



Research Article

The Levels of Perceived Emotional Abuse among Pakistani Husbands and Wives

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ABSTRACT

Emotional abuse in marital or committed couples has been reported differently in literature. There has been a traditional theme that husbands are significantly more emotionally abusive toward their wives. This trend, however, has been changing due to the social participation and educational uplift of women. The current study intended to explore the prevalence and levels of emotional abuse among husbands and wives. The study involved 177 husbands and 139 wives and administered the Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse to assess the levels of emotional abuse among the respondents. The findings revealed that husbands felt significantly more emotional abuse from wives.

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Introduction

The term 'abuse' refers to the destruction of one's self-esteem or sense of safety occurring within relationships in which power dynamics are different [1]. Abuse may include 'physical' aspects involving physical acts to intentionally harm someone; 'sexual' aspects to exploit another person through sexual activities; 'emotional' or 'psychological' aspects to devalue the targeted person emotionally [2-4]. 'Neglect' is another form of abuse in which a person withdraws from the caretaking of a dependent [5]. Emotional abuse, defined briefly, can be any non-physical behaviour or attitude intended to control, intimidate, subjugate, demean, punish, or isolate another person for the sake of gaining power over another person [6, 7]. In marital or committed intimate relationships, emotional abuse can take forms of humiliation, degradation, negating, criticizing, accusing, blaming, unreasonable expectations, withholding of attention or affection, disapproving, threatening, etc. [6]. Emotional abuse is generally more prevalent than physical or sexual abuse [8]. Emotional abuse has a significant potential to be converted in physical abuse and has negative psychological effects on the victim e.g. depression, low self-esteem, sense of failure, hopelessness, self-blame and self-destructiveness [6, 9]. The current

study intended to explore the prevalence and levels of emotional abuse among husbands and wives.

Methods

I Participants

The study involved 316 conveniently selected married individuals including both husbands (n=177) and wives (n=139).

II The Instruments

Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse, a well-utilized measure to assess the levels of emotional abuse among couples, was used in the study [10]. The measure comprises of 28 items with an 8-point Likert scale. It also includes four sub-scales namely Restrictive Engulfment, Denigration, Hostile Withdrawal, and Dominance Intimidation. The scale claims to be highly reliable and valid by the authors. The same was re-confirmed by doing a confirmatory factor analysis of the scale in the current study (Tables 1 & 2) and the analysis revealed high levels of reliability and validity of the scale and its sub-scales.

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Table 1: Reliability and data accuracy of multidimensional measure of emotional abuse (N=316).

N	α	KMO	BTS	Components Extracted	Variance Explained (%)
28	.951	.902	6464.92*	4	63.20

N: Number of items; α : Cronbach’s Alpha; KMO: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sample Adequacy; BTS: Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity; *P: .000

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and reliability of multidimensional measure of emotional abuse (N=316).

Variable	Items	α	M	SD	%	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
						Potential	Actual		
MDMEB	28	.951	46.46	37.93	23.70	0-196	0-195	1.116	.947
RE	7	.833	13.53	10.74	27.61	0-49	0-48	.775	.012
D	7	.904	9.93	11.56	20.26	0-49	0-49	1.428	1.333
HW	7	.866	15.00	11.16	30.61	0-49	0-49	.458	-.704
DI	7	.917	7.98	10.56	16.28	0-49	0-49	1.483	1.419

α : Cronbach’s Alpha; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation; MDMEB: Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse; RE: Restrictive Engulfment subscale; D: Denigration subscale; HW: Hostile Withdrawal subscale; DI: Dominance/Intimidation subscale.

III Procedure

Upon the approval of the study by the Departmental Ethics Review Committee, the researcher approached the participants in different public offices and educational institutions. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their consent to take part in the study was obtained. The data collected was analysed in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

Results

Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse was found highly reliable through the Cronbach’s alpha values i.e. .951 for the overall scale and .833, .904, .866, and .917 for its sub-scales (Table 2). The confirmatory factor analysis of the scale confirmed the validity of the scale and its four sub-scales (Table 1; KMO=.902; P=.000 in Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity; 4 factors extracted; and 63.20% variance explained). The findings revealed that husbands felt significantly more emotional abuse from wives (Table 3; M=51.24 vs 40.37; p=0.01).

Table 3: Differences in the levels of husbands and wives for their perceptions of being emotionally abused.

Variable	Husbands (n = 177)			Wives (n=139)			t	p	95% CI	
	M	SD	%	M	SD	%			LL	UL
Emotional Abuse	51.24	39.64	26.24	40.37	34.85	20.59	2.55	0.011	2.48	19.25
Restrictive Engulfment	15.80	11.18	32.24	10.63	9.41	21.69	4.37	0.000	2.84	7.50
Denigration	10.53	11.72	21.49	9.17	11.34	18.71	1.03	0.301	1.22	3.93
Hostile Withdrawal	16.37	11.30	33.41	13.25	10.76	27.04	2.49	0.013	0.65	5.59
Dominance Intimidation	8.51	10.84	17.37	7.30	10.19	14.90	1.01	0.313	1.14	3.56

CI: Confidence Interval, LL: Lower Limit, UL: Upper Limit.

Discussion

Emotional abuse in marital or committed couples has been reported differently in literature. There has been a traditional theme that husbands are significantly more emotionally abusive toward their wives [11]. Husbands and wives have also been found to be equally abusive toward each other [12]. There are, however, plenty of studies that have been reflecting a trend of women being more emotionally abusive toward their husbands [13-17]. The current study also reflected more emotional abuse from wives toward husbands.

Ethics Statement

The ethical approval was granted by the departmental review committee at the Department of Humanities, COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan. All the procedures performed in this study were in accordance with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Conflicts of Interest

None.

Funding

None.

Data Availability

The data related to this paper is available on demand.

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