

Review Paper

Psychosocial Factors and Dating Violence: A Review of the Literature

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Abstract: Dating violence is a major source of concern among the general population. Previous literature reviews have studied many other risk factors and dyadic implications of dating violence, but there has been very little research done in diverse elements of psychosocial factors linked to dating violence. The articles related to the term's psychosocial factors (personality traits, attachment style and loneliness) and we looked for phrases linked to dating violence (aggression in romantic partnerships, violence in intimate relationships). The studies for this literature review must be from original studies with any gender sampling and should be written in English. This review included 27 papers that met the criteria for inclusion. The findings of this literature analysis revealed inconsistent results regarding the association between psychosocial factors and violent behaviour in romantic relationships, with some studies unable to detect such links. These findings are explored in terms of current gaps in the literature as well as suggested future research areas. The implication of this study can help in understanding the psychosocial factors that form the basis of relational aggression in romantic relationships and as a proactive step to avoid from being a victim of relational aggression.

Keywords: Psychosocial factors, aggressive behaviour, romantic relationship, attachment style, personality traits

Introduction

In recent times, issues related to dating violence have become a very serious and worrying social problem all over the world, especially among young individuals. Violence which is viewed as a social mirror is frequently handled as a result of aggression (Rahim et al., 2014). Several famous philosophers and psychologists argue that this happens because a person has an innate tendency, or even an instinct, to be aggressive. For example, the philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) explained this view that humans are inherently evil and that only society can curb their aggressive tendencies. On the other hand, the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) had a more positive view. He believes that humans are naturally gentle creatures and are aggressive only because of learning from our society. Dating violence is a major social and public health problem (Douglas & Straus, 2006). Rahim et al. (2014) have also found that several related risk factors have contributed to negative symptoms among young people that cannot be accepted by society's norms. This issue has psychological and physical effects on individuals in romantic relationships.

The problem of aggressive behavior in romantic relationships is becoming more contagious in Malaysia day by day. The global prevalence of aggressive behavior in romantic relationships among all women who have ever been in a relationship is 30.0% with regions reporting the highest number of cases being the African, Eastern Mediterranean and Southeast Asian Regions. A lower prevalence of aggressive behavior in romantic relationships is seen in high-income areas such as Europe and the Western Pacific region which report prevalence rates of aggressive behavior in romantic relationships between 23% and 25%. In Malaysia, among the latest evidence on the prevalence of aggressive behavior in romantic relationships among all women who have ever been in a relationship was conducted by Shuib et al. (2013) among households across the country. The survey showed a prevalence of aggressive behavior in romantic relationships of about 8% among all women who have been in a relationship in Malaysia. However, the results can be underestimated as the nature of aggressive behavior in romantic relationships is a sensitive topic and is usually underreported. Statistics (2021) by the Royal Malaysian Police Force reveal that intimate partner violence accounts for more than 50% of acts of violence against women in Malaysia followed by rape, mahram incest, and maid abuse. It also reported an increasing trend in the number of reported cases of aggressive behavior in romantic relationships from 2555 cases in 2011 to 3643 cases in 2020. Accordingly, various studies and efforts have been implemented by various parties to overcome the issue of behavior aggressive behavior in romantic relationships.

A romantic relationship can give a person a very meaningful experience and a partner to have a deep interaction. Individuals enter such romantic relationships with the aspiration and hope of having a partner who will care for and fulfil their relationship needs. Unfortunately, most relationships experience moments where partners do not meet each other's aspirations and expectations. There are several types of problems or issues that can cause a couple to feel this way, among them are issues of disagreement, problematic relationships involving partner dishonesty, personal pressure, and aggression in the relationship. Recently developmental psychologists have focused on the concept of love or romantic relationships. Furthermore, the development of scientific knowledge about love is slow and incomplete. It took time for love to be recognized as a field of scientific research in the field of psychology (Suzana et al., 2013). A romantic relationship can give a person a very meaningful experience and a partner to have a deep interaction. Individuals in romantic relationships hope to have a partner who will care for and fulfil their relationship needs. Unfortunately, most relationships experience moments where partners don't live up to each other's expectations. There are several types of problems or issues that can cause a couple to feel this way, among them are issues of disagreement, problematic relationships involving partner dishonesty, personal pressure, and aggression in the relationship.

