A comparative analysis of personality dimensions and perceived social support for women victims of domestic violence and normal women

Hassan Ja'farzadeh Dashbolaq*, Mohammad Bidari Koije**, Solmaz Fardyadras***,
Ramin Ghasemzadeh**** and Hamideh Valizadeh*****
*MA in Clinical Psychology, Lecturer of Germi Payame Noor University, Iran
**Department of Psychology, Ardabil Branch, Islamic Azad, University, Ardabil, Iran
***Department of Psychology, Ardabil Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad, University, Ardabil, Iran
****Department of Psychology, Tabriz Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad, University, Tabriz, Iran
*****Department of Psychology, Ardabil Branch, Islamic Azad, University, Ardabil, Iran

(Corresponding author: Hassan Ja'farzadeh Dashbolaq)
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ABSTRACT: The current article mainly aims to compare the personality dimensions and perceived social support among the women victims of domestic violence and normal women. The study population was composed of all women victims of domestic violence in Ardabil in 2014 (N = 870). The statistical sample was 45 women victims of violence who were selected by a convenience sampling method and 45 normal women who were randomly selected. For data collection, "personality dimensions and perceived social support questionnaire" was used. The research data were analyzed by using Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). The research findings indicated that there is a significant difference between personality dimensions and perceived social support for women victims of domestic violence and normal women (P<0.05). Thus, among the personality dimensions, only neuroticism was more dominant among women victims of violence. In addition, normal women obtained higher scores on perceived social support components (P<0.01). As a result, it could be concluded that personality dimensions and perceived social support are some of the low variables in women victims of domestic violence, and some training programs on this variable must be taken into account for these families and women.

Keywords: Domestic Violence; Personality; Personality Characteristics; Perceived Social Support

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, although beating women and causing psychological damages is considered obscene socially and legally, given its historical and traditional areas, it is still legitimate. Privatization of domestic violence itself confirms this issue. Among the Western thinkers who analyzed domestic violence for the first time in the West were Dobashs. They revealed that domestic violence has been tied with social isolation and powerlessness of women in the family (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). Violence against women includes any act of gender-based violence that can lead to sexual, physical and psychological abuse for women, and ultimately their detention, both in private life and in social life. The National Commission on Violence against Women in 1991 in Australia, defined violence against women as "a behavior by men to control the victim by causing psychological trauma, physical and sexual abuse and social isolation or economic and behavioral deprivation, in a way that make women live in fear and intimidation" (Zanganeh and Ahmadi, 2004).

A research on violence against women in Iran in the form of national campaign was conducted in 28 provinces, which showed that 66 percent of Iranian women, since the beginning of their married life, at least once been subjected to violence. However, the amount and types of domestic violence in different Iranian provinces has more significant diversity and differences. Notably, abuse of women, in addition to the physical problems can cause lasting psychological consequences such as depression, suicide and post-traumatic stress. Violence against women can threaten and disrupt life quality of women and their children, ability, independence and productivity and their normal life (Sadeghi Fasaei, 2010). In addition, it is suggested that personality traits may be one of the most important variables related to the violence. From the perspective of Eysenck personality is composed of an integrated body of temperament, mood, intelligence and body. One of the most common personality patterns in psychological research is five-factor model of personality. Some authors believe that this model is the best conceptualization of personality (Goldberg, 1990; Mac Kra and Costa, 1987).

This model has five factors: 1-Neuroticism: as the tendency to experience negative emotions, anxiety, stress, anger, depression and impulsivity; 2-Extraversion or having features such as sociability and being full of energy, excitement and intimacy; 3-Flexibility as intention to support, compassion, kindness and altruism; 4-Conscientiousness: the tendency of a person to responsibility, trustworthiness, self-regulation, objectivity, efficiency, interest to progress and rationalization, and eventually, 5-Openness to experience including features such as assertiveness, interest, flexibility and curiosity. In a study by Panaghi Moghadam *et al* (2011) entitled "the role of personality traits in spouse abuse" which five personality factors were analyzed, the results showed that neuroticism predicts psychological and physical violence, conscientiousness predicts sexual violence, and extraversion predicts physical violence.

