

**Original Article****Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence and Personality in Women:  
A Relation-Seeker Type Study****Sengul Yaman Sozbir**

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**Place where the work was carried:** This study's data were collected in the family life center of a city in Turkey's Mediterranean region.

**Abstract**

**Background:** Violence is a learned behavior. In this context, it can be learned to excuse violence as much as to apply violence. Therefore, the personality structures of violent women can also affect exposure to violence.

**Objective:** This study was conducted to determine whether there is a relationship between women's personality structures and their exposure to intimate partner violence.

**Methodology:** This study was conducted with 350 women as a relation-seeker type study. "Personal Information Form", "Domestic Violence Against Women Scale" and "Fast Five Big Personality Test" were used to collect data.

**Results:** There was a very weak negative correlation between Domestic Violence Against Women Scale's scores and agreeableness; a very weak negative correlation between Domestic Violence Against Women Scale's scores and extraversion; a weak negative correlation between Domestic Violence Against Women Scale's scores and conscientiousness; a weak negative correlation between Domestic Violence Against Women Scale's scores and emotional stability; a very weak negative correlation between Domestic Violence Against Women Scale's scores and openness to experience ( $p < .05$ ).

**Conclusions:** We found that women who have higher extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness to experience have less violence experienced.

**Keywords:** Domestic Violence, Personality, Woman

**Introduction**

Personality is the continuity of an individual's mental, emotional, social, and physical characteristics that separate the individual from others (Mann, De Young, and Krueger 2019). The personality shapes the psychological reactions of individuals to events (Van Kleef and Lange 2020). According to the "Five-Factor Personality Model" in recent years (Morsunbul 2014), personality structures have been defined. Personality in the model is defined in five broad dimensions. These dimensions are

conscientiousness (dependability), neuroticism (emotional stability), openness (intellect), agreeableness, and extraversion (urgency). Planned behaviors (more often than spontaneous behaviors) are exhibited, and a sense of duty, self-discipline, and a tendency to target success are at the forefront in conscientiousness (Van Kleef and Lange 2020). Depression, anxiety, vulnerability, and anger are in the foreground. Extraversion includes such related qualities as sociability, excitement seeking, impulsiveness, and positive emotions in neuroticism (Yoyen

2017). Individuals in an openness dimension tend to be insightful, creative, curious, and open to new experiences. In the agreeableness dimension, individuals tend to be trusting, compassionate, and cooperative with others. Extraversion means to have positive emotions, energy, and the tendency to be sociable (Brandes and Tackett 2019; Morsunbul 2014).

It is stated that personality has innate and later acquired aspects (Mann, De Young, and Krueger 2019). Personality shapes individuals' interpersonal relationships and behaviors. (Segerstrom and Smith 2019). It is predicted that past experiences are very effective in personality development, especially domestic violence experienced/witnessed during childhood is the basis for the formation of individuals' personality structure (Haj-Yahia et al. 2019; Kim and Farber 2019; Umar and Singh 2019). This situation causes individuals to be perpetrators or victims who perceive violence as an ordinary case. It is stated that 70% of children witnessed physical domestic violence against women in Turkey (Muderrisoglu et al. 2014).

Violence is a fact that involves the use of force intentionally to harm another, leaving being that associated with an individual's thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors (Day et al. 2020). Violence is a human rights violation and crime. Many studies are showing the connection between the personality structures of perpetrators and their violent tendencies (Mauri et al. 2019; Thomson et al. 2019). In a study using "Five-Factor Personality Model" In a study using "Five Factor Personality Model" a positive relationship was reported between verbal aggression and extraversion; anger, hostility, and introversion; physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, indirect aggression, animosity, disorganization and neuroticism (Yoyen 2017).

The relevant literature states that women who experience intimate partner violence (IPV) score higher on schizoid, timid, self-harming, schizotypal, borderline, and paranoid personality scales (Esteves Pereira et al. 2020; Pico-Alfonso, Echeburúa, and Martinez 2008). In the study conducted by Makhadiyeva et al. (2019) in Kazakhstan, the depression level, personal anxiety, posttraumatic stress symptoms, and paranoia and schizophrenia indicators were high in women who were subjected to domestic violence. IPV survivors may exhibit low personal

self-esteem, social isolation, addiction (economic and emotional), insecurity, inferiority, obedience, and pacification. Clinical attempts to change the personality structure will be shaped by determining the factors that facilitate women's exposure to violence. Therefore, studies that reveal the personality structure of women who are IPV victims are needed. Although many studies are showing the effect of the perpetrators' personality structures on creating a tendency to violence, there are limited studies that reveal the relationship between the personality structure of the victims and the tendency to experience violence. Violence is a learned behavior. In this context, it can be learned to excuse violence as much as to apply violence. Therefore, the personality structures of violent women can also affect exposure to violence. From this point of view, attempts to change/develop women's personality structures to eliminate violence can be important initiatives to solve violence. This study was conducted to determine whether there is a relationship between women's personality structures and their exposure to intimate partner violence.