A romantic relationship is a positive experience for every individual. However, certain experiences, such as having a partner who behaves aggressively, can harm personal and social well-being (Exner-Cortens et al., 2013). Physical aggression is the most studied type of aggressive behavior in romantic relationships (Vagi et al., 2013). However, other aggressive behaviors may be more common. For example, several studies have found that emotional verbal aggression is common in teenagers involved in long-term romantic relationships (Muñoz-Rivas et al., 2007). In addition, verbal-emotional and sexual aggression is more dangerous than physical aggression (Exner-Cortens et al., 2013; Muñoz-Rivas et al., 2007). Studies involving children, adolescents, young adults reveal relationship aggression and the resulting negative effects that may affect emotional and psychosocial well-being. However, there is limited research on relational aggression among adult populations. In addition, this study emphasizes the psychosocial aspect of a person that can cause a tendency to behave aggressively in a romantic relationship. It is important to identify the psychosocial aspects of a person who tends to engage in dating violence.

In this literature review, for psychosocial factors including personality trait, attachment style and loneliness is studied with dating violence. Many studies have linked aggressive behavior with loneliness (Ostrov & Kamper, 2015; Povedano et al., 2015; Reijntjes et al., 2010; Vanhalst, Luyckx, & Goossens, 2013). Loneliness is described as an emotional reaction that is aversive to the disparity between one's desired and attained social network quality (Vanhalst et al., 2013). Personality traits consist of external and internal characteristics that can be seen by others. This term also includes some subjective characteristics, both social and emotional, that cannot be observed directly and may be tried to be hidden by a person (Schultz & Shultz,

2009). Personality traits will also be studied in this study. This is so because a person's personality traits will develop from childhood to adulthood and are determined based on what a person is and wants to be (Schultz & Shultz, 2009). However, the relationship between romantic relationship violence and women's personality type is an issue that has not been thoroughly researched, especially among young adult women in Malaysia. This study uses the "Big Five" personality model which is divided into five main personality dimensions namely openness, frugality, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism as one of the psychosocial factors. Each main trait from this model can be divided into several aspects to provide a more detailed analysis of a person's personality. Some theorists argue that personality variables are important predictors of aggressive behavior in romantic relationships (Jones et al., 2011).

Dating violence is thought to be strongly influenced by variables other than personality qualities, such as loneliness. Loneliness is typically characterised by a lack of social support and a perception that one has no interest in social media (Holt & Espelage, 2007). Many research have connected loneliness with violent behaviour (Ostrov & Kamper, 2015; Povedano et al., 2015). An unpleasant emotional reaction to the gap between one's desired and actual social network quality is called loneliness. Moreover, Başoğlu (2019) supports the idea that loneliness is a contributing factor to relationship aggressiveness. The study's findings are consistent with those of studies by Acquah et al. (2016) and Brown et al. (2017) that indicated people who experience high degrees of loneliness are more likely to experience relational violence in romantic relationships. Attachment style is another psychosocial factor that is frequently linked to relational aggressiveness. According to certain theories, an individual's attachment style might influence the likelihood that they will experience aggression in romantic relationships.

According to a growing body of research, attachment theory is a fundamental paradigm for understanding emotional and interpersonal processes that occur throughout life (Bowlby, 1969). Individuals feel startled when they perceive a threat to their attachment style and subsequent anxiety causes them to act in ways that protect that attachment style system (Bowlby, 1969). In addition, Muñoz-Rivas et al. (2019) also argues that individuals with different attachment styles also have a strong influence on individuals' involvement in aggressive behavior in romantic relationships. The quality of the relationship that develops between young individuals and their parents can be a very important component with lasting effects on the individual's psychological and behavioral state. Indeed, interactions between caregivers and children that calm and protect promote proper emotional self-regulation capacity in children's development (Roque et al., 2013). Therefore, attachment style theory can be a useful theoretical framework to foster understanding of adult differences in the ability to cope with emotions and aggressive behavior of young people.

Although there are previous studies that explore the relationship between psychosocial factors and dating violence, there is still a lack of research that examines these two constructs. In addition, there are previous studies that have reported a positive relationship between psychosocial factors and dating violence, but until now it is still unclear or there is minimal research on psychosocial factors and their effects on romantic relationships such as aggressive behavior in women. Previous studies on romantic relationships often focus on the quality of relationships, perceptions of parents, peers and aggressive behavior that occurs physically but rarely focus on factors that influence dating violence such as psychosocial factors. With that in mind, this review aims to review the literatures which studied the association between psychosocial factors and dating violence.

