (3.2%). Students of private universities have higher assertiveness skills (2.1%) than students of public universities (2%). When comparing, we found significant differences between the expression of assertiveness among students of private and public universities.

From Table 1, we can conclude that students of private universities are more assertive ($t = -2.072$, $df = 313$, $p = 0.039$) than students of public universities with a significance level of <0.05 ($p < 0.05$), which corresponds to the probability of reliability 95%. There were no statistically significant differences in self-confidence, i.e., this study showed that university status affects assertiveness and does not affect the level of self-confidence.

Table 1. Statistical Comparison according to University Status

Independent Samples T-Test								
	Group	N	M	SD	SE	t	p	Cohen's d
Self-confidence	Public universities	150	3.119	0.421	0.034	-1.135	0.257	-0.128
	Private universities	165	3.177	0.475	0.037			
Assertiveness	Public universities	150	1.949	0.499	0.041	-2.072	0.039	-0.234
	Private universities	165	2.058	0.439	0.034			

This may be due to the fact that the system of organizing education in private universities is more flexible and loyal to students (for example, more exchange programs with foreign universities, a system of retakes, the formation of a curriculum, etc.), in addition, students of private educational institutions behave more confidently because they feel they are part of a more prestigious environment and experience less stress due to the lack of high competition for scholarships (Sheinov, 2016). Assertiveness is formed later than self-confidence, at later stages of life, when a person consciously absorbs knowledge, skills, experience, and establishes himself/herself in a social environment that supports independence, initiative and personal responsibility. Such conditions are better manifested in the special relationship of the student with the teaching staff and administration of private universities, where environmentally friendly competition is supported by non-toxic, ethical incentives (Zagorulya, 2014).

Figure 1 further shows that male students show more self-confidence (3.2%) than female students (3.1%). No statistically significant differences by gender were found. From time immemorial, men have had an increased responsibility for themselves, their families, and their country, and therefore men have always had more responsibility, as can be seen in our study. Moreover, men are influenced by cultural and social stereotypes, forcing them to look and try to be self-confident. Assertiveness indicators according to the study are the same for men and women. These results reflect that society nowadays gives women the opportunity to show their assertiveness, as well as equal educational opportunities for both boys and girls. Our study showed that gender does not affect self-confidence and assertiveness.

The level of economic well-being (hereinafter referred to as LEW), i.e., income affects self-confidence in such a way that the most confident were students with a high LEW (3.4%), then confidence falls among students with an average LEW (3.1%) and the lowest confidence among students with low income (3 %). Further in Figure 1, we see that high income contributes to a higher level of assertiveness among students (2.2%) than medium (2%) and low (1.9%). There were no statistically significant differences in levels of economic well-being between low and middle income. However, a statistical comparison between low and high, as well as between medium and high wealth, shows that the level of economic well-being determines the level of self-confidence and assertiveness, i.e., the higher the economic well-being, the more self-confident and assertive the person is.

Table 2. Statistical Comparison according to the Level of Economic Well-being (LEW) - Low and High

Independent Samples T-Test

	Group	N	M	SD	SE	t	p	Cohen's d
Self-confidence	Low level	53	3.038	0.383	0.053	-3.692	< .001	-0.797
	High level	36	3.367	0.452	0.075			
Assertiveness	Low level	53	1.875	0.430	0.059	-3.251	0.002	-0.702
	High level	36	2.219	0.567	0.095			

From table 2, we can conclude that there is a significant difference between the indicators «self-confidence» and «assertiveness» of students with low and high levels of economic well-being, with a significance level of <0.05 ($p < 0.05$), which corresponds to the probability of reliability 95%. Students with a higher level of economic well-being are more self-confident ($t = -3.692$, $df = 87$, $p < .001$) and assertive ($t = -3.251$, $df = 87$, $p = 0.002$) than students with a low level. This may be due to the fact that senses of significance, of one's capabilities, and of self-worth, etc. generated by high income significantly affect the feeling of self-confidence and confident behavior.

There are also statistically significant differences in levels of economic well-being between middle- and high-income holders.

