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Relationship between Assertiveness and Self-Esteem among Young Indian Adults

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Abstract: ***This quantitative study explores the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem among young Indian adults aged 20 to 30 years. The research design employs a correlation approach to examine the statistical association between assertiveness and self-esteem without manipulating variables. The study aims to answer key questions regarding gender differences in assertiveness and self-esteem, the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem, and the impact of self-esteem on assertiveness. Data from 131 participants (61 males, 70 females) from Assam and Karnataka were collected using Google Forms and social media advertising. The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) were used to measure assertiveness and self-esteem, respectively. Statistical analyses included independent sample t-tests, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. The results indicate no significant difference in assertiveness and self-esteem between males and females. However, a significant negative correlation was found between assertiveness and self-esteem, suggesting that as assertiveness increases, self-esteem tends to decrease, and vice versa. Regression analysis further confirms that self-esteem significantly impacts assertiveness among young adults, with approximately 8.9% of the variability in assertiveness scores explained by differences in self-esteem. These findings provide valuable insights into the dynamics of assertiveness and self-esteem among young Indian adults, highlighting the complex interplay between these psychological constructs and their implications for individual well-being and behavior.***

Keywords: Assertiveness, Self Esteem, Youth

I. INTRODUCTION

The term "youth" in India refers to all those between the ages of 15 and 29, as reflected in the National Youth Policy, 2014, Government of India. This section of the society comprises a large number of India's population and constantly experiences the amalgamation of modern trends with traditional values. How globalization, technology, as well as shifting cultural values impact them is reflected in the various spheres that constitute life namely relationships, education, careers, and societal expectations. Thus, this community is usually considered to have a great deal to do with the evolution of our country both socially and economically in the time to come. Young Indian adults exhibit a diverse range of personal characteristics that influence their approach to forming relationships. They play a pivotal role in forming relationships psychologically, both individually and collectively. Additionally, many young Indian adults are ambitious and career-driven, prioritizing professional success alongside personal fulfillment. Psychologically, these young adults often grapple with issues of identity, autonomy, and intimacy as they seek to establish and maintain relationships. They may experience internal conflicts between the desire for independence and the need for emotional connection, influenced by factors such as family dynamics, peer pressure, and personal aspirations. Moreover, the digital age has introduced new dimensions to relationship formation, with social media platforms shaping perceptions of self-worth, attractiveness, and social status. Young Indian adults often engage in self-reflection, introspection, and self-disclosure as they navigate the complexities of romantic relationships, friendships, and familial bonds. Their psychological experiences in forming relationships contribute to their overall development, shaping their values, beliefs, and interpersonal skills as they navigate the intricacies of love, companionship, and belonging in a rapidly evolving society. The millennial generation is marked by the fact that young Indians show rather interesting personality traits that have a great bearing on their daily connections. They are very important for the psychological formation of relationships, both individually and in groups. Besides, a large number of Indian youth are career-minded and want to combine both professional and personal satisfaction. From a psychological point of view, college students frequently face problems such as a sense of self, autonomy, and intimacy by trying to build relationships and maintain their status in the university environment. They are likely to encounter the inner struggle between the synchronization of individuality while being autonomous, and communication of emotions that are generated by different sources including birth family, the peer community, and personal aims. So far, the digital period has added some new features to the process of relationship formation, which developing beliefs of self-esteem, attractiveness, and social status via social media networks.

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Most times young Indian adults of the present time are found to be indulging themselves in self-reflection, contemplation, and self-disclosure as they figure their way through the maze of romantic relationships, friendship circles as well as families. Those psychological features in building relationships, on the other hand, result in the individual's overall development: they keep shaping one's personality, inner beliefs, and interpersonal skills. The individual gains insight into the complexity and subtleties of these relationships along with comprehension of self-image, other people's expectations, and social rules.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A. Research Design

A quantitative approach was followed for the study as its primary research method. This method involves gathering and analyzing numerical data to draw statistical conclusions and identify patterns, providing a systematic framework for the research process. A correlation research design was used to test the statistical relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem. The advantage of this research design lies in its ability to assess the strength and direction of correlations without manipulating the variables. By employing this methodology, we aim to shed light on the nature and extent of the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem.