Methodology

1. Data Selection

This study examined how psychosocial factors contribute to dating violence using an integrated literature review methodology. A non-contact technique that incorporates reading is an integrated literature review and assessing the available literature regarding the issue (Snyder, 2019). It is a noncontact approach since it concentrates on the goal of the research and excludes the use of items or people. To find the hidden material and create themes on many levels, the researchers first categorised the contents. The writers used six databases were used in the electronic search process, namely Google Scholar, Scopus, MEDLINE, SAGE Journals and

Taylor & Francis. In addition, a manual search was also conducted to identify additional articles related to the two constructs. There are few inclusion criteria that has been set for the identification of the articles. The studies from 2011 to 2021 was identified. The articles that are written in English and Malay language only are included in this study. Besides that, only research articles which studied the two constructs which is psychosocial factors and dating violence were included in this review.

2. Data Analysis

The first step is to identify the keywords that will be used in the search strategy procedure. Similar keywords and keywords related to psychosocial factors and dating violence were utilised in previous studies. The keyword list was examined and corrected, including the addition of many spelling variations. From 4 May 2021 to 30 May 2021, the databases Scopus, MEDLINE, Google Scholar, and SAGE Journals were searched for research. There were initially 256 papers. However, when one independent reviewer (the first author) screened the reference list, 192 publications were located utilising the search parameters across all four databases. During the initial screening stage, the title and abstract of each manuscript were appraised for relevance, and 128 titles were deleted. The entire text of the studies that were evaluated for eligibility based on their methodology and findings. After reading the full essay, several manuscripts were discarded for various reasons. Manuscripts that did not identify the phrase psychosocial factors, review manuscripts used as secondary sources, and manuscripts that only examined connection quality were among those that were deleted. There were 27 manuscripts that were included and determined to be eligible for review.

Finding and Discussion

1. Relationship Between Psychosocial Factors and Dating Violence

A study conducted by Linder, Crick & Collins (2002) identified the types of aggression in young people's romantic relationships including relational aggression. Much of the research on relational aggression has focused on same-sex peer relationships, typically showing poor outcomes for both victims and perpetrators of peer aggression (Crick, Ostrov & Werner, 2006). In a survey carried out showing that physical behavior and forms of psychological aggression occur in most romantic couples, that is 8 percent to 21 percent of couples report physical violence and verbal aggression is reported as much as 80 percent in romantic relationships. Furthermore, previous studies have also found that women are more likely to use physical violence more often than men and men are more likely to injure their partners by using physical aggression. Research conducted by Frye and Karney (2006) also shows that physical and psychological forms of aggression tend to be linked to each other, and that physical aggressive behavior is particularly dangerous in romantic relationship conflicts.

Among 27 articles that examine the association between psychosocial factors on dating violence, 19 articles reported that there is a positive relationship between psychosocial factors on dating violence. Individual violent behaviour has been proven to be influenced by parenting style characteristics (Chang, 2014; Llorca, Richaud, & Malonda, 2017). Individual disparities exist among young women who have experienced various parenting techniques. Researchers classified parenting styles as emotional attachment, rejection, overprotection, and favouritism. Parental emotional attachment is an important component of parenting style that relates to the amount to which parents cultivate personality traits, self-regulation, and self-assertion through supporting, satisfying, and attending to their children's wants and expectations (Wu et al., 2015). This study has used 530 Chinese students as a sample and this study aims to examine the effect of parental emotional attachment and personality on aggression behaviour in young adults. The results of the study show that personality types such as Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism have a positive relationship with aggression behaviour. Although personality is not the only element influencing such offensive behaviour, there appears to be a solid argument that personality qualities are relevant to a wide range of behavioural domains (Rahim et al., 2014).

