An Analysis of Trends in Research on Methods of Assessing Children's Assertion

Hitoshi Takahashi and Yu Ito*

(accepted December 7, 2020)

In recent years, there have been concerns about issues related to communication with others in education and childcare, especially the communication of younger children. One of the things that seem to be important in solving these problems is to raise the assertion of children. In order to nurture assertion, it is necessary to consider programs such as training. At the same time, it is important to assess the assertion of children. Therefore, in this study, the present state of the method for assessing the assertion of children was examined through analyzing the research trend. Since there were a few studies on young children subjects in this field, the study including the research of child subjects was examined.

Key words : assertion, assertiveness

Introduction

This research aims to analyze and investigate trends in research regarding methods of assessing children's assertion.

In recent years, there have been concerns in Japan regarding interpersonal communication in education and childcare, particularly communication of younger children. Nishikata, Hosono, & Hamano (2009) researched the problems of preschool children and clarified that guardians were more often "bothered" or "extremely bothered" by problem behaviors such as "using inappropriate language" and "frequently making excuses and blaming others" on the part of their male children when these children were older rather than younger. Moreover, guardians were more often "bothered" or "extremely bothered" by the problem behavior of "unable to be assertive or say what she wants to say" on the part of their female children when these children were older rather than younger. These results indicate that as boys grow older, they are more likely to exhibit problem behaviors such as "using inappropriate language" and "frequently making excuses and blaming others," and that as girls grow older, they are more likely to exhibit the problem behavior of being "unable to be assertive or say what she wants to say."

Furthermore, the 2018 and 2019 editions of A survey of problems related to guidance for children/students who exhibit problem behaviors or are unable to go to school by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2019, 2020) state that violent incidents were more prevalent in elementary schools than middle schools for two consecutive years.

Cultivating appropriate self-expression ability in children may be a means of solving these problems. Previous researches have investigated children's ability to express themselves; however, such researches have not led to sufficient educational outcomes. The two reasons for this are as follows.

The first reason is the lack of practical researches wherein preschool children and children in the lower grades of elementary school are taught appropriate self-expression abilities.

Broadly speaking, within psychology, the teaching of appropriate self-expression ability

* Shimane University

is researched from the following two perspectives.

The first perspective focuses on self-assertion/actualization and self-inhibition (e.g., Kashiwagi, 1988). From this perspective, self-expression is encouraged and investigated with reference to self-assertion/actualization and self-inhibition. Most researches in this field target children.

The second perspective focuses on assertion. Assertion is "a form of self-expression that values both oneself and others" (Hiraki, 2008). This has also been referred to as assertiveness, that is, the ability to express, in a nonhostile manner, one's thoughts and feelings while not violating the rights of others (Deluty, 1979). And, Hamaguchi (1994) saw assertiveness as personality. This perspective establishes three categories in order to research self-expression: assertiveness, aggressiveness, and submissiveness. Most of these research target children of elementary school/middle school age and older.

The two perspectives differ in their perception of self-expression as well as in their execution of practical researches and training. Assertion-related researches tend to address training, while researches of self-assertion /actualization and self-inhibition address mainly the circumstances and causes of self-assertion/actualization and self-inhibition by preschool children. Given the importance of teaching appropriate self-expression ability, practical researches involving, for instance, assertion training for preschool children and children in the lower grades of elementary school are required. Takahashi (2012) explains that individuals with experience in childcare express favorable views toward implementing assertion training, and believe that such training is possible for preschool children as well as older children.

The second reason for the shortage of sufficient educational outcomes among researches of appropriate self-expression ability seems to be the lack of researches on methods of assessing the assertion of preschool children and children in the lower grades of elementary school. Hatanaka, Nakamoto, Ikudome, Ifuku, & Mori (2020) highlight the dearth of researches on the measurement of assertion by preschool children.

The present research investigates children's assertion by analyzing trends in research regarding the circumstances of assertion. Due to the lack of researches targeting preschool children in this field, researches of other children were also considered.

Method

On the document search website CiNii Articles, in December 2017, searches were carried out for the Japanese language keywords "アサーション(assertion) 幼児(preschool children)," "主張性(assertiveness) 幼児 (preschool children)," "アサーション(assertion) 評価(assessment) 児童(school children)," "アサーション(assertion) 尺度(inventory) 児童 (school children)," "主張性(assertiveness) 評価 (assessment) 児童(school children)," and "主張性(assertiveness) 尺度(inventory) 児童(school children)." Duplicate researches as well as researches with content unrelated to assessment methods were excluded. Based on this overview of previous researches, because there were researches using the word "アサーション (assertion)" as well as researches using the word "主張性(assertiveness)," searches were also performed using the word "主張性 (assertiveness)." As a result, eighteen researches from 1992 to 2016 were selected. Text mining was carried out on the titles of the researches. The analysis of the present research used "Trend Search 2015" (Social Survey Research Information Co., Ltd.).

