

# Personality Traits, Emotional Profile and Coping Mechanism of Physical-Sexually Abused Women: Basis for Intervention

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the study is to identify the common personality traits and emotional profile of the respondents and to determine how the physically and sexually abused women cope with their abusive husband.

**Keywords:** hypochondriasis, depression, denial, interpersonal problems, alienation, persecutory ideas, anxiety, thinking disorder, impulse expression, social introversion, self-depression and deviation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a widespread phenomenon which is regarded as very alarming all over the world.

In the US, more than 3 women and 1 man are murdered by their intimate partners on average. According to the WHO half of the women who died from homicide were killed by their current or former husband and partners. In 2000, 1,247 women and 440 men were killed by an intimate partner (M. Struckle & K. Hajjar, 2015). In addition, Women victims of repeated physical abuse have the tendency to fight back as self-defense and sometimes they become very violent (Fernandez, 2013).

In some parts of Asia specifically, in Bangladesh, 42% of 275 respondents had justified wife beating; in India, 51% of 13,078 male adolescents had supported wife beating; and in Nepal, 28% of 939 respondents had supported wife abuse. Individual-level factors, such as rural residency, low educational attainment, low economic status, being unemployed, and having a history of family violence, were positively associated with the justification of wife abuse.

In the Philippines, the Philippine National Police documented a total of 1,100 to 7,383 cases of violence against women from 1996 to 2004. It also reached its peak during 2001 at 10,343 cases and further increases and reached 23,865 cases in 2013. This involves physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence.

One in 5 Filipino women age 15-49 has experienced physical violence since age 15; 14.4% of married women have experienced physical abuse from their husbands; and more than 1/3 (37%) of separated or widowed women have experienced physical violence, implying that domestic violence could be the reason for separation or annulment (DSWD, 2012). On the other hand, 1 in 10 women have experienced sexual violence (Dela Pena, 2015). One in 25 women age 15-49 that has ever had sex ever experienced forced first sexual intercourse and one in ten women age 15-49 ever experienced sexual violence. Overall, 4 % of women who have ever been pregnant have experienced violence during pregnancy. The incident increases slightly with number of living children. Spousal abuse greatly affects women's personality; 1 in 3 women who experienced physical or sexual violence reported having cuts, bruises or aches. More than 10% suffered from eye injuries, sprains, dislocations or burns and about the same proportion reported that they attempted to commit suicide while 3 in 5 women who experienced physical and sexual violence reported having experienced psychological depression, anxiety and anger.

According to Women and Children Protection Center (2014) reported cases from 2004-2013 under RA 9262 which wife battering is under is ranked 1<sup>st</sup> at 57% or a total of 60,725 cases, followed by physical injuries at 19.7% or 21,004 cases, rape at 5.5% or 9,164 cases, acts of lasciviousness at 2.4% or 5,912 cases, threats at 2.0% or 2,604 cases, attempted rape at 1.7% or 2,087 cases, unjust vexation at 1.2% or 1,788 cases, concubinage at 0.6% or 1,264 cases, sexual harassment at 0.6% or 629 cases, RA 9208 at 0.3% or 592 cases, incestuous rape at 0.2% or 288 cases and abduction and kidnapping at 0.2% or 238 cases.

However, despite of having abusive husbands some women prefer to stay battered. To them it is normal to get hurt by the people they love (Veilleux, 2014). This reasoning was brought because some women had abusive parents and affected their self-esteem and cannot distinguish love from violence. In addition, there are some emotional factors from women that their partner will change over time. Leading to use of unhealthy coping strategies such as substance abuse, eating disorders, troubled relationship with others and suicidal attempts. As a result, it is taking away a large amount of money from the national budget of the government and becomes a hindrance for human development, economic growth and productive capacity.

The exponential increase in the number of cases of wife battering even though several laws have been implemented for prevention gave the researchers the reason to study this subject. Identifying and understanding behavioral aspect that causes wife battering may help in minimizing the violence against women in the country.