## Methodology

**Study Design and Sample:** This research is a relation seeker study.

**The Universe and Sampling of the Study:** Power analysis was performed to determine the study's sample size (Type 2 Error: 0.01 and Power: 95%). The prevalence of intimate partner violence in Turkey was reported at rates ranging from 37.5-41.9% (Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies, 2015). The minimum number of people to be included in the study sample was calculated as 192. The research sample consisted of 350 women who were at least literate, married, and volunteer. This study's data were collected in the family life center of a city in Turkey's Mediterranean region.

**Data Collection Tools:** The data of the study were collected by the researchers. The purpose of the study was explained to the women, and the informed consent form was signed. Women filled data collection tools within approximately 60 to 65 minutes. Personal information form, Domestic Violence Against Women Scale (DVAWDS), and Fast Five Big Personality Test (QBFPT) were used to collect data.

**Personal Information Form:** There are five questions to determine the sociodemographic characteristics of women in the questionnaire.

**Domestic Violence Against Women Scale (DVAWDS):** The five-point Likert type (1 never, 5 always) scale consisting of 87 questions was developed by Yanikkerem and Saruhan (2005). The higher the score obtained from the scale, the higher the exposure to violence. Yanikkerem and Saruhan reported the Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale as 0.98. In our study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.947.

**Fast Five Big Personality Test (QBFPT):** The scale was developed by Verlmuts and Geris (2005) and adapted into Turkish by Morsunbul (2014). The scale is a 7-point Likert-type scale with 30 items (between "completely false" and "completely true"). The scale has five sub-dimensions as extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness. In our study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.831.

**Ethics of the Study:** Before data collection began, ethics approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University (reference number 2020/01), application permission from the institution, and written consent from the women participating in the study. Women who were found to the exposure to high and very high levels of violence were directed to the Violence Prevention and Monitoring Center, and the women who were found to the exposed to low and moderate violence were informed about domestic violence.

**Data analysis:** Data analysis was performed in SPSS 24.0 (IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 24.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.). The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to determine the conformity of the data to normal distribution. Spearman's correlation, Student's t-test, number, percentage, and mean  $\pm$  standard deviation were used in the analyzes. A p-value of  $<0.05$  was considered statistically significant.

## Results

Among the women, 39.4 % were between 36- 45 years, 35.7 % graduated from primary/secondary school, 61.1 % were unemployed, 53.7 % perceived their economic level as moderate, and 56% lived in a city (Table 1).The mean score of the DVAWDS was 155. The median scores of the QBFPT were; agreeableness 36, extraversion 27, conscientiousness 32, emotional stability 23, and openness to experience 31 (Table 2). The majority (73.4%) of the women exposed to low and 22% of them were exposed to moderate domestic violence (Table 3).There was a very weak negative correlation between DVAWDS scores and agreeableness; a very weak negative correlation between DVAWDS scores and extraversion; a weak negative correlation between DVAWDS scores and conscientiousness; a weak negative between DVAWDS scores and emotional stability; a very weak negative correlation between DVAWDS scores and openness to experience ( $p<.05$ ) (Table 4).

**Table 1.** Descriptive Characteristics (n:350)

Characteristic		
Education	Number	%
Literate	8	2.3
Primary/Secondary School	125	35.7
High School	105	30.0
University	112	32.0
Age		
18-25	41	11.7
26-35	109	31.1
36-45	138	39.4
46 and over	62	17.7

<b>Working Status</b>		
Yes	136	38.9
No	214	61.1
<b>Perceived Economic Level</b>		
Very low	11	3.1
Low	117	33.4
Moderate	188	53.7
High	31	8.9
Very high	3	0.9
<b>Living Place</b>		
Metropolis	73	20.9
City	196	56.0
Town/Village	81	23.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 2.** Median Scores of the Domestic Violence Against Women Determination Scale (DVAWDS) and the Quick Big Five Personality Test (QBFPT) (n: 350)

	$\tilde{x}$	$Q_3$
<b>DVAWDS</b>	155	366
<b>Subdimensions of QBFPT</b>		
Agreeableness	36	42
Extraversion	27	42
Conscientiousness	32	42
Emotional stability	23	42
Openness to experience	31	42

**Table 3.** Levels of the violence according to the Domestic Violence Against Women Determination Scale scores (n: 350)

<b>Level</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Low	257	73.4
Moderate	77	22.0
High	12	3.4
Very High	2	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 4.** Correlations Between DVAWDS and QBFPT Scores