B. Objectives

1) To assess thesignificant difference in the level of assertiveness between males and females.
2) To assess the significant difference in the level of self-esteem between males and females.
3) To assess the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem.
4) To assess the impact of self-esteem on assertiveness.

C. Hypotheses

1) H01: There is no significant difference in the level of assertiveness between males and females.
2) H02: There is no significant difference in the level of self-esteem between males and females.
3) H03: There is no significant relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem.
4) H04: The level of self-esteem does not impact assertiveness.

D. Universe of the study

The universe of the study encompasses a diverse population of young adults from various backgrounds ranging between 20 to 30 years of age.

E. Inclusion Criteria

1) Only participants who were between the ages of 20 and 30 years were included.
2) Participants must be able to read English.
3) Participants must provide informed consent to participate in the study.

F. Exclusion Criteria

Individuals outside of the specified age range were not included.

G. Sample and Technique

The sample of this study consists of 131 young adults (61 men and 70 women), belonging to the states – of Assam and Karnataka. They were recruited to participate in this study by convenience sampling through Google Forms, and social media advertising. Participants completed an online questionnaire survey containing several standardized measures. None of the participants received any financial reward for participation.

H. Description of Tools

Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire containing several preliminary demographic questions, and the scales - The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS; Spencer A. Rathus [1973]), and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale [(RSES) Morris Rosenberg]. Previous research demonstrates the reliability and validity of each scale.

The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule: The Rathus assertiveness schedule (RAS) is a 30-item self-report instrument designed by Rathus (1973) to measure assertiveness. The RAS permits dependable and valid assessment of fierceness or social boldness. Each item is answered from +3 "Very characteristic of me, extremely descriptive" to −3 "Very uncharacteristic of me, extremely nondescriptive," without including 0. 17 items require inverting the sign, and then the items' scores are added up. High positive scores indicate high assertiveness while high negative scores indicate the opposite.

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale: The Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSES), developed by the sociologist Morris Rosenberg, is a self-esteem measure widely used in social science research. It uses a scale of 0 – 30, where a score lower than 15 may indicate problematic low self-esteem. The scale measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. Low self-esteem responses are "disagree" or "strongly disagree" on items 1, 3, 4, 7, and 10, and "strongly agree" or "agree" on items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9. The scale can also be scored by totaling the individual 4-point items after reverse-scoring the negatively worded items. Reliability: The RSE demonstrates a Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility of .92, indicating excellent internal consistency. Test-retest reliability over 2 weeks reveals correlations of .85 and .88, indicating excellent stability. Validity: Demonstrates concurrent, predictive, and construct validity using known groups.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to analyze the relationship betweenStudy Habits and Academic Performance among University Students. The data was collected using Palsane and Sharma's Study Habits Inventory(PSSHI) and the Academic Performance of the previous semester. The sample size consisted of 200 University Students aged 18 – 25 years residing in India at the time of the study being done, were selected. The data was entered into Microsoft Excel and then exported into SPSS 25 for statistical analysis.

Table 4.1: Socio-demographic details of the participants

		Frequency	Percentage
Age	20 -30years	131	100
Sex	Males	61	46.56
	Females	70	53.44
	Under Graduation	57	43.51
Current Education Level	Post Graduation	131	56.46

Data presented in Table 4.1 shows that 131 respondents representing 100% are within the age group of 20-30 years. 61 respondents representing 46.46% are males and 70 respondents representing 53.44% are females, while 57 respondents representing 43.51 % are from the undergraduate level, 74 respondents representing 56.46 % are from the postgraduate level.

