RESEARCH ARTICLE

Relationship between Personality Traits and Acceptance of Domestic Violence among Married Couples; Self Esteem as Moderator

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Abstract: This research aims to find the impact of personality traits on acceptance of domestic violence among married couples and self-esteem as moderator. The correlational, quantitative research design was used in this study and a purposive sampling technique was used. The participants of the study were 300 married women and men from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The instruments used to collect the data for the variables of personality traits, acceptance of domestic violence, and self-esteem was "The Big Five Personality Inventory", "Domestic Violence Scale (DVI) "Farida Ridai Self-Esteem Scale". The results of the present study observed no impact of personality traits on acceptance of domestic violence but a slightly moderating effect of self-esteem was observed. This study suggests that future studies should be conducted on personality traits with vast groups of people in diverse cultures. It suggests that comparative groups of people (non-married and married) should be studied in the future and the role of other variables; marital satisfaction, religiosity, education level, social support, economic dependence, childhood exposure to domestic violence, cultural norms among them. This research has the potential to influence psychological interventions, societal policies, and awareness campaigns aimed at reducing domestic violence by determining how self-esteem and personality factors influence the acceptability of such abuse.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Domestic Violence, Self-esteem, Psychological Interventions, Abuse

Introduction

A person's personality is made up of behavioral and cognitive traits that are shaped by their upbringing and upbringing (Krueger & Johnson, 2008). These traits make learning more flexible (Bandura, 1999). Numerous theories have been proposed to define and explain human personality. Some of these theories have become well-known in psychology, such as factor theory (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1969) trait theory (Heinström, 2013), and more recently the study of the Big Five personality traits (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Psychologist Thomson (2014) created a 4,500-word personality assessment list that he divided into three categories: secondary traits, primary traits, and cardinal traits.

Personality traits refer to the behaviors, thoughts, and feelings that distinguish individuals from one another. According to Specht et al. (2014), these variations can be observed across time and in various settings. Violence inclination is a major element behind violent behaviors, as noted by Haskan and Yıldırım (2012) in their research, in addition to interpersonal issues. According to Kilpatrick and & Sutker (2015) there seems to be a varied relationship between sensation seeking, neuroticism, impulsivity, anxiety, and other

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personality traits and the use of different classes of substances and consumption intentions. According to Costa et al. ([1992](#)) and Roberts et al. ([2017](#)), understanding personality traits is crucial for predicting behaviors and outcomes in a variety of life domains. This underscores the significance of personality assessments in both research and practice.

Domestic violence is defined as violence against women by spouses or family members (Mathur, [2024](#)). Violence against women (VAW) is a global public health issue and a serious human rights violation. According to Hindin et al. ([2003](#)) the terms KNIFE and intimate partner violence are often used interchangeably. The World Health Organization (WHO, [2005](#)) defines VAW as any act of gender-based violence that inflicts or causes suffering on a woman physically, sexually, or psychologically. Violence against women can lead to physical and mental health problems as well as violations of fundamental human rights (Ellsberg et al., [2008](#)).

People's views and responses to interpersonal interactions, particularly violent ones, are influenced by self-esteem, which is defined as a person's subjective assessment of their value and worth. Low self-esteem has been linked to several negative psychological effects, such as being more susceptible to external influences and having distorted views of social norms (Mruk, [2006](#)). The relationship between self-esteem and acceptance of domestic violence has been the subject of numerous studies. A study by Aeebanjo (2024) found that college students with lower self-esteem were more likely to defend and tolerate psychological aggression in romantic relationships.

RQ1. What are the Key Personality Traits that Influence Acceptance of Domestic Violence?

Many theoretical models of personality have been studied and analyzed (Allport & Odbert, [1936](#); Cattell, [1946](#); Fiske, [1949](#); Eysenck & Eysenck, [1969](#)). The model of five major personality traits presented by McCrae and Costa (1987) is the one that has been put forward in many recent studies and is widely recognized. Many psychologists have developed the Big Five model of personality over the years, including Fisk ([1949](#)), McCrae and Costa ([1987](#)), and Goldberg ([1993](#)). Fisk's ([1949](#)) personality theory was updated by McCrae and Costa ([1987](#)) to categorize personality into five major traits: neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness. In general, extroverts are sociable, spontaneous, energetic, and optimistic. In other words, they enjoy interacting with other people. Intense emotional reactivity, anxiety, hopelessness, and low self-esteem are all signs of neuroticism. (Eysenck & Eysenck, [1969](#)). A variety of traits, including calmness, serenity, irritability, and emotional stability, are referred to as "neuroticism." "Openness to experience" includes intellectual curiosity, awareness of inner sentiments, openness to new ideas, and intellectual flexibility. The traits of agreeableness include conformity-fostering, likability, and conscientiousness.

