

Examining The Effects of Abusive Relationship in Body Self-Image

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the connection between body self-image and abusive behavior in married individuals. Marriage, being a major social institution, is usually prone to conflicts, which, in certain instances, take the form of abusive behaviors—physical, emotional, financial, or sexual. Body self-image, including people's thoughts and emotions regarding their body, is important in emotional health and relationship functioning. Employing a quantitative, correlational research design, 300 married participants were surveyed using the Body Self-Image Questionnaire-Short Form (BSIQ-SF) and the Abusive Behavior from Spouse Inventory. Statistical analysis was performed using Pearson correlation coefficient to evaluate relationships among variables and t-test to evaluate differences by gender. Findings indicate a strong relationship between body self-image and abusive behavior among married individuals, but no correlation when examined separately for men and women. Also, no differences based on gender were found in levels of body self-image or abusive behavior. These findings highlight the intricate interconnection between self-perception and relational abuse, pointing to the importance of interventions focusing on body image issues within abusive relationships. Later research should take further psychological and socio-cultural determinants of this relationship into account.

Keywords: abusive relationship, body self-image, married individual

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage as a very significant social institution, lays down the nucleus of society. It is one of the most important social institutions which evolved and developed with the socio-economic progress of mankind. Though practiced in different forms in diverse cultures, its one common feature is the conjugal union of a man and a woman where the association of men and women is believed to be formed for mutual satisfaction of needs like, biological, psychological, social and economic. Not only so, marriage is an institution, recognised as having the legal and moral authority too. The continuity of human race and its development along with the realization of values of life in human society is considered to be possible due to the institution of marriage. Sociologists feel that marriage offers a suitable framework upon which personal and group relations having to do with industry, property government, religion etc. are developed. It is a social institution which transforms a male and female into a family and brings along with it certain rights, duties and creates definite relationships. (Gowsami, G.,2022).

Marriage is exposed to many difficulties and disputes, like all other partnerships. Because of their negative effects on people, families and communities, derogatory behaviour stands out of these. Marital conflicts

in the form of logic or conflict between the spouse who have the ability to put Sangh at risk. Prices are often caused by these disputes under inequality, poor communication, incomplete needs and outbreaks. Economic difficulties, upbringing difficulties, personality struggles and lack of emotional support are some reasons for marital disagreement. According to the article, doctors who work with joints should be fully aware of these causes and should have dynamics in the game to succeed in leading and solving their problems. (Fincham & Beach,1999).

A pattern of tasks for the purpose of regaining or retaining a partner is known as an abuse of the relationship. It can show in many ways. Usually, a violent relationship involves several types of abuse that occurs physical abuse that is one of the simplest forms to detect. It uses physical force, or his fear to control a person. As a result, the remaining people are scared and are uncertain when abuse can arise again. Other, frequent use of abuse of more secret forms, is often encouraged by it. The goal of non-physical activities is to scare, manipulate or distinguish someone, who is considered emotional abuse. These actions are as serious as other forms of abuse, although they are often more secret and difficult to see. When a spouse dominates physically and sexual intimacy in a relationship, it is known as sexual abuse. It often requires enormous and non-conscious tasks. When a derogatory relationship increases your power and control under your financial conditions, it is known as financial or financial abuse. Sexual aggressive behavioural spectrums include sexual power. This may include forced intercourse as well as arguments and persuasion. However, sexual power still occurs when your partner feels compulsory to participate in sexual behaviour, even if they do not need to do so against the desire. There is less emphasis on internal psychological dynamics that reduce derogatory trend compared to the external causes of abuse, including childhood trauma, socio-economic stress and dependence on the drug. Victims of relationship abuse have physical, psychological, and emotional effects. Trauma, anxiety, sadness, and a lowered feeling of self-worth are some of these effects. Long-term repercussions for victims might include trouble establishing new relationships, persistent medical issues, and even suicide thoughts. The study emphasises how abuse by a spouse may negatively impact the victim's general well-being and quality of life (Lawrence et al, 2012).