1) H01: There is no significant difference in the level of assertiveness between males and females.

Table 4.2:Independent sample t-test of Assertiveness between Males and Females

Assertiveness	N	M	SD	SE	t	df	p
Males	61	62.05	28.477	3.646	-.343	129	.733
Females	70	63.69	26.192	3.131	-.341	122.96	.734

Note: SD= Standard Deviation; SE=Standard Error.

The Independent Sample t-test presented in Table 4.2 indicates the Assertiveness level between males and females of the taken population. The sample size (N) of the male was 61, the mean score (M) was found to be 62.05, the standard deviation (SD) was 28.477, the standard error (SE) was 3.646, the t-value was -0.343, the degree of freedom (df) was 129 and the obtained p-value was 0.733.

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The sample size (N) of females was 70, the mean score (M) was found to be 63.69, the standard deviation (SD) was 26.192, the standard error (SE) was 3.131, the t-value was -0.341, the degree of freedom (df) was 122.96 (typically rounded to the nearest whole number, so df = 123) and the obtained p-value was 0.734. Based on these results, there doesn't appear to be a significant difference in assertiveness between males and females. This is indicated by the non-significant p-values being greater than 0.05 (.733 for males and .734 for females), which suggests that any observed differences could likely be due to chance variation rather than a true difference in assertiveness between the genders. Therefore, the Null Hypothesis is accepted.

2) H02: There is no significant difference in the level ofself-esteem between males and females.

Table 4.3:Independent sample t-test of Self-Esteem between Males and Females

Assertiveness	N	M	SD	SE	t	df	p
Males	61	28.69	4.296	.550	1.842	129	.068
Females	70	27.06	5.633	.673	1.876	126.85	.063

Note: SD= Standard Deviation; SE=Standard Error.

The Independent Sample t-test presented in Table 4.3 indicates the Self-esteem level between males and females of the taken population. The sample size (N) of the male was 61, the mean score (M) was found to be 28.69, the standard deviation (SD) was 4.296, the standard error (SE) was 0.550, the t-value was 1.842, the degree of freedom (df) was 129 and the obtained p-value was 0.068. The sample size (N) of females was 70, the mean score (M) was found to be 27.06, the standard deviation (SD) was 5.633, the standard error (SE) was 0.673, the t-value was 1.876, the degree of freedom (df) was 126.85 (typically rounded to the nearest whole number, so df = 127) and the obtained p-value was 0.063. Based on these results, although the p-values (0.068 for males and 0.063 for females) are slightly above the typical significance threshold of 0.05, they are relatively close. This suggests that there may be a trend or a borderline significant difference in self-esteem between males and females, but it's not strong enough to reject the null hypothesis with conventional levels of significance. Therefore, the Null Hypothesis is accepted.

3) H03: There is no significant relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem.

Table 4.4: Correlation between Assertiveness and Self-Esteem among young adults

	N	M	SD	*r*	p
Assertiveness	131	62.92	27.186	.001**	-.298
Self esteem	131	27.82	5.102	.001**	-.298

*Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The Pearson Correlation test presented in Table 4.4 indicates the relationship between Assertiveness and self-esteem among young adults. The sample size (N) was 131. For assertiveness, the mean score (M) was found to be 62.92, the standard deviation (SD) was 27.186, the correlation coefficient (r) was -0.298 and the obtained p-value was 0.001 (significant at the 0.01 level, 2-tailed). For self-esteem, the mean score (M) was found to be 27.82, the standard deviation (SD) was 5.102, the correlation coefficient (r) was -0.298 and the obtained p-value was 0.001 (significant at the 0.01 level, 2-tailed). The results suggest a significant negative correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem among young adults, as indicated by the correlation coefficient (r) of -0.298 and the p-value of 0.001 for both variables. This means that as assertiveness increases, self-esteem tends to decrease, and vice versa. Based on this correlation analysis, we can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is indeed a significant negative relationship between the two variables among the studied population.