Table 3. Statistical Comparison According to the Level of Economic Well-being – Medium and High

Independent Samples T-Test

	Group	N	M	SD	SE	t	p	Cohen's d
Self-confidence	Medium level	226	3.141	0.455	0.030	-2.765	0.006	-0.496
	High level	36	3.367	0.452	0.075			
Assertiveness	Medium level	226	2.003	0.453	0.030	-2.569	0.011	-0.461
	High level	36	2.219	0.567	0.095			

According to Table 3, there is a significant difference between the indicators «self-confidence» and «assertiveness» of students with an average and high level of economic well-being, with a significance level of <0.05 ($p < 0.05$), which corresponds to a confidence level of 95%. Students with a higher level of economic well-being are more self-confident ($t = -2.765$, $df = 260$, $p = 0.006$) and assertive ($t = -2.569$, $df = 260$, $p = 0.011$) than students with an average. It is well known that in 2010 the researchers concluded that people who rate their income as high are considered more assertive, ambitious, competent, or hardworking than those who rate their income as medium or low.

Students from rural areas also show more self-confidence (3.1%) than students born and living in the city (3.2%). Statistical comparison by the rural-urban factor

did not show significant differences. This may be due to the fact that students from rural areas face reality early, in their place of residence there are many restrictions and few opportunities, so they face the choice to stay or move to the city, where subsequent education will expand and fill their lives with a new experience. The students' indicators of assertiveness depending on the origin were equal. This may be due to the fact that the Republic of Moldova is a small state and the boundaries between large cities and rural areas have begun to blur in recent years. In addition, the growing responsibility for oneself makes students grow up faster and gain invaluable life experience, which in turn affects their assertiveness.

Regarding the year of study, according to the schedule, the second year (3.4%) showed the highest self-confidence, followed by the third (3.1%) and first (2.9%) years. As for assertiveness, it is higher in the second year (2.1%), while in the first (2%) and third (2%) the indicators are the same. Statistically significant differences were found only in self-confidence between 1-2, 1-3 and 2-3 years of study.

Table 4. Statistical Comparison 1-2 Year of Study

Independent Samples T-Test								
	Group	N	M	SD	SE	t	p	Cohen's d
Self-confidence	1 Year of Study	99	2.944	0.428	0.043	-9.036	<.001	-1.246
	2 Year of Study	112	3.388	0.276	0.026			
Assertiveness	1 Year of Study	99	2.014	0.349	0.035	-0.484	0.629	-0.067
	2 Year of Study	112	2.045	0.534	0.050			

In this table, we can see that the year of study affects self-confidence but does not affect assertiveness. Second-year students are more self-confident ($t = -9.036$, $df = 209$, $p < .001$) than first-year students. This may be due to the fact that first-year students, getting into the unknown environment of a higher educational institution, lose self-confidence, by the second year it increases along with the learning experience and the first passing of exams, and by the third year it falls, because, according to the Bologna system, this year is the last and they will have the first in the life of the state examinations and defense of graduation projects, which can be seen in tables 5 and 6.

Table 5. Statistical Comparison 1-3 Year of Study

Independent Samples T-Test								
	Group	N	M	SD	SE	t	p	Cohen's d
Self-confidence	1 Year of Study	99	2.944	0.428	0.043	-2.182	0.030	-0.306
	3 Year of Study	104	3.088	0.507	0.050			
Assertiveness	1 Year of Study	99	2.014	0.349	0.035	0.945	0.346	0.133
	3 Year of Study	104	1.957	0.499	0.049			

In Table 5, we can also see that the year of study affects self-confidence and does not affect the assertiveness of the study participants. Third-year students are more self-confident ($t = -2.182$, $df = 201$, $p = 0.030$) than first-year students, but there are no significant differences in assertiveness. This can manifest itself in this form, because third-year students still have more experience of studying at a university, a large number of passed sessions behind them, so even the upcoming state exams and employment according to their specialty cannot be compared with what first-year students will have to start from scratch.

Table 6. Statistical Comparison 2-3 Year of Study

Independent Samples T-Test								
	Group	N	M	SD	SE	t	p	Cohen's d
Self-confidence	2 Year of Study	112	3.388	0.276	0.026	-5.440	<.001	-0.741
	3 Year of Study	104	3.088	0.507	0.050			
Assertiveness	2 Year of Study	112	2.045	0.534	0.050	-1.248	0.214	-0.170
	3 Year of Study	104	1.957	0.499	0.049			

This table shows us the significant difference in self-confidence between second and third-year students ($t = 5.440$, $df = 214$, $p < .001$). Second-year students are more self-confident, because the graduates open the way to a fully adult, independent life, they face the need to independently find a job according to their profession and start their journey anew in a new environment, which affects self-confidence, and it naturally decreases. Again, there are no significant differences in assertiveness.