When discussing intimate partner abuse, body self-image which is a person's opinions, thoughts, and feelings about their own physical appearance becomes a neglected but potentially significant topic. The intricate relationship between abusive behaviour from spouse in married individuals and physiological self-perceptions is examined in this study.

Body self-image is a complex notion that includes not just a person's physical appearance but also their attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about their body. A complex network of psychological, social, and cultural factors, including media representation, cultural norms, individual experiences, and conventional beauty standards, all have an impact on it. A positive body image is associated with increased self-worth, better mental health, and stronger interpersonal relationships. However, among other detrimental effects, body dissatisfaction, usually referred to as a poor body self-image, can lead to anxiety, depression, and issues in interpersonal relationships. A couple's body image may significantly impact the emotional climate of their marriage when they are married and have a unique degree of closeness.

Cultural and social variables further complicate the link between aggressive marital conduct and body self-image. Irrational expectations regarding physical appearance are produced by social beauty standards, which are often reinforced by the media and advertising. These norms, which disproportionately damage women but increasingly attack men as well, lead to widespread body dissatisfaction across both genders. In other communities, traditional gender norms and expectations increase these pressures even further.

Women may be expected to prioritise their physical beauty as an indication of their value, while men may feel driven to display concepts of strength and power. Such norms have the capacity to distort one's perception of oneself and encourage unfavourable interpersonal dynamics, such as power-driven abuse.

A person's body image offers an interesting lens through which to evaluate the connections because it is an integral aspect of who they are. To compensate for their inferiority complex, people with low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction, for example, may attempt to manage their partner. However, a partner who acts harshly or criticizingly might harm the other person's self-esteem and create a vicious cycle of suffering.

According to the social comparison hypothesis, people evaluate their own appearance by comparing it to that of others, which usually leads to dissatisfaction if they feel they are lacking. In a marital situation, they could compare themselves to their partner, which might intensify feelings of jealousy, rage, or inadequacy. An alternative viewpoint is provided by attachment theory, which argues that individuals with insecure attachment styles—often the consequence of negative self-perceptions—may behave violently or control others to feel safe in their relationships. These theoretical positions emphasise the need of considering body self-image as a key component of abuse dynamics.

The goal of this research was to identify the relationship between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse in married individuals. The potential for this study to further both the academic and practical domains makes it significant. It attempts to fill a vacuum in the scholarly literature by integrating research on body self-image and intimate partner abuse. In the real world, the findings could direct the development of targeted therapies for individuals, such as counselling programs that address body image issues as part of measures to avoid violence. It could also help public awareness campaigns that challenge harmful societal norms and promote more optimistic views on relationships and body image. By shedding light on the link between relational dynamics and self-perception, this study aims to further theoretical understanding and practical approaches for addressing abuse in marital individuals.

In conclusion, this study uses insights from cultural studies, sociology, and psychology to investigate the complex relationship between abusive conduct in married individuals and body self-image. By examining the psychological mechanisms, interpersonal connections, and cultural elements that connect different events, it seeks to provide comprehensive information that may direct both academic discourse and practical activities. The results and implications of the study will be discussed in the sections that follow. These sections will also assess the body self-image and intimate partner abuse literature that is currently available and outline the techniques used to investigate the relationship between the two.

2. Literature Reviews

Dashti et al (2024). Studied the relationship between perceived partner responsiveness and sexual satisfaction with the mediating role of sexual desire and positive body image in married women. The research population included all married women living in Isfahan city, and among these married women, 345 people were selected to participate in the research using the convenience non random sampling method, and according to the Perceived Response Questionnaires of Apt and Hurlbert (1992) Sexual Desire Questionnaire, Avalos (2005) Body Appreciation Questionnaire and Hudson (1981) Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire. The results showed the indirect path of the spouse's perceived responsiveness through sexual desire and positive body image was significant on sexual satisfaction.