4) H04: The level of self-esteem does not impact assertiveness.

Table 4.5: Regression between Assertiveness and Self-Esteem among young adults.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f	P	R Square
Self Esteem	8528.358	1	8528.358	12.566	.001[b]	.089

Dependent Variable: Assertiveness
Predictors: (constant), Self Esteem

The regression analysis presented in Table 4.5 tests the hypothesis that the level of self-esteem does not impact assertiveness. The table provides the following statistics: the sum of squares was found to be 8528.358, the degrees of freedom (df) was 1, and the mean square was 8528.358. F-value was 12.566 and the obtained p-value was 0.001 (significant at the 0.001 level). The R-squared value (R^2) was found to be 0.089 (8.9%). The key takeaway is that the p-value of 0.001 is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, indicating that the relationship between self-esteem and assertiveness is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis. Additionally, the R-squared value of 0.089 suggests that approximately 8.9% of the variability in assertiveness scores can be explained by differences in self-esteem. While this effect size is relatively small, it does indicate that self-esteem has some impact on assertiveness among young adults in the studied population.

The present study attempts to investigate the relationship between assertiveness, and self-esteem, and their impact on young adults. The findings reveal several important insights regarding these psychological constructs and their interplay.

Firstly, the independent sample t-tests do not produce any significant difference as a result when comparing the assertiveness levels among women and men. It is worth noting that the results are for the population under study and suggest that gender has no significant effect on the level of assertiveness. Yet, the difference instead may relate to how assertive individuals might be regardless of their gender. On the other hand, the evaluation of self-esteem according to males and females also did not reveal a significant difference. Notwithstanding, the p-values were at the threshold of being normally significant, with relatively few differences and a need to increase the sample size to detect any more exact differences, for example.

Moving on to the core relationship examined in the study, a significant negative correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem was revealed by the correlation analysis. This implies that as assertiveness increases, self-esteem tends to decrease, and vice versa. This result fails to support the previous hypothesis that higher assertiveness always corresponds to higher self-esteem. The breakdown of these inversely proportional tendencies may reflect underlying psychological mechanisms in which persons with high levels of assertiveness may face problems of inner confidence, and the other way around. The correlation which became more evident after running regression indicated that self-esteem also has a significant impact on assertiveness. The large F-value together with the low p-value reveals that self-esteem is a predictor of assertiveness among young adults. Even a small effect size (R-squared) of 8.9% indicates the significance of self-esteem as a determinant of the assertiveness of this age group.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the intricate relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem among young adults. The study contributes to our understanding of assertiveness and self-esteem among young adults, highlighting the complex interplay between these constructs and their impact on psychological functioning. While gender differences did not emerge as significant factors in assertiveness and self-esteem levels, the negative correlation and impactful regression analysis underscore the intertwined nature of these psychological constructs. The findings suggest that as individuals become more assertive, their self-esteem may experience a corresponding decrease, and vice versa, highlighting a nuanced dynamic that challenges traditional assumptions. These results carry important implications for interventions aimed at enhancing psychological well-being and interpersonal effectiveness among young adults. By incorporating strategies that address assertiveness skills and self-esteem building, practitioners and educators can develop more comprehensive and effective programs tailored to the unique needs of this demographic. These findings provide valuable insights for practitioners, educators, and researchers working in the field of psychology and human development. It underscores the importance of holistic approaches that consider individual differences and interrelationships among psychological traits. These findings have practical implications for psychological interventions and personal development programs aimed at enhancing assertiveness, self-esteem, and overall well-being among young adults.

V. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

These results have implications for psychological interventions targeting young adults. They highlight the importance of considering both assertiveness skills and self-esteem building in programs aimed at enhancing psychological well-being and interpersonal effectiveness. Conclusions on the subject of the association of assertiveness, self-esteem, and gender among youth present complex points and have an impact not only on theoretical psychology but also on the professional world of psychology. The conclusion that no so strong evidence showed how assertiveness and self-esteem depend on gender suggests that traditional views on the correlations between gender and these two psychological traits are questionable.