Thus, from our sample, the most self-confident are male students with a high level of economic well-being and they are second-year students from rural areas studying at private universities. And the most assertive are also second-year students, but of both sexes, with a high level of economic well-being studying at private universities. Since the identified differences can be due to many factors, it is impossible to draw any conclusions about causal relationships based on these (albeit statistically significant) results alone.

Discussion

This study aims to explore how social and demographic characteristics such as gender, background, economic well-being, educational institution status, year of study affect students' self-confidence and assertiveness.

The first hypothesis «there are differences in self-confidence and assertiveness depending on the university status» was partially confirmed. According to the results obtained, university status affects assertiveness and does not affect self-confidence. There are few studies on this topic that are too contradictory, so it is not possible to take a firm position on the impact of university status on

assertiveness. In this case, further research is needed in this area based on the above and subsequent justifications.

The second hypothesis «there are differences between men and women in the categories of «self-confidence» and «assertiveness»» was not confirmed. We found out that male students are more self-confident, but they are equal in assertiveness to women. No statistically significant differences by gender were found. These results are confirmed by a study (Qadir, A. *et al.*, 2013), which also did not show a significant difference in the level of assertiveness among students depending on gender. Regarding self-confidence, studies (Lopez & Gormley, 2002) found no statistically significant differences between gender and self-confidence.

In addition, in the study (Patton *et al.*, 2004) it was found that there were no significant differences in self-esteem between men and women, which in turn directly affect self-confidence. When analyzing sources on the topic of the study, conflicting data were found regarding the formation of self-confidence and assertiveness depending on gender. Sheinov (2016) found that the average value of self-confidence in men is statistically much ($p < 0.01$) higher than the average for women. However, at the same time, the proportion of self-confident women exceeds the proportion of self-confident men. This is in line with the study (Kukulu *et al.*, 2012), which found a significant statistical difference in self-confidence by gender.

The conflicting results of studies of the influence of gender on self-confidence are explained by the fact that the decisive role in this issue is played not by biological, but by psychological sex and the ratio of its components - masculinity and femininity.

In the study of emotional intelligence (of which assertiveness is a part), Goleman (2005) also states that students' self-discipline and self-confidence positively influences their behavior. In addition, in many countries, private sector institutions are considered to provide better education, which in turn influences students' perceptions and behavior (Jamjoom, 2012). Moreover, the results of this study may be related to the fact that in private educational institutions in Moldova, the admission requirements are softer than in public ones, and the learning process itself is structured so that students study without being exposed to severe stress, spending resources specifically on education, and not on fierce competition and a large amount of not always necessary information.

The study by Maheshwari & Gill (2015) reported a positive correlation between assertiveness and confidence ($r = 0.272$; $p = 0.01$). Nevertheless, there are many conflicting studies in the psychological sources regarding the influence of gender on assertiveness, as well as studies that have revealed that women are more assertive than men (Karagozoglu *et al.*, 2008; Uzuntarla *et al.*, 2016).

The third hypothesis «there is a significant difference in self-confidence and assertiveness of students depending on the level of economic well-being» was partially confirmed. Statistically significant differences were found between low

and high level of economic well-being, and between middle- and high-income holders. This suggests that the higher the level of economic well-being, the more self-confident and assertive a person is. No statistically significant differences were found between students with middle and high income.

When analyzing the sources on a given theme, the following was revealed: in the study of Ghezelbash (2015), the most positive relationship was found between the students' income and self-confidence. Yoshioka (1995), in a study of assertive behaviors among low-income women, found that, compared with African American and Anglo-American women, far fewer Spanish women felt they could be assertive with their friends and family members. Moreover, a significant proportion of the Spanish women interviewed reported that, in their opinion, they never had the right to act assertively. Jangra & Balda (2018) also found that self-confidence is positively correlated with family income. Kumaraswamy (2014) found that many social and demographic characteristics including income have a significant impact on self-confidence. A doctoral study (Kotkar, 2016) showed a significant relationship between self-confidence and income, i.e., students with higher social and economic status had higher levels of self-confidence than their peers with low social and economic status. An individual's perception of being poorer than other people causes class anxiety and psychological stress, undermines social support and thus contributes to increased mental distress, and also makes the person less assertive (Wilkinson & Marmot, 2001). Research findings (McGrath & Elgar, 2015) show that low social and economic status contributes to behavioral problems. Another empirical study (Johannesen-Schmidt & Eagly, 2002) found that high status individuals and groups are more assertive than low status individuals and groups. A positive relationship has also been noticed between student income and assertiveness (Sanaa, 2011).