Rakhshani et al (2024) conducted a study on relationship Between Body Image, Marital Offense-Specific Forgiveness, and Marital Happiness in Urban and Rural Married Women Aged 20-35. Study was

conducted on 608 married women aged 20 - 35, residing in urban and rural areas and referring to the comprehensive community health centres in the city of Jahrom, Fars province, Iran. The Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ), the Marital Happiness Scale (MHS), and the Marital Offense-Specific Forgiveness Scale (MOFS) were further applied to collect the data. The study results revealed that marital happiness and marital offense-specific forgiveness could lead to a positive body image in married women.

Palamuleni conducted a study on prevalence and correlates of domestic violence among currently married women in Malawi (2019). 4916 married women who answered the domestic violence module were extracted from the 2010 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, chi-square test and logistic regressions. The study has found that the existence of moderate but rising levels of violence against women in Malawi.

Tayzar Tun and Per-Olof Ostergren studied the Spousal violence against women and its association with sociodemographic factors and husbands' controlling behaviour (2020). This study used data from the Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS) 2015–2016, based on the responses of 3,425 ever-married women. The results showed that controlling behaviour by husbands was significantly associated with higher likelihoods of lifetime spousal violence among ever-married Myanmar women in this study. These findings reflect an obvious need for policy development and preventive strategies against marital controlling behaviour in Myanmar.

Aricioglu and Kaya conducted a study on Abusive behaviours in relationships, need satisfaction, conflict styles and relationship satisfaction: mediation and moderation roles (2023). The study included 333 (91 men, 242 women) Turkish emerging adults in relationships participated in this research. These participants completed a measure of abusive behaviour from spouse in romantic relationship, conflict resolution styles, relationship satisfaction and need satisfaction in romantic relationship. According to the results, Abusive relationship in romantic relationship has a full mediator role in the relationship between subordination and relationship satisfaction and has a partial mediator role in the relationship between retreat and relationship satisfaction. Results suggest that relatedness and autonomy present an adaptive approach and protection method associated with improved relationship satisfaction.

Lascorz, Yubero and Larrañaga conducted a study on subtle psychological violence and couple satisfaction among university students (2020). 1156 university students from 28 from all over Spain, throughout an academic course, participated in this cross-sectional non-experimental study. In order to identify subtle psychological violence, the Questionnaire on Micro Male Conducts of Ferrer et al was adapted to a self-report on behaviours used towards the partner (perpetration) and received from him/her (victimisation). The results showed that women definitely are sensitive towards victimisation of insecurity by their partners. There is a common pattern in terms of strategies of invading spaces and underestimating; in both cases, they have an important impact on satisfaction with the partner and reduce the level thereof. In order to reduce psychological violence among individuals, it is important that young people identify abusive behaviours and the level of violence they may be facing.

3. Methodology

Problem

How does abusive behaviour from spouse within a marriage impact the body self-image of individuals in the relationship?

Aim

The study aims to examine the significant relationship between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse among married individuals.

Objectives

The objective of this study is to explore the potential relationship between abusive behaviour from spouse and body self-image among married individuals. It aims to understand how experience of abuse whether emotional or physical may influence individual perceptions and satisfaction with their bodies. Ultimately, the study aims to provide insights that can inform interventions and counselling approaches to support the well-being of individuals in abusive relationships.

Variables

Independent variable: abusive behaviour.

Dependent variable: body self-image.

Demographic variable: age, gender, educational qualification, occupational status.

Hypothesis

1. There will be no significant relationship between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse among married individuals.
2. There will be no significant relationship between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse among married male.
3. There will be no significant relationship between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse among married females.
4. There will be no significant difference in the level of body self-image among married individuals across gender.
5. There will be no significant difference in the level of abusive among married individuals across gender.

Research design

The research was quantitative in nature and a correlational approach is used.

Research sample

The target population of this includes married couple. The sample was taken from 300 participants. The sample belongs to different age, educational qualification, occupational status etc. Purposive sampling was used as the sampling method for this study.

Sampling criteria

Inclusion criteria: Individuals who are currently living with their spouses were chosen.

Exclusion criteria: Participants who are separated or divorced will be excluded.