According to Barlett & Anderson ([2012](#)), agreeableness is associated with a decrease in aggression and violence. According to a meta-analysis of 15 studies involving over 4,500 participants (Jones et al., [2011](#)), there is a significant negative correlation between agreeableness and antisocial behavior. The Milgram Experiment, conducted by American social scientist Stanley Milgram in the 1960s, demonstrated that submissive and obedient individuals had a greater propensity for aggression and violent potential (Kaya et al., [2004](#)). The desired social behaviors of not upsetting people or breaking social norms result from the connection between agreeableness, compliance, and conformity. After reading through all of this research, one might wonder if certain personal characteristics were linked to a person's propensity for violence. Additionally, neuroticism is associated with hostile feelings and thoughts (Barlett & Anderson, [2012](#)).

Domestic violence against women is recognized as a chronic community issue, but it is hidden behind closed doors and not discussed. The present study tries to investigate personality traits that lead to domestic violence.

RQ2. How Does Self-esteem Moderate the Relationship between Personality Traits and Acceptance of Domestic Violence?

The purpose of this study is to determine how personality traits, or basic tendencies, affect whether women or men accept domestic violence. In addition, it examines the relationship between personality traits and acceptance of domestic violence and how self-esteem affects this relationship. The primary focus of the current study is the investigation of personality traits that encourage women and men to accept domestic violence. According to Jones (2022), the relationship between neuroticism and violence is thought to be mediated by defensive and emotional responses, whereas the relationship between agreeableness and violence is thought to be mediated by instrumental or callous hostility.

RQ3. What are demographic differences (age, gender, education level, residence) between personality traits and acceptance of domestic violence among married couples?

Research in various demographic and cultural contexts has shown the importance of considering cultural norms when assessing personality traits (Bashir & Khalid, 2022). Analysts use both subjective and objective indicators to comprehend people's personalities (Steel et al., 2008). According to Roberts et al. (2007) personality studies in a variety of cultural contexts can be enhanced by establishing cultural norms for personality assessment like childhood abuse and exposure to violence of parents may lead to a lack of empathy and an inability to meet the child's needs. This may manifest as passive personality traits and open the door to adult emotional abuse (Webster, 2016).

Theoretical Foundation and Literature Review

According to Bell & Naugle (2008), there are a number of frameworks that are unique to IPV, including feminist theory, power theory, and individual frameworks like social learning theory, background/situational model, and personality typology. Clark et al. (2018) provide evidence for the significant influence of norms by finding that norms significantly predict the risk of physical and sexual IPV experienced by Nepalese women. According to Arslantaş et al. (2012), certain personality traits are linked to aggressive and submissive behavior.

Anderson and Bushman's (2002) research indicates a correlation between aggression and acceptance of violence. According to Raja and Bashir (2019), the belief that Nadeem and Malik's beating of their fifth wife was not justified is positively correlated with the amount of money. Media exposure has also been found to have a significant impact. 3,911 rural women between the ages of 15 and 49 in Nigeria said that they were beaten more frequently, according to a poll. In a nationwide study, 5,907 Zimbabwean women between the ages of 15 and 49 participated in Hindin (2003). According to the findings, younger women were more likely to justify partner beatings.

According to Kraus et al. (2012) study, socioeconomic status also plays a role in shaping people's beliefs and values. Research indicates that women who complete secondary school are less likely to endure domestic abuse from their spouses (Shorey, & Baladram, 2024), and it has been discovered that being wealthier lowers the likelihood of embracing IPV.