Results and Disscussion

Table 1 (words that appeared twice or more) and Table 2 (words that appeared once) demonstrate results on the frequency of the appearance of keywords and the number of related texts. As seen in Table 1, the results regarding the appearance of main keywords

show that among the keywords used to search the documents, the first to third most prevalent terms were "主張性 (assertiveness)," "尺度 (inventory)," and "児童 (school children)." The terms in fourth place and onward were as follows: "幼児(preschool children)," "アサーション (assertion)," and "評価 (assessment)." Moreover, some of the words from the fourth place onward were not used in document searches. These included terms such as "関連 (relation)," "児童用(for school children)," "作成 (development)," "自己主張性 (assertiveness)," "関係(relationship)," "構成(construction)," "こころみる (attempt)," "社会的 (social)," "行動 (behavior)," "学校適応感(school adjustment)," "攻撃(aggression)," "他者(others)," "アサーショントレーニング(assertion training)," and "検討 (investigation)." The keywords that were high on the frequency list were also high among related texts.

On this basis, it is apparent that many of the researches target children and address assessment of assertion using inventories. This may be because of the ease of understanding and implementing assessment using inventories, and because self-reported inventories can be used with children from the intermediate grades of elementary school on. Takahashi (2006) states that assertion inventories are also advantageous as they can be administered simultaneously to large numbers of people. However, when assessing assertion by preschool children, as suggested by Kanayama, Kanayama, Isobe, Okamura, Sato, & Sato (2011) in a research of social skills, due to the limitations of the linguistic and cognitive abilities of preschool children, it is necessary to consider performing assessments using assertion inventories with an instructor assessment method (caregiver assessment method). Hatanaka, Nakamoto, Ikudome, Ifuku, & Mori (2020) also discuss this thing. Additionally, in view of the development status of children, it is necessary to consider using the instructor assessment method for assertion by children in the lower grades of elementary

school as well.

Additionally, Figure 1 shows the results of an analysis of a map of the main keywords. As Figure 1 demonstrates, in the results of the map of the main keywords, "アサーション (assertion)" was correlated with "自尊感情 (self-esteem)," "ストレス(stress)", "児童(school children)," and so on. Moreover, "主張性 (assertiveness)" was correlated with "学校適応感(school adjustment)" and "児童用(for school children)." "尺度 (inventory)" was correlated with "児童用 (for school children)." "評価 (assessment)" was correlated with "学校適応感 (school adjustment)" and "高学年 (upper grades)." "幼児 (preschool children)" was correlated with "自己主張性(assertiveness)," "協調(cooperation)," and "社会的(social)." These correlations appear to arise because the concept of assertion is related not only to internal adaptation but also to external adaptation. Furthermore, our investigation of the relationship of assertion to "自尊感情 (self-esteem)," "ストレス (stress)," and so on suggests that "自尊感情(self-esteem)," "ストレス (stress)," and so on may have the potential to serve as standards for evaluating the appropriateness of assertion inventories.

Table 3 and Figure 2 demonstrate results on the Quantification Method of the Third Type. These shows the results of 0/1 data analysis of the frequency of the appearance of keywords and the number of related texts (Table 1). This analysis of the present research used "BellCurve for Excel" (Social Survey Research Information Co., Ltd.). As seen Figure 2, "尺度 (inventory)" was close to "児童用(for school children)". However, "尺度(inventory)" was not close to "幼児(preschool children)". This result was similar to Figure 1.

This research aimed to analyze and investigate trends in research regarding methods of assessing children's assertion. We hope that future researches will further address methods of assessing assertion by preschool children and children in the lower grades of elementary school.

Table 1 The frequency of the appearance of keywords and the number of related texts (words that appeared twice or more)

keywords	The frequency of the appearance	The number of related texts
主張性（Assertiveness）	9	7
尺度（Inventory）	8	8
児童（School children）	8	7
関連（Relation）	6	6
児童用（For school children）	5	5
幼児（Preschool children）	5	5
アサーション（Assertion）	5	4
作成（Development）	4	4
自己主張性（Self-assertion）	3	3
関係（Relationship）	3	3
構成（Construction）	2	2
こころみる（Attempt）	2	2
社会的（Social）	2	2
行動（Behavior）	2	2
学校適応感（School adjustment）	2	1
攻撃（Aggression）	2	2
他者（Others）	2	2
アサーショントレーニング（Assertion training）	2	2
評価（Assessment）	2	2
検討（Investigation）	2	2