Instruments**1. Demographic data:**

Age, gender, educational qualification and occupation.

2. BSIQ-SF (short-form version of the body self-image questionnaire)

The tool used for the research was short form of the body self-image questionnaire by Rowe, David (2015). It consist of 27 items and Items are scored on a 1–5-point scale, with a=1, b=2, c=3, d=4, and e=5. The

BSIQ should not be used for a summed "total body image" score. Each subscale score ranges from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 15. Note: Item 1 should be reverse-scored, i.e., a=5, b=4, c=3, d=2, and e=1. The internal consistency reliability assessed in the study was considered satisfactory, with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.87.

The abusive behaviour from spouse inventory

The tool used for the research was the abusive behaviour from spouse inventory by Shepard and Campbell (1992). It consist of 30 item instrument that uses a 5-point Likert scale . Reliability ranges between 0.70 to 0.92 and validity 0.76 to 0.91.

Procedure:

The data was collected physically through offline mode of data collection. 300 people took part in the study. The consent of the participant was ensured before initiating data collection. They were ensured that the information will be kept confidential and will be used for research purpose only. The participants were required to complete a questionnaire that included sociodemographic information, a scale for measuring body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse in partner. The participants were encouraged to contact the scholar in case of any quires that arise while filling the questionnaire. If anyone is interested to know their personal results, they were provided with email ID of the scholar. The scoring was done and the obtained results was subjected to statistical analysis.

Analysis of the data

Following the collection of data from the sample of the study, the data were statistically analysed using the excel to interpret the data using the statistical tests such as Pearson correlation coefficient to analyse the relationship between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse in partner, t test to analyse the mean difference of body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse among gender.

4. Result

The purpose of this research was to examine the significant relationship between abusive behaviour from spouse(AB) and body self-image (BSI) among married individuals.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of participants based on demographic factors.

Variable	Group	N	%
Gender	Male	145	50
	Female	145	50
Occupation	Unemployed	59	20.34
	Employed	231	79.31
Educational qualification	12 th and below	90	31.03
	UG	173	59.65
	PG	27	8.62
age	Below 30	103	35.51
	30-39	127	43.79

	40 and above	60	20.34
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Table 1 represents the socio-demographic data of the 290 participants in which 145 were males (50%) and 145 female (50%). In current population 90 of them (31.03%) had qualification below 12th, 173 of them (59.65%) had completed their under-graduation, 27 of them (8.62%) had completed their post-graduation, 59 of them (20.34%) are un employed, 231 of them (79.31%) are employed. With regard of age 103 of them (35.51%) are below 30 years old, 127 of them (43.79%) are between the age of 30-39 years old and 60 of them (20.34%) are above 40 years of age.

The researcher formulated a hypothesis to examine the correlation among the variables. The study was conducted on 290 people and the results are shown below.

Table 2: correlation between body self-image and abusive behaviour.

Variables	M	SD	BSI	AB
BSI	61	19.288	1	-0.030
AB	45	18.161	-0.030	1

Note: M= Median, SD= Standard Deviation, BSI= Body Self-Image, AB= Abusive Behavior.

Table 2 shows the Pearson correlation between body self-image and abusive behaviour. The result shows that the significant value of the correlation between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouses -0.030 which is not significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse among married.

Table 3: correlation between body self-image and abusive behaviour in males

Variables	M	SD	BSI	AB
BSI	59	22.335	1	-0.097
AB	43	18.032	-0.097	1

Note: M= Median, SD= Standard Deviation, BSI= Body Self-Image, AB= Abusive Behavior.

Table 3 shows the Pearson correlation between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse in males. The result shows that the significant value of the correlation between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouses -0.097 which is not significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is a no significant relationship between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse among males.

Table 4: correlation between body self-image and abusive relationship in females

Variables	M	SD	BSI	AB
BSI	62	15.720	1	0.057
AB	45	18.344	0.057	1

Note: M= Median, SD= Standard Deviation, BSI= Body Self-Image, AB= Abusive Behavior.