Given the circumstances the researchers, pursued in identifying the personality traits, emotional profile index and the coping mechanism of physically abused wives in Haven- National Center for Women. The Haven-National Center for Women provides temporary shelter and protective custody to women ages 18-59 years old who are victims of involuntary or forced prostitution, illegal recruitment, battered/ abused women, victims of sexual abuse, women in detention, and women victims of armed conflicts.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Women's personality is perceived as one of the significant factors that determine their behaviorism, such as stay with abuser husband and being exposed to more abuse or leave them (Shoultes, 2008). Women with certain personality may also affect the level or severity of the abuse. In some cases women with certain personality traits may try to seek help to decrease the severity of abuse.

Talbot, Duberstein, King, Cox, and Giles (2000) showed that there is a significant relationship between dimensions of personality and child abuse. Colémont, Hiel, and Cornelis (2011) showed that personality traits is related to punitive attitude and based on this attitude, women think they deserve to be abused.

Sharma (2011) showed that neuroticism did not have significant relationship with wife abuse. However, extraversion had significant positive relationship with verbal and physical wife abuse, while openness had significant negative relationship with wife abuse. She also found that agreeableness personality had significant positive relationship with physical and sexual wife abuse, while conscientiousness had positive relationship with verbal abuse.

Panaghi (2011) reported a positive relationship between neuroticism and psychological, physical, and sexual abuse among women in Kermanshah (Iran). The result of the study by Panaghi et al. showed that extraversion had negative relationship with psychological, physical, and sexual abuse. Conscientiousness had negative relationship with psychological and sexual abuse. Neuroticism was a strong predictor for physical and psychological wife abuse and conscientiousness was a strong predictor for sexual abuse.

A World Health Organization review of 48 international population-based surveys found lifetime domestic violence prevalence rates for women ranging from 10% to 69% (WHO 2002). Comparison of international prevalence findings indicates that at a conservative estimate, 20-25% of all women have experienced physical assault from a partner or ex-partner in their lifetimes; although the top end of this estimate rises to almost 30% when forced sex is included. At least 10% of all women are estimated to have experienced severe forms of repeated physical abuse, and most of this group is thought to have experienced sexual abuse as well.

The 2001 BCS provides a more detailed picture of domestic violence in the year prior to the survey. 1 in 17 women disclosed experiencing one or more of the measured forms of domestic abuse during the previous year, and 1 in 25 disclosed domestic assaults or threats in the same period. 72% reported more than one such in-year incident, and the average was 20; a small percentage of women experienced an exceedingly high number of threats and assaults. 37% endured severe forms of violence (being kicked, bit, hit with a fist or weapon, choking, threats to kill, or threats with a weapon), averaging 18 such incidents in the past year. 72% of women were injured in the worst last year incident (Walby & Allen 2004).

Every individual possesses personality traits which makes them unique and gives them a sense of identity. Women who experienced physical abused from their partners also have the traits which might serves as a key factor in wife battering which is supported by the study of Shoultes in 2008 that Women's personality is perceived as one of the significant factors that determine their behavior, such as stay with abuser husband and being exposed to more abuse or leave them.

Rampersad (2008) showed that there is a significant relationship between psychological aggression, neuroticism, and social support. Study by Vittengl, Kraft and Jarrett (2003) and Sharma (2011) showed that five dimensions of personality are important elements among women which in turn are related to severity of wife abuse.

Several studies suggest that this personality trait contributes in wife battering such as the study of Rampersad (2008) and Panaghi (2011) showed that there is a significant relationship between psychological aggression, neuroticism, and social support. A study by Vittengl, Kraft and Jarrett (2003) and Sharma (2011) showed that five dimensions of personality are important elements among women which in turn are related to severity of wife abuse as well as Narimani and Aghamohamadian (2005) stated that introversion/extraversion dimensions of personality may relate to abuse while psychological aggression may lead to neuroticism. In addition, Colémont, Hiel, and Cornelis (2011) showed that personality traits is related to punitive attitude and based on this attitude, women think they deserve to be abused.