	Agreeableness		Extraversion		Conscientiousness		Emotional stability		Openness to experience	
	$r_s$	$p$	$r_s$	$p$	$r_s$	$p$	$r_s$	$p$	$r_s$	$p$
<b>DVAWDS</b>	-.179	0.001	-.147	0.006	-.242	0.000	-.325	0.000	-.149	0.005

$P < 0.005$ .  $r_s$ : Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

## Discussion

Intimate partner violence against women is a human rights violation experienced by individuals belonging to every society, culture, and religion. Our study found that most of the women (73.4%) were exposed to intimate partner violence. The World Health Organization reports that 35% of women are subjected to physical or sexual violence (Ram et al. 2019). Some (13.3%) of women reported that being beaten of women by their intimate partner is normal in some cases ((1) if he burns food; (2) argues with him (3) refuses to have sex with him; and (4) neglects children), in Turkey (HUIPS, 2014). About half (43.9%) of women are exposed to psychological violence, 35.5% are exposed to physical violence, 30% are exposed to economic violence, and 12% are exposed to sexual violence in Turkey (HUIPS, 2015). There are many defined risk factors for both perpetrators and victims in the literature for intimate partner violence such as low education level, personality traits, growing up in a family where domestic violence exists, having troublesome relationships with peers and parents, alcohol use, being violent / abused in childhood, having negative self-esteem, and having a traditional gender role attitude (Fernández-Fuertes et al. 2019; Jennings et al. 2017; Zietz et al. 2020). Women's personality traits are defined between factors that can help explain violence against women (Motevaliyan et al. 2017). Personality traits are thought patterns, emotions, and behaviors that tend to respond in certain ways under certain conditions (Woods et al. 2020). It is thought that these characteristics may cause conflict, dissatisfaction, and aggression in interpersonal relations. Although many studies are showing the effect of the

personality structures of the perpetrators on creating a tendency to violence, there are limited studies that reveal the relationship between the personality structure of the victims and the tendency to experience violence (Banyard et al. 2020; Danisman, Ucar, and Okay 2018; Kulakci-Altintas and Ayaz-Alkaya, 2019). However, the fact that women have a strong personality and can say stop is essential in solving the violence problem. The correlations between the mean scores of DVAWDS and QBFPT were evaluated. Women who have higher agreeableness (respectful, insightful, and able to establish positive relations with others), extraversion (energetic, friendly and open and courageous to establish new social relationships), conscientiousness (responsible, regular, and hard to achieve the goals), emotional stability (balanced, calm and good stress management skills), and openness to experience (to participate in intellectual activities, new emotions, and thoughts) have less violence experienced. Therefore, it can be considered that women with poor interpersonal communication, low self-esteem, poor coping skills, and self-enclosed characteristics are exposed to more violence. Extraverted persons can communicate easily with others, energetic, optimistic, risk-taking, and highly self-confident. On the other hand, introverted persons are closed to interpersonal communication, silent, shy, and have low self-confidence (Chamorro-Premuzic 2016; Smith et al. 2019).

These personal characteristics may facilitate the acceptance and internalization of violence. In the literature, it is stated that the extraverted individuals experience less stress because of their warm and intimate social relations, and this

situation has a positive effect on the marital life, and these women are exposed to less domestic violence (Amini, Heidary, and Daneshparvar 2015; Avdibegovic, Brkic, and Sinanovic 2017; Bolhari et al. 2018; Naghavi et al. 2019). Intimate partner violence may occur as a result of low interaction between spouses. Therefore, both the perpetrator's and the victim's personality characteristics should be determined while determining intimate partner violence's risk factors and facilitators. Thus, a strong positive relationship was found between women's neurotic characteristics and intimate partner violence (Panaghi et al. 2011). Motevaliyan et al. (2017) reported that women with high neuroticism were exposed to more psychological violence, while women with high extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were exposed to less psychological violence.

**Conclusion and Recommendations:** It is found that women who have higher extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness to experience have less violence experienced in this study. In line with these results, it was suggested to investigate the personality traits of the perpetrator and the personality traits of the victim in determining the risk factors and facilitators for intimate partner violence. However, to prevent violence against women or stop violence against women, counseling/health education to strengthen women's personality structures is recommended. Finally, it was suggested to repeat similar studies in different samples and with higher sample numbers.

Consultancy/health training should be provided to strengthen women's personality structures to prevent violence against women or stop violence against women.

#### The Limitations of the Study:

There are some limitations to this study. (1) The population is limited, so the results can only be generalized to this population; (2) The data were based on self-reporting of the women and not observed by the researcher; and (3) Because this study was conducted based on volunteer participation, only women willing to participate completed the questionnaire.

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**Place where the work was carried:** This study's data were collected in the family life center of a city in Turkey's Mediterranean region.

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