Table 4 shows the Pearson correlation between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse in females. The result shows that the significant value of the correlation between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse is 0.057 which is not significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is a no significant relationship between body self-image and abusive behaviour from spouse among females.

Variables	Gender	Number	Mean	t value	p value
BSI	Male	145	63.68	0.610	0.542
	Female	145	62.52		
AB	Male	145	48.43	0.713	0.476
	Female	145	49.21		

Table 5: T-Test to identify the difference on the level of body self-image across gender and difference on the level of abusive behavior from spouse across gender

Table 5 shows the results of the result on the test of the level of body self-image and abusive behavior in married individuals across gender. The result shows that the significant value of body self-image among married individuals across gender is 0.542 ($t=0.610, p>0.05$) which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is a no significant difference in the level of body self-image in married individuals across gender. The result of abusive behavior in married individuals across gender is 0.476 ($t=0.713, p>0.01$) which is not significant at 0.01 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in the level of abusive behavior in married individuals across gender.

The primary goal of the study was to understand the relationship between the body self-image and abusive behavior of married individuals and to find out gender differences on these two variables. It was found that there was no significant relationship between body self-image and abusive behavior in married individuals, there was no significant relationship between body self-image and abusive behavior when analyzed separately for males and females. There was, however, no significant difference across married individuals in terms of body self-image and abusive behavior according to gender. These findings add to the extant literature related to body self-image and abusive behavior with contributions made towards understanding marriage and gender considerations in these psychological constructs.

One of the possible reasons for these results is the complexity of marital abuse. Abusive behavior is never caused by one factor; it is formed by a mix of psychological, emotional, social, and relational factors. Although body self-image could be involved in self-esteem and emotional well-being, it is not found to be a main factor in determining whether one will be abused in marriage. Rather, personality, emotional regulation, communication style, financial pressure, relationship satisfaction, and history of trauma are likely to play much more significant roles in abusive behavior within marital relationships.

Another significant factor to consider is the influence of self-esteem and mental health on relationship dynamics. While body self-image can be a factor in self-esteem, the lack of strong correlation between BSI and abuse indicates that as a more general psychological construct, self-esteem is perhaps a better predictor of relationship problems than body image. Further, mental illness like depression, anxiety, and stress may affect both self-view and relationship functioning more than concerns about body image. Those who have low self-esteem or emotional issues might be more susceptible to abusive relationship patterns, but according to this study, body self-image in itself isn't a prime indicator of abusive experiences.

The research also reported no difference in body self-image or abusive behavior by gender, which refutes some of the usual assumptions regarding the role of gender in body image disturbance and relationship experience. Historically, women have been thought to be more vulnerable to dissatisfaction with body image because of cultural expectations about physical beauty. But this research posits that perceptions of body image among men and women in marriage are likely closer than hitherto presumed and that these have little bearing on experiences of spousal abuse.

For married men, concerns about muscularity, physical dominance, and fitness are more typical rather than weight or appearance per se. But these concerns are not found to increase the probability of being a victim of abusive treatment at the hands of a spouse. Relationship power, economic, personality, and psychological resilience factors may be more influential in defining their experience within a marriage.

For married women, body image discontent is most often associated with media pressure, societal expectations for beauty, and internalized ideals about physical attractiveness. Yet according to the research findings, the poorer the woman's body self-image, the more likely she might not be to be a victim of spouse abuse. What this implies is that other relationship and psychological characteristics like emotional dependency, satisfaction with relationship, previous experience of trauma, and stress will play more pivotal roles in how they report their experiences of being abused within marriage.

It is also important to note that the research methodology of this study could have affected the results. For instance, self-reported measures of abusive behavior and body self-image could have been biased because people might have underreported due to social desirability or fear of judgment. Also, a cross-sectional study design makes it difficult to establish causality. Longitudinal studies in the future may reveal more about the dynamic between body self-image and abusive behavior, and whether abusive behavior is influenced by changes in self-perception in the long term.