The ability to assert oneself consistently and suitably is gender-independent and seems to indicate that the interventions meant to increase assertiveness and self-esteem should not be based only on gender, instead, they should consider individual differences and the unique situations that individuals may be facing. The major significant negative correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem hints at the necessity of working out the two aspects simultaneously during the psychological treatments. Those approaches concentrating only on assertiveness training shift the attention from the relationship of self-efficacy to self-esteem and back. For this reason, the combination of methods that help to increase assertive skills and build self-esteem will most likely be more effective when it comes to the promotion of youth psychological wellness. From a pragmatic perspective, the research above shows the relevance of stakeholders in the education, mental health, and policy-making sectors taking a comprehensive attitude toward policymaking and the development of programs targeting the emotional growth of young people. Developing techniques that help individuals stand up for themselves and improve self-confidence should be integrated into the education curriculum, work plan, and community programs across all age groups so that youth learn to communicate with others, take challenges head-on, and build self-esteem. In addition, which lays out the intricate links among assertiveness, self-esteem, and gender, helps to claim other lines of research. The next step will be to go deeply into those mechanisms of how these links work and what may happen to make the process of interacting in the person's life. Furthermore, moderators or mediators could be explored, and the effect of cultures or societies on the dynamics of these interactions might be observed. It would have a far more subtle and better picture of psychological mechanisms among young adults and be informative about evidence-based interventions needed to be tailored to people of color and those who are diverse in other ways.

VI. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future research could benefit from larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal designs to track changes over time, and the inclusion of other relevant psychological factors for a more comprehensive understanding of assertiveness and self-esteem dynamics. On the other hand, this study helps understand the complexity behind the linkage of agency, self-esteem, and gender; therefore, more research is needed. Furthermore, then aimed to investigate how cultural and social factors may affect these dynamics. This would create a more discreet knowledge of the mental function of young people, and consequently, such information delivered on evidence-based interventions according to different population groups and contexts could be developed. Exploring the role of cultural and social factors in shaping assertiveness and self-esteem among young adults could provide valuable insights into how these constructs manifest across diverse populations. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking changes in assertiveness and self-esteem over time would offer a deeper understanding of the developmental trajectories of these traits. Moreover, investigating the potential moderating or mediating variables that influence the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem, such as personality traits or social support, could elucidate the mechanisms underlying their interplay. Furthermore, considering the impact of interventions aimed at enhancing assertiveness and self-esteem on various outcomes, such as mental health and interpersonal relationships, could inform effective intervention strategies. Lastly, employing mixed-methods approaches combining quantitative analyses with qualitative interviews or observations could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the subjective experiences and contextual factors related to assertiveness and self-esteem among young adults.

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A. *Conflict of Interest*

Conflict of Interest Statement:
Anuradha Dowerah: The author declares no conflicts of interest.
Deepmala Sutar: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

B. *Ethical Approval*

The researcher adhered to the 2016 APA ethics guidelines throughout the study, specifically following point 8 regarding ethical considerations:

1) *Institutional approval:* Institutional approval was obtained during the study proposal phase.
2) *Informed Consent*: All participants received a clear and concise informed consent form explaining the study procedures and their right to withdraw at any time. Only those who provided voluntary written consent were included.
3) *Dispensing with Informed Consent for Research:* Participants' data were anonymized using initials (e.g., the first letter of their name and surname) to ensure confidentiality.
4) *Offering Inducements for Research Participation:* No inducements were offered to participants for their involvement in the research.
5) *Deception in Research:* The researcher did not employ any form of deception in the study.
6) *Debriefing*: As deception was not utilized, debriefing was not necessary.
7) *Duplicate Publication of Data:* The study's data have not been previously published, though republishing with proper acknowledgment is permissible.