According to previous research (Kennedy & Julie, 2013), the health sector had a higher rate of violent incidents than other workplaces and a risk of violence against health workers that was sixteen times higher than that of other occupations. According to Ayranc et al. (2006), their examination of occupational categories revealed that nurses were the target of violence more frequently than any other group of workers. Whether as perpetrators or victims, nurses face violence within the healthcare system. Identifying and addressing the violent tendencies of nurses who provide patient care is necessary for maintaining, promoting, and improving public health (Karakurt et al., 2024). Arslantaş et al. (2012) state that nurses who are assertive, self-assured, and in submissive are capable of asserting patient rights and taking on leadership roles. For nurses

undergoing education, proper behavior patterns must be developed early. In addition to academic lectures, nursing students practice in a hospital setting and experience a variety of interpersonal interactions.

Social Learning Theory

People are more likely to accept the use of violence when they see IPV, according to the social learning theory (Ha et al., 2023). According to Oral (2022), there is evidence that people were more likely to commit violent crimes and develop violent personalities when they watched or experienced violence in their families during the phase of personality development and settling, which includes infancy and childhood. During the period of personality formation, a person's interactions with other people influence their propensity toward violence.

The Big Five Personality Traits Model

The Big Five Personality theory, which is based on the Five Key Personality Dimensions discovered by Allport and Cattell, is one of many personality theories and methods. According to Carver et al. (2000) suggests that agreeableness can reduce aggressive responses. Psychologists attempt to comprehend human behavior and personality by utilizing the evidence gathered from research data. The five-factor model has generally been replicated across cultures in studies, and factor scales exhibit high internal reliability. However, extraversion and agreeableness are not always clearly distinguished and can be affected by cultural factors (Triandis & Suh, 2002). A five-factor structure does not consistently emerge everywhere, and some researchers have hypothesized that certain populations have more than five personality factors (Gurven et al., 2013). A person's personality, according to Allport (2008), is a dynamic organization within them that functions as a psychophysical system and defines how they uniquely adapt to their environment. The person has an innate personality that drives particular behaviors. According to Allport and Cattell, humans possess five traits, with a single trait serving as the dominant one. The big five personality types are Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experiences. According to Carver et al., (2000), agreeableness, one of the Big Five Personality traits, is thought to contribute to interpersonal conflict.

According to Collison and Lynam (2023), women with higher scores on neuroticism and lower scores on agreeableness and conscientiousness are more likely to engage in violent behavior, highlighting the significance of these higher-order personality traits in comprehending hostile behavior. Increasing women's wealth and educational opportunities may help them become less accepting of IPV and, ultimately, less victims of IPV. According to Dam et al. (2021), individuals with higher levels of neuroticism are more likely to have agonizing and illogical ideas, and we argue that examining individual personality variations about violence and criminal behavior requires additional attention. They might act aggressively after that. In contrast, agreeable individuals are less likely to engage in violent behavior (Quan et al., 2021). Dam et al. (2021) discovered that neuroticism was positively associated with violence, whereas conscientiousness and openness to new experiences were inversely related to it. According to Dinic and Wertag (2018) extraversion had a positive correlation with aggressiveness, whereas agreeableness and aggression had a negative correlation.

Hypotheses

H1. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant effect of personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, neuroticism) on acceptance of domestic violence among married couples.
H2. It was hypothesized that self-esteem played a significant moderator role between personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, neuroticism) and acceptance of domestic violence among married couples.
H3. It was hypothesized that there would be demographic differences like age, educational level, marital status, and residence, (urban & rural), between the relationship of personality traits and domestic violence among married couples.

Methodology

Data Collection and Sample

The quantitative; correlational research design was used for the present research. The data was collected through purposive sampling from married couples (150 women, 150 men) in Punjab, Pakistan. Participation in the research was voluntary, and none was paid or compensated for their participation in the study. Obtain informed consent and ensure the participants' confidentiality.

Measurement of Variables

The Big Five Personality Inventory. The researcher used the Big Five Personality Questionnaire, created by Costa and McCrae ([1992](#)). Sixty questions cover the five main personality traits—extroversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and experience-openness—that make up the big five. The researchers were able to verify the validity of internal consistency by determining the correlation coefficient for each item and the degree to which it belongs. As a result, the correlation coefficients range from 0.59 to 0.26. The appropriate stability range for Cronbach's Alpha is 0.74-0.77. The 5-point Likert scale is used, with 1 representing a very low degree of applicability, 2 representing a low degree, 3 representing a medially relevant degree, 4 representing a very applicable degree, and 5 representing an extremely high degree of applicability. It was noticed that some negative values have been reversed before looking at the data. Participants' personality traits were evaluated using this 44-item standardized instrument. Neuroticism, extroversion, openness to new experiences, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are the five domains that the scales cover.