The fourth hypothesis «there are differences in self-confidence and assertiveness depending on the origin» was not confirmed. According to our study, urban students are less self-confident than rural ones, the indicators are the same in terms of assertiveness, and a statistical comparison by the rural-urban factor did not show significant differences. The analysis of the sources showed that when assertiveness was studied based on location; researchers (Qadir, A. *et al.*, 2013) found that urban adolescents had higher scores in self-confidence and assertiveness than rural adolescents, among both boys and girls. Another study (Zeki Coşkuner, *et al.*, 2013) shows that the level of self-confidence does not depend on the location students come from. Shivappa (2015) found that students differ significantly in self-confidence by location, year of study, faculty, gender, etc. Neelima (2011) argues that rural college students were more confident than their urban peers. The results of Singler's (2008) study of the assertiveness of students from the Upper Midwest and the New York Metropolitan area revealed a significant difference in the assertiveness of students living in the two regions. Interestingly, no significant differences were found in the assertiveness indicators of those who are originated from there and those who temporarily reside in one of these regions.

The fifth hypothesis «there are significant differences between first-year students, second-year students and graduates» was partially confirmed. According to the results of our study, the second-year students had the highest self-confidence, followed by the third and first years of study. The indicators of assertiveness are higher in the second year, while in the first and third years are the same. Statistically significant differences were found between rates 1-2, 1-3 and 2-3 years of study. In reviewing the scientific sources, we found that Rodriguez (2001) *et al.* concluded that assertiveness is dependent on age and ethnicity. His female college students demonstrated lower in assertiveness than older women, with Hispanic women having lower levels of assertiveness than white (Caucasian) women. Kilkus (1993) found that as the level of education increases, so does the level of assertiveness. These differences are statistically significant. At the trend level, age-related features of the assertiveness manifestation were established: older students have a lower level of assertiveness. Thus, the highest indicators of the assertiveness development (the average level - in 25%, above the average - in 4.2% of the subjects) are among students of the age group from 22 to 31 years; the low level of assertiveness development among these students is practically absent. Insufficient level of assertiveness development to the greatest extent (93.6% of students) is presented in the group of students over 31 years old. A comparative analysis of the study results regarding the behavioral component of assertiveness showed that there were no significant differences in the degree of expression of this component by age, year and form of education.

It has also been found that senior students show a higher level of assertiveness than junior students (Medvedeva, 2020). According to Eskin (2003), the level of assertiveness increases with the age of students, although significant differences were found only among boys, but not among girls.

According to (Coşkuner, *et al.*, 2013), significant differences in self-confidence were found among older students. The analysis of sources also reveals research findings that indicate that the assertiveness and self-confidence of students who are about to graduate from an undergraduate program increase (Begley & Glacken, 2004; Dinçer & Öztunç, 2009; Ekinçi, Altun, & Can, 2013).

However, there are also studies that show that the level of self-confidence and assertiveness is higher at the beginning of training, and decreases with years of training (Randle, 2003; Edwards *et al.*, 2010).

Conclusions

Self-confidence is one of the most interesting properties of the human psyche. Self-confidence is the belief that we there is more to us than what we know about ourselves. Everyone has hidden potential. This is the belief that in a difficult situation you can rely on yourself. Self-confidence has long been of increased interest among researchers, because this quality makes people happy, promotes

all-round development, increases the effectiveness of communication, and its absence hinders personal development and reduces efficiency. Assertive behavior is also important for modern students because it is based on balance. A person is frank about his intentions, but at the same time he/she considers the rights and needs of other people. In this case, the student is self-confident and draws from this the strength to state his/her point of view in a firm, fair and balanced way. In order to help students increase their self-confidence and assertiveness, universities should create trainings on the basis of this theme, which, in turn, will contribute to a better learning process.

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