The correlation between the physical and psychological violence experienced and Chinese people's inclination of dependent personality disorder

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Abstract. The aim of the study was to explore the influence of physical and psychological violence on Chinese people's formation of dependent personality disorder (DPD) tendencies. By studying the relationship between violence and DPD, awareness about the potential consequences of violence and the importance of early intervention and prevention can be raised and emphasized. This knowledge can aid in developing targeted prevention strategies and promoting a society that actively works towards reducing violence and supporting mental well-being. The research employed the quantitative study method of self-report. Quantitative data were collected from August 17th to August 22nd, 2023, by using a self-reporting questionnaire selected from the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis II Personality Disorders (SCID-II) diagnostic questionnaire as well as questions related to the participant's personal experience. The study result shows an overall positive correlation between physical and psychological violence experienced and the tendency of DPD. However, the positive correlation is insignificant which may imply the importance of other possible influences such as cognitive impairment and social reality.

Keywords: violence, dependent personality disorder, Quantitative data, self-reported surveys

1. Introduction

A recent statistic estimated that while as many as 2 million individuals are suffering from physical abuse that result in physical injuries, only around one-third of these individuals are willing to seek help from medical institution or community service [1]. While injuries produced by physical violence are a significant cause of death and disease burden globally, exposure to any form of trauma as witnesses or any psychological violence experience can hugely increase the risk of mental illnesses and suicide, particularly in vulnerable childhood [2]. To China, the prevalence rate of violence needs more data; to a great extent, it is due to the appreciation of individuals' abilities to endure suffering in Chinese culture [3]. Both physical and psychological violence have huge impacts in an adverse way.

Statistics indicate that in 2001, nonfatal violence against females and males at approximately 20% and 3% respectively were discovered to be physical domestic violence. Domestic violence is the act of physically harming, threatening, intimidating, controlling, abusing or depriving of liberty by one party to a family or intimate relationship against the other party, whether physically, psychologically, economically, or by gender. Domestic violence usually occurs between spouses, partners, parents, and children, but is not limited to these relationships and can include relationships between family members such as siblings, grandparents, and grandchildren [4]. Violence has many negative impacts on individuals, families, and society as a whole. These effects can be physical, emotional, psychological, and social. Domestic violence could cause long-term emotional and psychological trauma. For victims who endure violence, they might develop a fear of their abuser. For example, women who personally experience domestic violence are afraid of their husbands coming home and would be nervous to see them, possibly leading to symptoms of anxiety, depression, and so on. The constant fear and stress associated with abuse can have a serious impact on a person's mental health, which in turn can affect their daily functioning. At the same time, victims might develop low self-esteem and feelings of low self-worth [5]. Abusers often resort to several tactics to diminish a victim's

self-esteem and self-worth. They may make the women or children feel afraid through domestic violence, thus making the victim lower herself to submit to the abuser in exchange for their safety.

From a spiritual point of view, the abuser may brainwash the victim to make them feel worthless and that all conflicts and problems originate from the victim, and also to make them realize that they will have difficulty surviving without the abuser. For instance, women find it difficult to get a job after being domestically abused by their husbands, partly because they do not feel they have the ability to be qualified for the job, and on the other hand, they have been brainwashed by their husbands that they should just stay at home and raise their children and submit to them [6]. Constant criticism, verbal abuse, and emotional manipulation can cause the victim to feel worthless and powerless, resulting in several psychological disorders. Moreover, the abusers are likely to isolate the victims from their friends and family, making it difficult for them to seek help and support. This isolation can further exacerbate feelings of loneliness and helplessness.

Children who witness domestic violence in their homes may suffer a range of negative effects, including emotional trauma, behavioral problems, and a higher risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence in the future. Children who witness or personally experience domestic violence can be severely traumatized. They may feel scared, anxious, depressed, or even suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) [7]. These psychological problems may continue throughout their development. Behaviorally, domestic violence can lead to a range of behavioral problems in children, with aggressive, provocative behavior in dealing with classmates. They have difficulty in establishing healthy social relationships and may withdraw and avoid socializing out of fear or distrust of others, which can affect their friendships and ability to interact. Emotionally, domestic violence may cause children to feel self-blame, and guilt, or even believe that they are the cause of their loved one's injuries [8]. Domestic violence may also cause children to feel less trusting of adults and authority figures, as they may have personally experienced betrayal by a loved one or family member. On the other hand, they may mimic the behavior of the abuser and see domestic violence as a way to solve problems. This leads to children learning that the way to solve problems is through violence and control. This may lead them to become perpetrators or victims in the future, perpetuating the cycle of domestic violence [9]. These negative effects may continue into adulthood and affect children's relationships, careers, and overall quality of life.