Domestic Violence Scale (DVI) scale. Participants' attitudes and beliefs about domestic violence are typically measured using a domestic violence scale. It will determine whether an individual condones or denounces such conduct. While lower scores may indicate a more critical stance, higher scores may indicate greater acceptance or normalization of domestic violence.

Self-Esteem Scale. In 1999 this scale was created to assess self-esteem among Pakistani adults. It is based on a combination of qualitative data and translated items from the well-known Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale Participants are asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement on this 29-item Likert-type scale, which is widely used. Individuals' self-esteem can be measured effectively using this scale. Scores are calculated as strongly agreeing = 1, agree = 2, strongly disagreeing = 3, disagree=4, no idea=5 (Farida, [1999](#)).

Table 1

Socio Demographic Features of the Sample (N= 275)

Features	F	%
Gender		
Male	134	48.7
Female	141	51.3
Age		
18-24 years	122	44.4
24-30 years	116	42.2
31-40 years	37	13.5
Education		
Bachelor	78	28.4
Graduation	121	44.0
Master	76	27.6

Socio-economic Status		
Low class	73	26.5
Middle class	163	59.3
High class	39	14.2
Residence		
Rural	167	60.7
Urban	108	39.3

The descriptive statistics of the demographic variables was calculated.

Data Analysis

Table 2

Summary Statistics of Descriptive and Reliability Analysis

Construct	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's α	Skewness	Kurtosis
BFPI	44	2.85	.76	.945	1.003	-1.406
Self esteem	29	2.63	.53	.783	1.046	-1.457
ADV	5	1.77	.43	.648	.130	-1.267

Note. α=Chronbach alpha, M=mean, SD=Standard Deviation

Table 1 shows the psychometric properties of the scale used in the present study. The Cronbach's α for the Big Five personality inventory was .94 (<.70). The Cronbach's α for Attitude towards domestic violence Scale was .64) which indicated good internal consistency. The Cronbach's α for the Self-esteem Scale was .78 (>.70) which indicated high internal consistency. So, the study scales have sufficient reliability.

Table 3

Correlations among Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Extraversion	-	.08	.09	.02	.34**	.45**	-.09	.30**
2. Agreeableness			.16**	.14**	.35**	.62**	-.02	.19
3. Conscientiousness				.08	.27**	.46**	.03	.15**
4. Neuroticism					.37**	.54**	-.03	.29**
5. Openness						.85**	-.04	.57**
6. Personality traits							-.05	.53**
7. Domestic violence								-.12*
8. Self-esteem								-

Note: **p< .01

Correlation analysis of Table 2 showed that acceptance of domestic violence has a negative relationship with Personality traits (r =-0.05) and a significant negative relationship with self-esteem (r =-.12, p< .01). The personality traits have a significant positive relationship with the self-esteem (r = .53, p< .01). Moreover, all subscales of personality have a significant positive relationship with Self-esteem except agreeableness. While there was no significant relationship was found between any of the subscales of personality with domestic violence.

Testing of Hypotheses

The analysis's subsequent phase When the measurement model has generated a reasonable fit to the data, is to evaluate suggested causal links between constructs and examine the predicted coefficients (Gerbing &

Anderson, 1988). The table presents the overview of inter-correlations among all the constructs using the average scores of the scales that were completed in the measurement models.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics & Inter-Correlations Summary

	Mean	SD	1	2	3
.acceptance of domestic violence	2.85	.76	--		
self esteem	2.63	.53	-041		
Personality traits	1.77	.43	-032	.429**	1

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

The findings show that there is a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and personality traits (r=0.429, p < 0.01). The acceptance of domestic violence does not have a significant relationship with self-esteem or personality traits. The table showed that acceptance of domestic violence has a negative relationship with Personality traits (r =-0.05) and a significant negative relationship with self-esteem (r =-.12, p< .01). The personality traits have a significantly positive relationship with the self-esteem (r = .53, p< .01).