In contrary a research made by Sharma (2011) falsified Rampersad and Panagi's work and showed that neuroticism did not have significant relationship with wife abuse. She also found out that openness had significant negative relationship with wife abuse.

Hence, many among the researches mentioned states a relationship that personality trait is a factor that contributes in wife battering especially in terms of physical abuse.

Hamby and Gray-Little (2007) have proposed a model for understanding different ways of coping with the problems created by battering. It represents a continuum of approaches that victims might adopt, and how these approaches can involve multiple strategies, not just leaving the relationship. It is based on a model from the world of finance. One of the key advantages offered by this financial model is that the full range of coping strategies are de-stigmatizedóno one strategy is automatically deemed superior for every person. This provides a concrete analogy for how we might reframe our perceptions of victim's coping strategies.

### **Framework of the Study/ Hypothesis:**

This study was supported by Plutchik's evolutionary theory of emotion. In Plutchik's evolutionary theory he said that traits result from persisting situations which produce mixed emotions. For example, a person who is always in fearful situations but who wants to please is likely to develop the trait of doctility (Plutchik and Conte, 1989). This fact that the inherent characteristic of emotions are reflected in personality traits implies, according to Plutchik and Conte (1989), the circumplex model as a good fit to the measurement of traits and emotions. In addition according to this theory emotion is divided into 8 primary emotions namely joy, acceptance, surprise, fear, sadness, disgust, expectation and anger. The mentioned primary emotions produces secondary emotions and combination will result to a third level often referred as mix emotions.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

A case study design - concurrent triangulation strategy will be utilized in this study. Purposive sampling technique will be used to determine who among the physically abused wives in Haven-National Center for Women would represent as the participants in the study. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research (Oliver, 2006).

**Participants of the study:**

The participants of the study were at least 30 physically and sexually abused women in Haven- National Center for Women whose age ranges from 22-40 years old.

The participants will be selected according to the following criteria: (a) must be married, (b) suffered from both physical and sexual abuse with husband over a year, (c) separated, (d) had at least one child and (e) is currently residing or in the custody of Haven-National Center for Women for at least one month.

**Instruments:**

There are two standardized instrument will be administered: The Clinical Assessment of Depression (CAD) authored by Bruce A. Bracken, PhD & Karen Howell, PhD is a more recent depression inventory which aims to screen for depression in individuals, a comprehensive assessment of depression symptomatology. The CAD is a 50-item self-report instrument that is comprehensive, highly reliable and sensitive to depressive symptomatology throughout the life-span ages from 8 to 79. It is closely aligned with the hallmarks of depressive mood and anhedonia as well as the additional seven criteria for major depressive episodes listed in the DSM-IV-TR.

Clinical Assessment of Depression (CAD) measures the following:

1. **Symptom scales include:** Depressed Mood, Anxiety/Worry, Diminished Interest, Cognitive and physical Fatigue.
2. **Critical Item Clusters includes:** Hopelessness, Self-Devaluation, Sleep/Fatigue, Failure, Worry and Nervousness.

Meanwhile another instrument to be used is Basic Personality The BPI measures twelve (12) distinct psychological traits. Scale names were chosen to avoid potentially inaccurate diagnostic labels while emphasizing construct dimensions of psychopathology. Consisting of 240 true/false items, and 11 substantive clinical scales and one critical item scale, the BPI can be completed in approximately 35 minutes—about half the time required to complete other popular measures.

The BPI scales are depression, hypochondriasis, denial, interpersonal problems, alienation, persecutory ideas, anxiety, thinking disorder, impulse expression, social introversion, self depreciation, and deviation

Then the interview guide would be used for depth analysis of their responses.

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