Table 2 The frequency of the appearance of keywords and the number of related texts(words that appeared once)

| keywords	The frequency of the appearance	The number of related texts
自尊感情（Self-esteem）	1	1
協調（Cooperation）	1	1
開発（Development）	1	1
検査（Test）	1	1
認知非言語（Cognition, Nonverbal）	1	1
遊ぶ（Play）	1	1
遊び（Play）	1	1
嗜好（Preference）	1	1
交代（Shift）	1	1
幼児期（Infancy）	1	1
スキル（Skills）	1	1
自己主張（Self-assertion）	1	1
変化（Changes）	1	1
コミュニケーション（Communication）	1	1
自由遊び場面（Free play settings）	1	1
含む（Include）	1	1
尊重（Respect）	1	1
アサーションプログラム（Assertion program）	1	1
高学年（Upper grades）	1	1
対（For）	1	1
おく（In）	1	1
主張（Assertion）	1	1
配慮（Consideration）	1	1
類型化（Construct）	1	1
友人（Friend）	1	1
あたらしい（New）	1	1
ストレス（Stress）	1	1
学校（School）	1	1
研究（Research）	1	1
測定（Measurement）	1	1
用いる（Use）	1	1
介入（Intervention）	1	1
基準（Criterion）	1	1
治療（Therapy）	1	1
問題（Problem）	1	1
ASC	1	1
アサーティブネス（Assertiveness）	1	1
因子構造（Factor structure）	1	1
信頼性（Reliability）	1	1
仲間（Peer）	1	1
適応（Adjustment）	1	1
役立つ（Helpful）	1	1
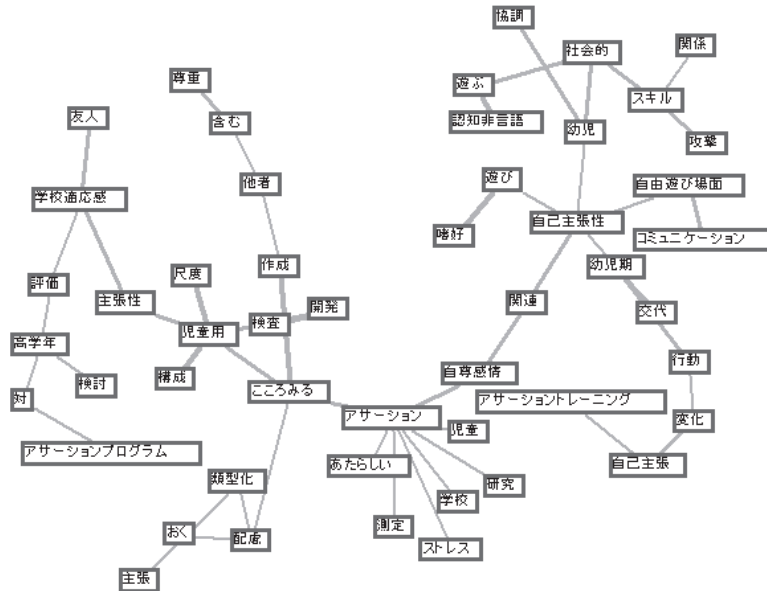
Figure 1 Keywords map