Moreover, the amount of individual social support can be effective on subjection to violence and infliction of violence on others. In fact, social support significantly impacts physical condition, mental health, life satisfaction and several different aspects of quality of life (Clara et al., 2008). In the area of the research carried out in this regard, social protection has been studied in the form of social support received and perceived. In the received social support, the amount of support received by individuals is emphasized, and in perceived social support, individual assessments of the availability of support in necessary times is considered (Glaket, 2010). The concept of social protection refers to support individual cognitive evaluation of his relationship. The theorists practicing in this area believe that all the relations of a person with others is not considered social support, unless man consider them as an accessible and appropriate source to meet the needs. Social support scales revolve around individuals' cognitive assessment of the environment and their assurance of the availability of help and support in required times (Brouwer *et al.,* 2008).

Women under violence are more in need of social support because of damages inflicted upon them, while it likely that providing such women with support can encourage more violence in some cases. Afrasyabi (2013) in a research showed that there is a significant relationship between social support and family social capital with violence against women, so that the author achieved a negative relationship between social support and domestic violence. In addition, Shakeri Nejad (2013) reported that there is a relationship between social support and occurrence of domestic violence, in a fashion that, whatever social and family support increases, the incidence of domestic violence against women will be reduced. Finally, given the increasing risk of this problem, it is of utmost significance to carry out research and raise knowledge on influential factors and causes of this problem. Therefore, the current article intends to present a comparative analysis of personality aspects and perceived social support in the women victims of domestic violence and normal women.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A causal-comparative (post-event) approach was used in the current research. The study population included all women victims of domestic violence (physical and mental) who were referred to the judicial authorities of Ardabil in 2014, and their number was a total of 870 based on the statistics reported by the authorities. The statistical sample consisted of 45 women victims of violence who were selected by convenience sampling, and 45 women also were normal which were selected randomly to do a comparison between the two groups. To select the statistical sample and carrying out the study after obtaining the necessary permits, the author referred to the judicial centers in Ardabil and after identifying the victims of violence, the victims were asked to cooperate in the investigation. The research data were analyzed by using MANOVA. Data collection tools were as follows:

1- Sameni's Social Support Scale (1994): this scale is designed and validated based on factor analysis. Social support scale has 28 items, which participants presented answers to them in the form of incorrect and correct answers. Scores of zero (0) and one (1) are allocated to the items. In the social support scale, to select items, minimum factor beliefs (0.50) are used. Using factor analysis, two factors namely social support related to friends and social support related to families were achieved. The reliability coefficient through Cronbach's alpha was 0.83, social support related to friends was 0.85, and social support related to family was 0.89. Test-retest coefficient after four weeks for the total scale was 0.73, friend's social support was 0.73, and family's social support was 0.68. The correlation coefficient between the total scores of the scale and operational strengthening of social support was 0.61. In addition, the correlation coefficient between the scores relevant to fiend's social support and family's social support, and the questions related to validity of social support was 0.57 and 0.51, respectively (Sameni, 1994).

2- Persoanlity Scale (NEOPI-R): This questionnaire which was developed by Costa and McCrae (1992) measures the five personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, degradability, agreeableness and conscientiousness) and six dimensions at each factor (a total of 30 dimensions). Numerous studies have confirmed the reliability and validity of the personality scale (Costa & McCrae, 1992). In a 7-year longitudinal study, reliability coefficients 0.51 to 0.82 were obtained for eighteen subscales of neuroticism, extraversion and degradability, and reliability coefficients 0.63 to 0.81 were obtained for five main factors in men and women (Costa & McCrea, 1992).

The body of research carried out on the psychometric properties of this scale in Iranian samples (Haghshenas, 2004) has reported the reliability coefficients of main dimensions of the test to be 0.53 to 0.87.