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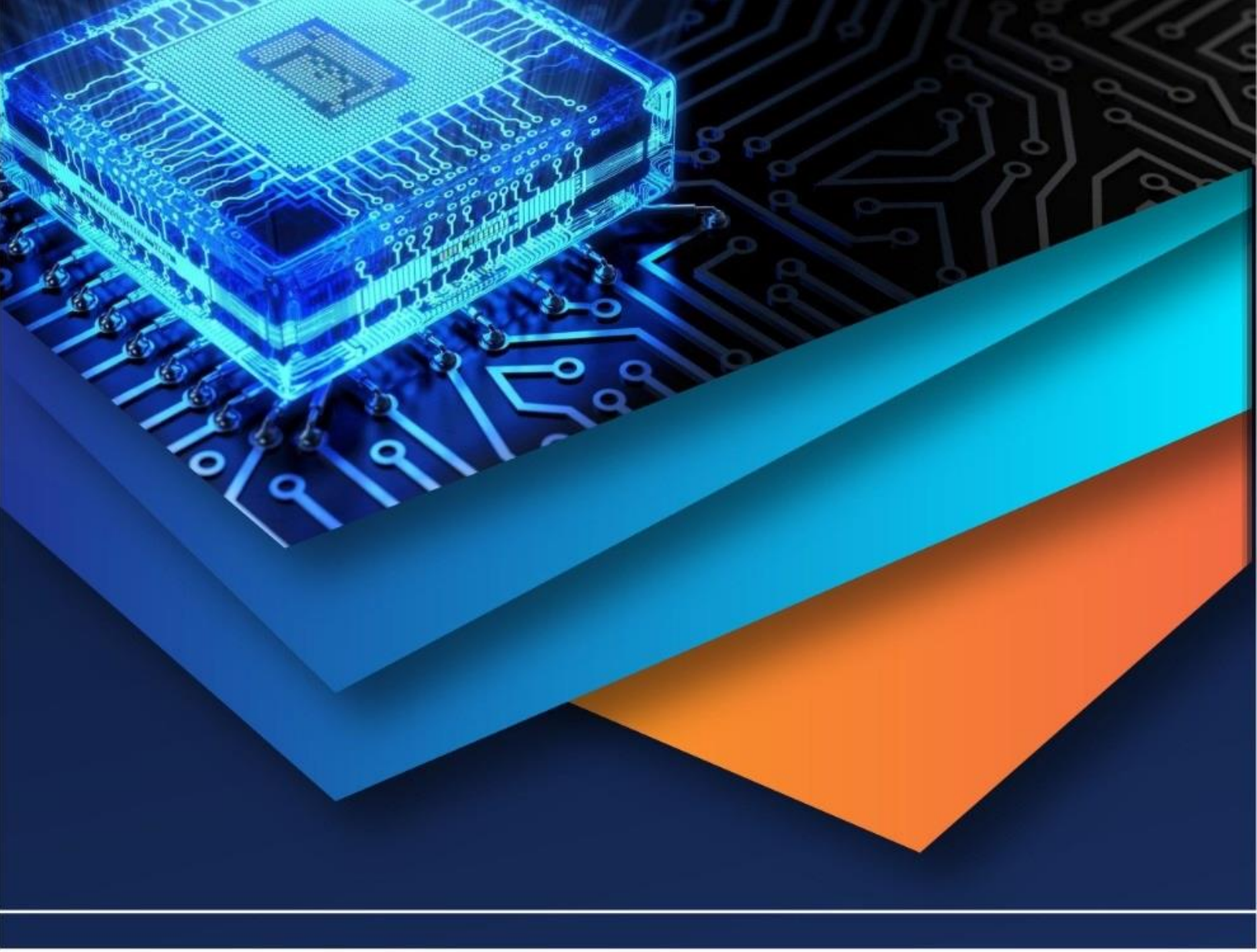

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