Table 3 Category score（Quantification Method of the Third Type）

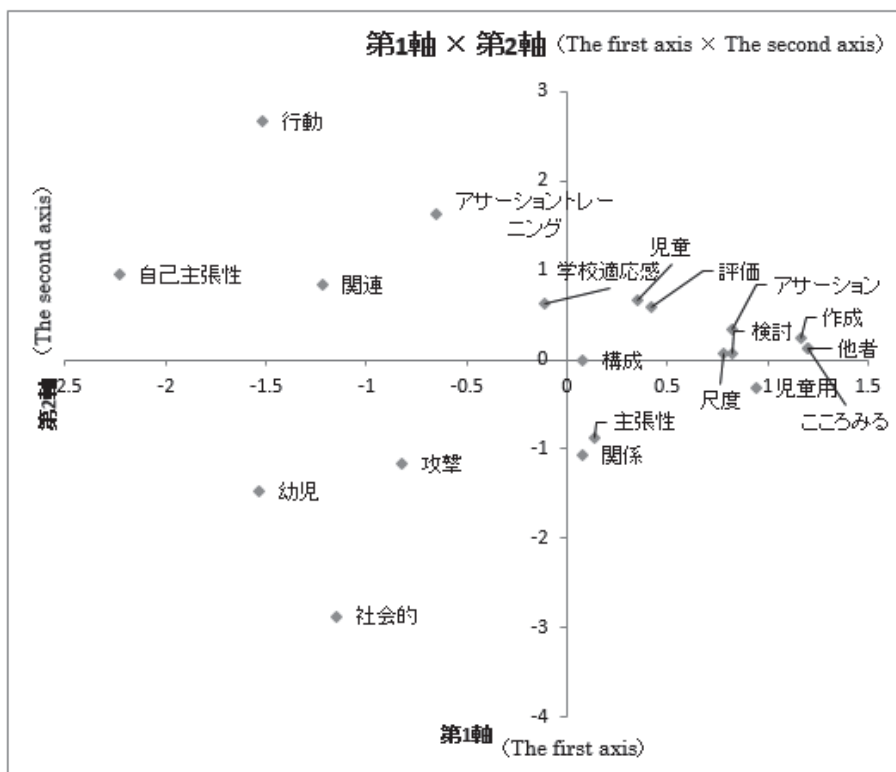| Category	The first axis	The second axis
主張性（Assertiveness）	0.14	-0.88
尺度（Inventory）	0.78	0.06
児童（School children）	0.35	0.68
関連（Relation）	-1.22	0.83
児童用（For school children）	0.94	-0.32
幼児（Preschool children）	-1.54	-1.48
アサーション（Assertion）	0.83	0.34
作成（Development）	1.17	0.24
自己主張性（Self-assertion）	-2.23	0.96
関係（Relationship）	0.08	-1.07
構成（Construction）	0.08	-0.02
こころみる（Attempt）	1.20	0.12
社会的（Social）	-1.14	-2.87
行動（Behavior）	-1.52	2.66
学校適応感（School adjustment）	-0.11	0.63
攻撃（Aggression）	-0.82	-1.17
他者（Others）	1.20	0.12
アサーショントレーニング（Assertion training）	-0.65	1.64
評価（Assessment）	0.42	0.59
検討（Investigation）	0.82	0.07

Figure 2　Plot（Quantification Method of the Third Type）
（The first axis　×　The second axis）

Postscript

This research is a part of a research funded by JSPS Grant-in-Aid for Young Scientists (B) (17K13916).

This is a revised version of a paper presented at the second research conference of The Japanese Society for the Study on Hoikusha Education in 2018.

References

Deluty, R.H. (1979). Children's action tendency scale: A self-report measure of aggressiveness, assertiveness, and submissiveness in children. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 47*, 1061-1071.

Hamaguchi, Y. (1994). Construction of assertiveness scale for children. *The Japanese Journal of Educational Psychology*, *42*, 463-470. (In Japanese)

Hatanaka, T., Nakamoto, H., Ikudome, S., Ifuku, H., & Mori, S. (2020). Development of the children's assertive behavior scale for preschool children: Examination of its reliability and validity. *The Japanese Journal of Personality*, *28*, 233-242. (In Japanese)

Hiraki, N. (Ed.) (2008). *Assertion training: Self-expression that values oneself and others.* Shibundo. (In Japanese, translated by the author of this article)

Kanayama,M., Kanayama, S., Isobe, M., Okamura, H., Sato, S., & Sato, Y. (2011). Development of a teacher-rated social skills scale for preschool children. *Japanese Journal of Counseling Science*, *44*, 216-226. (In Japanese)

Kashiwagi, K. (1988). *The development of the "self" in preschool children: Focusing on*

mechanisms of behavioral self-regulation. University of Tokyo Press. (In Japanese, translated by the author of this article)

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2019). *The results of a survey of problems related to guidance for children/students who exhibit problem behaviors or are unable to go to school: 2018.* https://www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/detail/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2019/10/25/1412082-30.pdf （Accessed Nov. 2020) (In Japanese, translated by the author of this article)

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2020). *The results of a survey of problems related to guidance for children/students who exhibit problem behaviors or are unable to go to school: 2019.* https://www.mext.go.jp/content/20201015-mext_jidou02-100002753_01.pdf （Accessed Nov. 2020) (In Japanese, translated by the author of this article)

Nishikata,T., Hosono,I., & Hamano, A. (2009). Developmental changes in problem behavior during childhood. *Mejiro Journal of Humanities*, *5*, 259-270. (In Japanese)

Takahashi, H. (2006). Trends and problems of assertion inventories. *Journal of Japanese Clinical Psychology*, *24*, 606-614. (In Japanese)

Takahashi, H. (2012). Images of the assertiveness training in early childhood education and childcare. *Bulletin of Yamaguchi Gakugei University, 3*, 33-39. (In Japanese)