DESCRIPTIVE FINDINGS

According to the research findings, the mean age of the respondents was 31.16 with a standard deviation of 6.98. In addition, 58.16% of the women victims of violence (physical and psychological violence) had under-diploma education, and 9.11% had over undergraduate education. 32.28 of the normal women had under diploma education and 17.18% had over undergraduate education.

Table 1 shows the data on the average and standard deviation of the personality traits and perceived social support and violence in two groups of the female participants in the current research, and indicating the difference between mean and standard deviation of the research variables in the participants. Based on the results of Table 2, there is a significant difference between all the personality aspects of women victims of violence and normal woman (P<0.05), and among personality dimensions, neuroticism feature is more prevalent in victimized women that normal women. However, the percent of other personality traits in normal women is more than that of victimized women.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of personality components and perceived social support among the normal and victimized women.

Variable		Group	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personality Characteristics	Neuroticism	Normal	4.85	2.22
		Victimized	10.41	6.09
	Extroversion	Normal	15.25	3.59
		Victimized	15.26	1.84
	Openness to Experience	Normal	16.93	2.53
		Victimized	15.73	2.29
	Agreeableness	Normal	11.87	2.79
		Victimized	11.71	2.07
	Conscientiousness	Normal	12.87	1.89
		Victimized	12.67	2.21
Perceived Social Support	Friends' Social Support	Normal	9.95	3.89
		Victimized	3.26	1.48
	Family's Social Support	Normal	13.58	4.78
		Victimized	4.11	1.56

Table 2: The results from MANOVA of personality characteristics.

Personality Characteristics	Source of Changes	Total Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F Value	Significance	Eta Square
Neuroticism	Model	5703.75	1	5703.75	1229.35	0.020	0.895
	Group	0.15	1	0.15	0.032	0.000	0.851
Extroversion	Model	14014.82	1	14014.82	4143.72	0.000	0.970
	Group	0.017	1	0.017	0.005	0.010	0.741
Openness to Experience	Model	16006.67	1	16006.67	1857.76	0.003	0.970
	Group	21.6	1	21.6	2.51	0.000	0.741
Agreeableness	Model	8330.82	1	8330.82	966.83	0.000	0.943
	Group	0.417	1	0.417	0.048	0.004	0.857
Conscientiousness	Model	9779.27	1	9779.27	2304.43	0.000	0.975
	Group	0.6	1	0.6	0.141	0.030	0.871

Table 3: The results from MANOVA of the components of perceived social support.

The components of perceived social support	Source of Changes	Total Square	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance Level	Eta Square
Friends' Social Support	Model	14415	1	14415	383.988	0.000	0.869
	Group	41.667	1	41.667	1.11	0.000	0.919
Family's Social Support	Model	8930.4	1	8930.4	1611.919	0.000	0.965
	Group	0.267	1	0.267	0.048	0.001	0.827

Also, according to Table 3, there is a significant difference between the components of perceived social support in the normal women and women victims of violence (P<0.01), and the percent of the components of perceived social support in the normal women is higher than that of women victims of violence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The current research was carried out to compare the personality characteristics and perceived social support for women victims of domestic violence and normal women. The results showed that there is a significant difference between the personality characteristics of the women victims of domestic violence and normal women. In addition, among the personality dimensions, neuroticism was more prevalent among the women victims of violence than normal women (P<0.01). On the other hand, the normal women obtained higher scores that the women victims in terms of extroversion, openness to new experiences, agreeableness and conscientiousness (P<0.01). This findings were consistent with those of Jamshidi *et al* (2010), Atef *et al* (2010), Zebardast (2011) and Panaghi *et al* (2011). Zebardast (2011) in a research showed that women victims of violence suffer from high neuroticism, low agreeableness, inflexibility and low extroversion and so reduce marital satisfaction and pleasure, thus creating ongoing conflicts with husband and constituting grounds for the occurrence of violence. In a similar study, Panaghi *et al* (2011) in their study showed that victims of violence obtained low scores on agreeableness, and low conscientiousness can predict sexual abuse.