It is suggested that there can be a close relationship between physical and psychological domestic violence and an individual's Dependent Personality Disorder (DPD) tendency, according to several research. One study conducted by Loas et al found a significant association between the experience of domestic violence and the development of DPD symptoms [10]. The authors proposed that chronic exposure to abuse and control in intimate relationships could lead to a learned helplessness and a fear of asserting independence. This dependency on the abusive partner can over time contribute to the formation of a dependent personality style, characterized by submissive behavior, excessive reliance on others for decision-making, and feelings of helplessness. Conducted by Bigizadeh et al, another study found that reduced self-esteem would result from domestic abuse among Iranian women, deducing a huge influence on various social groups including young children, adolescents, and marginalized individuals [11]. Since lower self-esteem could create huge stress emotions that promote the development of DPD traits, this further supports the idea that the emotional and psychological consequences of domestic violence can contribute to the proclivity towards dependency [12]. However, it is important to note that more research is needed to fully understand the complex dynamics between domestic violence and the development of DPD.

Additional studies exploring long-term effects, protective factors, and interventions are crucial for developing comprehensive strategies to support those affected by domestic violence and mitigate the risk of DPD tendency. It is critical to recognize the negative effects of domestic violence and provide victims with support and resources, such as local domestic violence shelters, hotline, or law enforcement agencies, to help them escape the abuse and heal from the trauma. Our research brings huge insight into the correlation between violence witnessed, and experienced and the DPD tendency specifically in Chinese society, providing a basic foundation for future study in Asian society.

2. Methodology

2.1. Study Design

In this study, a self-reporting questionnaire was employed to collect quantitative data from different age groups and regions of China to investigate the correlation between DPD tendency and the degree of experience with physical and mental violence. We used several DPD-related questions from the SCID-II personality disorder diagnostic questionnaire. The questionnaire is relatively short, using eight questions to understand participants' level of dependency and six questions to understand their level of experience regarding violence so that more participants may be willing to complete it. The wording and phrasing of each item were simple and easy to understand, allowing participants of all ages to complete the questionnaire.

2.2. Study sample and procedure

Participants for this project were recruited using an opportunity sampling method, and each participant was informed of the voluntary and anonymous nature of the study. The questionnaire was completed by four different age groups (under 16-year-old, 17-18-year-old, 19-30-year-old, and over 30-year-old) and people from all over the country to ensure generalizability. The survey was distributed to participants from August 17th to August 22nd, 2023 through the professional online questionnaire platform "Questionnaire Star". The final sample includes 228 people, of which 85 were male and 143 were female.

3. Data Analysis and Result

3.1. Data Processing

All analyses were conducted using SPSS and JASP version 0.17.3. Firstly, preliminary analyses, including descriptive statistics (Mean, mode, and standard deviation), were conducted. Secondly, regression analyses of the correlation between participants' DPD tendency and the degree of experience with physical and mental violence were conducted to explore the influence of violence on an individual's inclination toward DPD.

3.2. Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics of the collected data, including data on age groups and Gender groups are presented in Table 1 and Table 2. Participants in all four age groups were recruited, indicating that the results might have relatively higher generalizability to the public in different ages. Since the majority of participants were over 18, when individuals' psychological developments and mental status are relatively stable, the authentic relation between long-term DPD symptoms and violence experienced can be disclosed. Moreover, the proportion of female participants reached nearly twice of that males, indicating the possible limitation of failing to generalize the male public.

Table 1. The descriptive statistics of age groups

Age groups	Amount of participants	Proportion of participants /%
Below 16	11	4.82
16—17	28	12.28
18—30	74	32.46
Above 30	115	50.44

Table 2. The descriptive statistics of gender groups

Gender groups	Amount of participants	Proportion of participants
Male	85	37.28%
Female	143	62.72%