Another shortcoming of the study is that it didn't control for extrinsic stressors that might affect body self-image as well as relationship behavior, for example, financial stress, occupational pressures, and social support networks. Future research should involve a greater integration of factors in examining marital relationships, including for example, childhood experiences, family functioning, and psychological resilience. Notwithstanding these restrictions, the outcomes of this study add important knowledge to relationship psychology and domestic violence studies. They serve to draw attention to a broader understanding of what leads to abusive behavior within marriage, looking beyond body image issues to psychological, relational, and societal drivers.

5. Discussion

The results of this study suggest that body self-image does not have a significant relationship with abusive behavior from a spouse among married individuals. This lack of significance was observed across both genders, indicating that body self-perception is not a strong determinant of experiencing or engaging in abusive behavior within marriage. Additionally, no significant differences were found in the levels of body self-image or abusive behavior between males and females, further reinforcing that these variables do not play a decisive role in predicting abusive tendencies within marital relationships.

One of the key implications of these findings is that abusive behavior in marriage is influenced by a complex interplay of psychological, social, and relational factors beyond body self-image. While self-perception and self-esteem are crucial aspects of mental health and personal well-being, they do not appear to be major contributors to the occurrence of abusive behavior in married individuals. Instead, other factors such as emotional regulation, personality traits, relationship satisfaction, financial stress, and past

experiences of trauma may have a more significant impact on abusive dynamics within marriage. The absence of significant gender differences in body self-image and abusive behavior challenges traditional assumptions about the role of gender in body dissatisfaction and relationship experiences. While women have often been seen as more vulnerable to body image concerns due to societal beauty standards, this study suggests that both men and women experience body self-image in ways that do not significantly affect their likelihood of experiencing abuse from a spouse. This underscores the need for interventions and support systems that address relationship challenges for both men and women rather than focusing solely on one gender.

These findings highlight the importance of adopting a broader perspective when analyzing abusive behavior in relationships. While body self-image may influence an individual's self-esteem and emotional well-being, it does not seem to be a key factor in determining whether they experience abuse from a spouse. Future research should focus on more substantial predictors of abusive behavior, such as mental health status, communication patterns in relationships, history of violence or neglect, and interpersonal conflict resolution skills.

Additionally, the cultural and societal influences on abusive behavior must be considered. Social norms regarding marriage, gender roles, and power dynamics within relationships may shape how abuse manifests. If societal expectations promote power imbalances in relationships, other factors such as financial dependency and emotional control may be stronger predictors of abuse than body self-image. These aspects need to be explored further in future research to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of abusive behavior in marriage.

Overall, this study contributes valuable insights into the factors influencing abusive behavior in marital relationships. By demonstrating that body self-image does not significantly predict abusive tendencies, it redirects attention to other crucial psychological and relational factors. Future interventions should focus on promoting healthy communication, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution skills among married individuals. Addressing these broader issues will be more effective in preventing abusive behaviors and fostering healthier relationships. Continued research in this area will help develop targeted prevention and intervention strategies that consider the multifaceted nature of abusive relationships.

6. Limitations

The research has a number of limitations that need to be noted. To begin with, the use of self-report data might have created response bias, given that the participants could underreport or overreport their experience with body self-image and abusive behavior because of social desirability, personal biases, or fear of being judged. Secondly, the research was based on a cross-sectional design, which undermines the capacity to identify cause-and-effect relationships between body self-image and abusive behavior. A longitudinal study would be able to give clearer insights into the changes of these factors over time and whether body self-image affects the development or escalation of abusive behaviors within marital relationships. Another limitation is the lack of external influences that could have affected body self-image and abusive behavior.

Factors like economic status, upbringing, cultural background, and social support networks were not thoroughly investigated, although they can significantly contribute to self-image and relationship patterns. In addition, the sample used for the study might not represent the larger married population completely, since differences in ethnicity, socioeconomic level, and relationship length were not addressed specifically. Future studies need to employ a more inclusive method that takes these situational factors

into consideration in order to gain better insights into the body self-image complexities and marital abusive behavior.

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