In explaining these results, it could be said that based on the findings of many studies, neurosis in many women victims of violence is not the main cause of husbands' mistreatment, but it is its consequence, and the women involved in such relationships may utilize neurosis features as adaptive responses to adopt abnormal conditions (Herman, 1999; Rozwater, 1992). Regarding the results relevant to the component of extraversion, it can be said that unlike victimized women, the normal women are extrovert, more active and have high social ability and favorable interactions, and also this group of people take advantage of satisfactory sexual irritations (Garousi Farshu. 2001), which these factors have significantly contributed to the lack of violence among spouses. The research indicated that women under violence had poor relations regarding sexual components (Garousi Farshi, 2001; Zebardast, 2011). In addition, regarding the component "openness to new experiences", it could be explained that the women who obtain high scores in this area, take advantage of some features such as individual sense of beauty, attention to inner feelings, diversity, independence in judgment, etc. and so behave well in dealing with their husbands. In contrast, the victimized women have low scores in this regard and behave so

weak in dealing with their husbands (Zebardast, 2011), and this could significantly contribute to domestic violence. Regarding agreeableness, it could be said that, similar to extroversion, it is an interpersonal dimension that refers to a variety of interactions ranging from compassion to hostility (Garousi Farshi, 2001); and the women with a high score in this continuum, influence their husband and change their way of behavior.

Also, regarding the conscientiousness, it can be stated that as conscientiousness is associated with features such as purposefulness, strong will, determination, preciseness, power and self-assurance, the women with these features are able to behave well with their husband in terms of establishment of effective relationships, and can enhance life satisfaction. Thus, they are capable of diminishing violence of their husbands (Ahadi, 2008). According to a research by Ahadi (2008), among the personality features, neuroticism and conscientiousness are negatively and positively associated with marital satisfaction, respectively.

Regarding the findings related to perceived social support components which include social support of friends and family, the results showed that there is a significant difference the female victims of violence and normal women in terms of the components of perceived social support (P<0.01), and victimized women obtained low scores on perceived social support.

These results are consistent with those of Yaequbidoust and Enayat (2012), Afrasyabi (2013), and Shakerinejad (2013). Afrasyabi (2013) in a research showed that there is a significant relationship between social support and family social capital with violence against women, so that the author achieved a negative relationship between social support and domestic violence. In addition, Shakeri (2013) reported that there is a relationship between social support and occurrence of domestic violence, in a fashion that, whatever social and family support increases, the incidence of domestic violence against women will be reduced.

Regarding this finding, it can be expressed that social support can be defined as the enjoyment of the love, companionship and care of family members, friends and others. Social support means interpersonal relations and social interactions, and it can be defined as responsiveness to the needs of other. More specifically, social support is to be concerned about others, to show value for others' feelings and actions and providing others with required and valid information and resources (Stig, Runge and Randall, 2006). In fact, the social protection encompasses characteristics that always creates problems in families. So based on the report presented by Johnson and Johnson (2000) more incompatible families expressed the main cause of the problem as indifference and lack of respect toward each other's feelings and actions.

So the existence of social support leads to a reduction in many marital problems. Notably, victimized women are not able to apply these important features in a proper way and the very reason can lead to more increase in domestic violence rate. So the research have shown that people with high levels of social support have fewer psychological problems, and they are less influenced by life stresses (Shahyad, 2009).

Finally, it can be said that the components of the personality dimensions and perceived social support are two low variables in women victims of domestic violence, and some training programs should be developed for women and families. The current research statistical sample is consisted of the victimized women from Ardabil city and in generalizing these findings to the women living in other regions we must be cautious. Another limitation of the study is convenience sampling. Therefore, we suggest that such research be done in other areas. In addition, in the future research, random sampling method can be used. In addition, officials and administrators practicing in the area of prevention of domestic violence are recommended to develop some training programs in cooperation with IRIB on improved application of the positive aspects of personality and how to perform perceived social support.

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