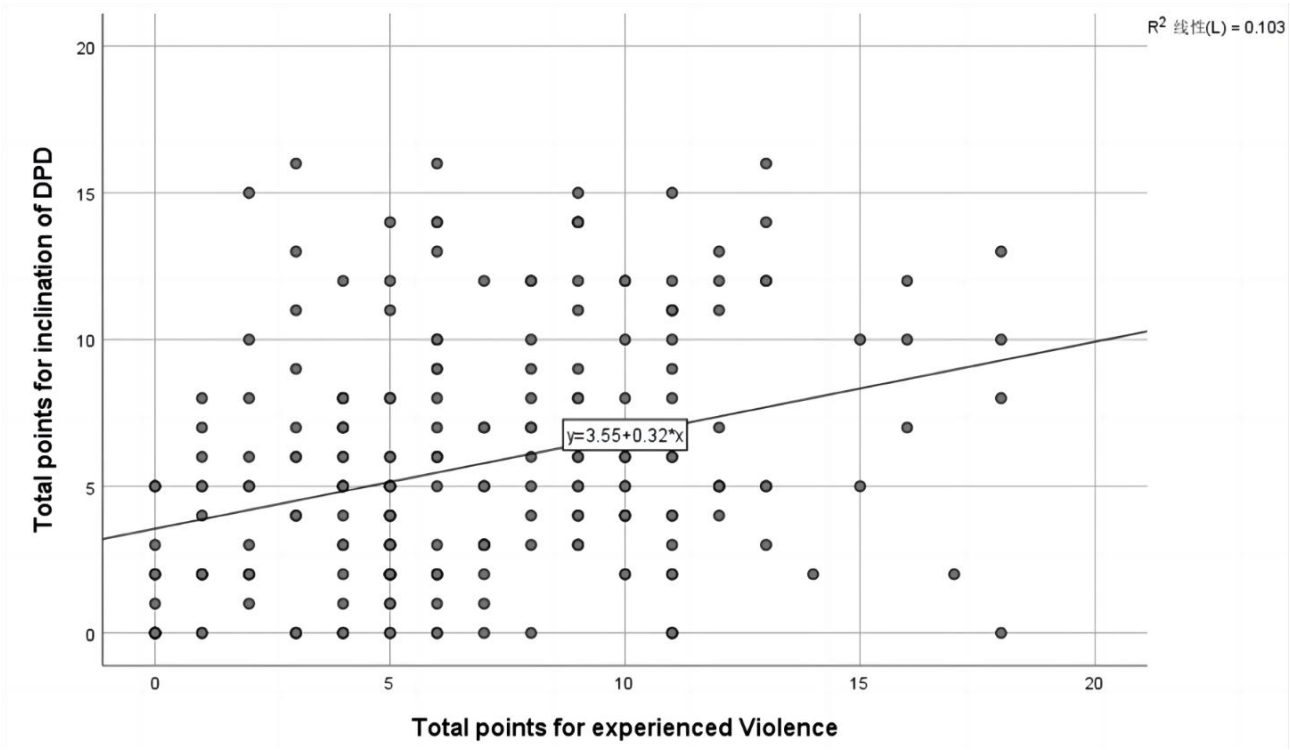


Fig. 1 Correlation between total score in DPD inclination test and level of violence experienced

3.3. DPD Inclination and Violence experienced

While individuals with DPD generally do not engage in violence behaviour, there is a potential risk of experiencing violence from others. The dependent nature and reluctance to assert themselves can make them vulnerable to psychological, emotional or physical abuse in their intimate relationships. It is assumed that reversely violence experience might reinforce the DPD inclination and therefore a positive correlation between DPD Inclination and Violence experienced is expected to observe. The correlations between score in long-term DPD symptoms and level of violence experienced obtained in self-reporting questionnaire are shown in Figure 1. A weak positive correlations between two variables (p=0.321) was discovered and described in Figure 1.

4. Discussion

Previous study has revealed that individuals who have endured various forms of violence or abuse during childhood may be more likely to display symptoms of DPD later in life as these experiences of violence can shape their behavior patterns and reliance on others [13]. Nevertheless, we consider mental and verbal violence acts as an equally influential risk factor in an individual's formation of DPD symptoms.

Our research discovered a weak positive correlation between DPD tendency and prior experience of violence (including both physical and mental violence). Through our questionnaire, it is worth noticing that while there was a small percentage of people who have experienced or witnessed physical violence, there was a large percentage of people who have experienced or witnessed mental

and verbal violence, indicating that non-physical abuse can be more widespread at least in Chinese society.

Though the correlation is less remarkable, the adverse impacts and risks still exist. Conversely, those people who had tended DPD initially as a result of an unsafe socialization environment or biological weaknesses are more likely to be exposed to violence as well due to their overdependence on partners, increasing the possibility of severe symptoms and emotional outbursts. These individuals might be so afraid of loss that they become very dependent on those around them like their family members, and after leaving them they might feel empty or even experience fear.

Based on our research, we suggested that some serious people, might not be able to get away from some things. For example, some women don't want to leave their husbands even if they have been domestically abused, either because they are too attached to them to leave, or because they think they won't be able to live on their own without their husbands. Perhaps they could switch their dependency and convert their dependency on the people around them to dependency on the things around them like a doll or a diary notebook which also could record their emotions and experiences, thus effectively reducing the harm that people bring to them such as domestic violence. For those who were at risk of developing DPD, they could focus more on their lives. For example, they could develop some hobbies, improve their sense of self-worth, and give themselves more support from the mental side to become more empowered and stronger without relying on other people.

5. Conclusion

Though only a less strong correlation was shown, the significance of physical and psychological abuse as risk factors for DPD should not be overlooked. Physical and psychological violence can have long-lasting effects on individuals, leading to various psychological disorders, including DPD. Investigating the connection between violence and DPD tendency can help shed light on the impact of trauma and potentially facilitate early identification and intervention. Various factors that contribute to the development of DPD symptoms can be understood comprehensively, informing effective treatment approaches. By recognizing the influence of violence in the formation of DPD tendencies, mental health professionals can tailor interventions and support systems to address the specific needs of individuals who have experienced violence.

However, there are certain restrictions on this study as well. We draw attention to the shortcomings of self-reported surveys and data underrepresentation, which can be improved in future research. We only had 228 participants, and they were chosen by chance sampling, which is susceptible to the effects of participant factors. Second, when self-report surveys are used, quantitative questions cannot be explained by the responses of individual children. Furthermore, there was only a weak correlation found, indicating that there is no causal connection between the two variables. Various research techniques, such as the use of case studies to study shifts in attitudes and personalities through interviews with participants' family and friends, could be used to make further improvements.

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