Additionally, the study conducted by Oka et al. (2015) used a sample for this study that originated from the Growing Family Project and participants were selected for this analysis were reported to be in

heterosexual romantic relationship at the time of the study and both partners had to participate in every step of the study. This study provides additional evidence that the type of insecure attachment has a significant relationship with aggression behaviour. Additionally, this study shows evidence that both men and women who report insecurity in their relationship are more likely to report less strength in their relationship and more aggression with their partner. In addition, the study conducted by Clark, Dahlen, & Nicholson (2015) aims to examine the significance of parenting style and parental psychological control in determining the likelihood of relationship aggressiveness and prosocial behaviour in a sample of college students. 323 undergraduate students (89 men and 234 women) between the ages of 19 were participated. According to the findings of this study, permissive parenting plays a significant effect in the development of hostility and prosocial conduct in children and adults. Students who described their parents' parenting styles as passive were more likely to engage in violent and prosocial behaviour.

Permissive parenting may be a risk factor for aggression in romantic relationships when the child becomes an adult because the association between permissive parenting and aggression is consistent with studies of young children and early adolescents (Brown et al., 2009; Leadbeater et al., 2008). The results of this study are contrary to the latest study conducted by Rivas, Vera, & Diaz (2019), where authoritative parenting style shows a high level of aggressive behavior. Next, the results of the above study are consistent with the study conducted by Foshee et al. (2013) who studied psychosocial factors such as the relationship between parents and children with aggression in romantic relationship. The sample of this study consisted of 84 Chinese college student participants between 18 and 24 years old. This study shows that a higher level of parental control is significantly related to a higher aggression score. According to social learning theory, parental control greatly contributes to the development of aggression in an individual's social interactions because children who have experienced manipulative and controlling behaviour in their relationship with their parents may learn to apply these similar behaviours in themselves and use them in other personal relationships such as romantic or close friendships (Nelson & Crick, 2002).

In addition, a study conducted by Wilson et al. (2013) showed a significant positive relationship between the type of adult attachment and dating violence. This study used a sample of 696 romantic couples. They are particularly interested in determining attachment types such as secure, and insecure connections. The results of the study showed that a romantic relationship consisting of a couple with an insecure attachment type has a higher level of aggressive behavior than a romantic relationship consisting of a couple with secure attachment type. Besides that, to understand the types of attachment further, Peloquin, Lafontaine, & Brassard (2011) conducted a quantitative study of 193 couples in romantic relationships. The research findings in this study also show that individuals who experience this type of insecure attachment have a higher level of aggressive behavior. Besides that, a study conducted in India used correlational analysis to examine psychosocial factors and aggressive behavior. The study sample consisted of 47 percent women and 53 percent men with a mean age of 20.2 years, and it was found that loneliness contributes to high aggressive behavior.

All the studies of psychosocial factors discussed above such as the type of convergence are contrary to the findings by Kawabata et al. (2011) where they discovered that uninvolved attachment used by parents showed a positive significant relationship with aggression. Besides that, according to Crockenberg et al. (2007), sensitive carers teach their children how to better manage their emotions, making them less likely to use aggressiveness. The variation in purpose or target in utilising aggressiveness may explain the contradiction between this study and earlier investigations. In other words, Crick (1995) argued that aggressiveness between peers is frequently employed to counter instrumental provocation, such as peers damaging toys and attempts to harm relationships and victims' self-esteem for the aim of retaliation. In romantic relationships, however, the goal of aggressiveness is to make their romantic partner obey them or to make their partner jealous so that the partner is more attentive to their demands rather than to exact revenge.

A recent study conducted by Huey et al. (2021) in Malaysia studied psychosocial factors and dating violence such as emotional abuse. Hence, this study showed a positive relationship between the two constructs. The sample of this study consisted of 273 university students who had been in a romantic relationship. Regression analysis shows that two psychosocial factors, namely personality traits and parenting style (responsive type) have a significant influence on emotional abuse. In addition, the findings of the next study

show little difference where the personality traits of high openness, extraversion and neuroticism appear as three important risk factors related to aggressive behavior. In this systematic highlighting process, there are five studies that show a negative association between psychosocial factors and dating violence. A study conducted by Khaleque et al. (2013) using a study sample of 196 students from two universities in Finland and from the results of the study found that there is no relationship between parenting style and personality on behavior in individuals regardless of cultural, ethnic, gender differences and geographic boundaries.