Table 5
Moderation Analysis for the Moderating Role of self-esteem between Personality traits and Acceptance of domestic violence (N=300)

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	β	SE	B	β	SE
Constant	8.96***		.13	8.77		.146***
Personality traits	-.02	-.01	.15	-.00	-.001	.152
Self esteem	-.25	-.11	.15	.02	.01	.187
Personality traits_X_ self esteem				.32	.18	.14
R²		.01			.03	
▲ R²					.02	

Note: N=300, **p<.01

The table shows the moderation of self-esteem between personality traits and acceptance of domestic violence. In Model 1, the R² value of .01 revealed that the predictors explained 1% variance in the outcome with F (2,297) =2.13. The findings revealed that personality traits (β=-.01) and self-esteem negatively predicted acceptance of domestic violence (β=-.11). In Model 2, the R² value of .03 revealed that the predictors explained 3% variance in the outcome with F (3, 296) =3.35. The findings revealed that personality traits (β=-.001) and self-esteem negatively predicted acceptance of domestic violence (β=-.01). The R² value of.02 revealed a 2% change in the variance of model l and model 2 with   F (1, 296) = 5.75, p <.01. Findings show that self-esteem moderated the relationship between personality traits and acceptance of domestic violence.

It was hypothesized that there was a significant gender difference between males and females concerning personality traits and acceptance of domestic violence.

Table 6

Mean Comparison of participants of Male and Female Gender

Variables	Male		Female		t(298)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Personality Traits	129.83	13.10	131.32	12.55	1.01	.31	0.12
Domestic violence	9.11	2.17	8.81	2.18	1.22	.22	0.14

Table 6 showed that there was not a significant gender difference between males and females concerning personality traits and attitudes toward domestic violence. That was found the variations between males and females were not very noticeable in personality traits and attitudes toward domestic violence.

Discussion

This study identified and described the role of personality traits and attitudes towards domestic violence while looking at the moderating effect of self-esteem among married people in southern Punjab, Pakistan. The results of the present study indicated that personality traits have no or slight impact on the acceptance of domestic violence in married individuals of southern Punjab, the role of self-esteem as a moderator is also slight. This clearly indicates and supports the idea that personality traits that affect attitudes towards domestic violence can be insignificant among married people in a culture where violence is normalized the moderating role of self-esteem is likely to be less significant as cultural pressure often takes precedence over individual factors. The social and cultural context in which the study was conducted might influence the results. For example, societal attitudes towards domestic violence and gender roles can vary widely and impact findings.

A comparison of the results from Koening et al. (2003) domestic violence research in Uganda supports my finding of a study by stating that cultural beliefs about gender roles can have a more significant impact on justification and acceptance of domestic violence than individual characteristics like personality traits and self-esteem, the study emphasized cultural norms can overshadow individual traits in predicting domestic violence acceptance. Another by Sharma (2015) showed insignificant results due to the high impact of culture even when contracts like education, personality traits, and self-esteem were controlled but still cultural norms were shown to exert a much stronger influence on the acceptance of wife beating. American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2022) DSM-5-TR also addressed the role of culture in shaping the expression and understanding of mental health contracts, it emphasizes that expression, interpretation, and experience of symptoms are influenced by cultural context which must be considered while examining any psychological construct. Heine and Norenzayan (2006) study highlights how cultural differences in values and behavior can lead to varying results in psychological studies. Research by Li et al. (2015) showed that language and context carry different connotations in different cultures. Social desirability bias also alters change results culture that places high value on social approval may align their responses to the majority just to gain social acceptance. For instance, people from collective cultures report different results than those from individualistic cultural settings on the same construct, people from collectivist cultures are more likely to suppress opinions that conflict with group norms.

Practical Implications

This study identifies married individuals who require psychological support and long-term follow-up during their lives and any future psychological assistance. It contributes to the evidence base supporting the need for married individuals and acts as a basis for future research. Also, the findings of this study result in a better understanding of psychological needs and may impact the readiness of response to potential future psychological assessment and management.

Limitations and Future Directions

Researchers should look into studying romantic partners in the future, although this research only looked at married couples. This survey was limited to the southern Punjab region of Pakistan; future research should expand to other regions of the country or compare results from different studies. Additionally, this study was cross-sectional, so future studies should include different age groups and be longitudinal.

Conclusions

Married people in southern Punjab did not differ in their attitudes toward domestic violence based on their personality traits, according to the research. Among married people, self-esteem was also shown to moderate the relationship somewhat. Personality, views on domestic violence, and self-esteem were not determined to vary significantly by gender on a mean basis.

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