The experience of parenting style and parental love is associated with the development of children's prosocial behavior such as helping and empathy. In addition, in the adult individual will achieve overall well-being and positive psychological and physical health. In addition, the study conducted by Clark, Dahlen & Nicholson (2015) aims to examine the significance of parenting style and parental psychological control in determining the likelihood of relationship aggressiveness and prosocial behaviour in a group of college students. There were 323 undergraduate students, 89 men and 234 women, all of whom were 19 years old. A previous study found a positive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and aggression behaviour in children and early teenagers (Linder et al., 2002; Sandstrom, 2007), but authoritarian parenting does not predict aggression behaviour. Given the association between a liberal parenting style and aggressive behaviour in this study, it is probable that parental limit setting is a trait of authoritative parents and functions as a protective factor for relationship aggressiveness. This possibility is similar with the results of the study found that authoritative parenting has a negative relationship with aggression behavior in romantic relationship.

Besides that, to understand the relationship between the two constructs, Kokkinos & Voulgaridou (2016) conducted to study the functionality of the family and aggression in romantic relationship. A quantitative study was conducted on 127 female students. The results of the study show that there is a significantly negative relationship between the two constructs. The relationship with family functioning may reflect that parenting that does not have clear limitations and involvement in accepting, does not show any reaction and shows objection to children's impulses can increase involvement in aggression behavior (Kawabata et al., 2011). In this literature review, there are 6 studies that show no relationship between psychosocial factors and dating violence. A study conducted by Knapp et al. (2016) to examine the relationship between psychosocial factors and aggressive behavior in romantic relationship stated that both genders, have higher self-esteem that is associated with more perceived responsiveness from partners in the context of romantic relationships. In other words, lower individual self-esteem is related to less responsiveness from the partner. From the results of this study, it was found that men's psychosocial factors have no relationship with their responsive responses. Our comparison of these studies also produced an interesting finding that when responsive responses were self-reported, individual self-esteem was unrelated to partner responsive responses.

In addition, a study conducted by Costa et al. (2015) also showed no relationship between personality and jealousy in romantic relationships. A study sample of 31 healthy volunteers participated in this study and tested jealousy intensity, attachment type, love and relationship style, personality, impulsivity, aggression, and social adjustment as well as socio-demographic profile was also obtained. In this study, it was found that personality traits and attachment style have no relationship with sarcastic attitude in romantic relationships. Friendly involvement of parents has no relationship or connection with aggressive adolescent behavior which is contrary to other literatures in this study. However, it is in accordance with the findings of other studies (Kawabata et al., 2011; Underwood et al., 2008) which produced a weak and nil relationship between these variables.

Overall, previous studies prove a significant relationship between an individual's psychosocial factors and their tendency to engage in dating violence. This is because it can impact or be a source of learning in the process of creating a person's behaviour via various social learning patterns such as modelling, feedback, encouragement, and impediments (Munusamy et al., 2022). Therefore, researchers in the field need to pay attention to the influence of psychosocial factors in each individual on the aetiology of them getting stuck in the problem of dating violence later in life. In addition, researchers need to expand their thinking to not only focus on the bivariate relationship but also test the theoretically plausible mechanisms underlying this relationship. Furthermore, potential moderators in strengthening or weakening the relationship between the two constructs also require further study. To summarise, more research is needed to investigate the relationship

between psychosocial factors and constructs that influence dating violence among young adults to contribute to the development of interventions that aim to help individuals who are vulnerable to dating violence as well as to prevent the formation of dating violence.

This study can give awareness to young women about the issue of relationship aggression that can happen romantically. This is because aggressive behavior is an issue that is not given attention in romantic relationships by women and only aggressive behavior such as physical and sexual is considered more serious in romantic relationships. This study can make women aware of the characteristics of someone who practices relationship aggression in a romantic relationship and can help in finding a solution from being involved in such a romantic relationship. This study can also help young people identify this issue so that it does not continue and affect romantic relationships as adults. Aggressive behavior is known to be a relevant social problem factor that can be a precursor to bad romantic relationships in later adulthood (Paige et al., 2003).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the direction of the association between psychosocial factors and violent behaviour in romantic relationships among young adults remains unknown and necessitates additional investigation, particularly in the setting of Malaysia. As a result, more research is required to investigate the relationship between psychosocial factors and dating violence to compare the findings and identify areas or factors that require serious consideration when designing interventions for young adults before involving in a romantic relationship or to overcome the problem of aggression in the future.

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