Dark Side of Romance: A Theoretical Exploration of Intimate Partner Violence Dynamics with Special Reference to Dating Violence

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INTRODUCTION

Intimate partner violence (IPV) has recently become a serious issue in India. According to the World Health Organization, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) " refers to behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, coercive control, sexual coercion, and psychological abuse. This violence is perpetrated by both current and former intimate partners". IPV is not only considered domestic violence; it also includes dating violence. Dating is defined as activities intended to establish and pursue a romantic relationship and is a stage in the process of spouse selection that occurs in a social context that permits romantic love. Moreover, it is the initial phase in which individuals get to know each other and explore the possibilities of a romantic relationship (Quah & Kumagai, 2015). The concept of dating is a forerunner or previous stage to marriage. Women have experienced various types of abuse in dating life as well as in marriage, including physical, psychological, sexual, and financial abuse.

This study assists in understanding the dynamics of dating violence with numerous risk factors, along with the theoretical frameworks. These theoretical frameworks help to intuitively recognise Dating Violence dynamics. Every theory has the inimitable acumen to comprehend the dynamics of dating violence and its abusive patterns. The most predominant risk factor for dating violence is aggression (Makepeace, 1981). Therefore, aggression was selected as one of the variables in this study. The selected variables for this study were aggression and engaging in dating violence as variables; aggression compared with the family structure to which individuals belong, witnessing conflict between parents, parenting styles that they experienced, prolonged acceptance of aggression, drug usage, and victim precipitation. Aggressive behaviour is defined as any behaviour intended to hurt another person. Aggression can precede violence. All violent acts are aggressive, but not all aggressive acts end with violence. This study can explain the factors contributing to aggression, which results in dating violence, as dating violence dynamics.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Exhibiting aggression within a dating relationship is one implication of dating

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violence. The existing literature indicates that aggression and dating violence are interrelated. According to Riggs (1993), dating violence is faced by those who are in aggressive relationships compared to those who are not in aggressive relationships. In contrast, individuals facing violence in relationships are in prolonged relationships (Marcus 2008). This literature review explores the factors capable of producing aggression towards a partner while dating, focusing on variables such as childhood learning from parents (i.e. parenting styles and family structure power dynamics), social constructs (i.e. gender roles and their power dynamics), jealousy, strain, coercive control, accepting aggressiveness, and self-defense to cope with aggression.

Prior studies have shown a significant relationship between parenting styles and aggression. Individuals subconsciously learn to exhibit aggression from their parents through their parenting styles. When individuals grow up in a physically punitive environment, they are more likely to be aggressive (Miranda, 2009). Individuals who engage in aggression may have learned it from their parents, who raised them using authoritative, permissive, or democratic parenting styles (Salavera et al., 2024; Zhong, 2022; Arzeen et al., 2023; Rahman, 2024). Even though individuals were raised under authoritative or permissive parenting styles, maternal parenting can lower aggression levels. Such individuals are less likely to exhibit aggression (Azimi, 2012). Bagan (2019) also noted that maternal support and maternal control play a crucial role in controlling aggressiveness.

Aggressiveness can also be learned from a family's structure and power dynamics (Fortuna & Masten, 2018; Fortuna & K, 2010). Male and female individuals from patriarchal families are more prone to exhibit aggressiveness and accept aggressiveness, respectively. In contrast, male and female individuals from matriarchal and egalitarian families are more prone to accept aggression and to exhibit aggression, respectively (Wahid, 2023; Violence & Aggression, 2023; Balbinotti, 2018; Karakurt & Cumbie, 2012). Women with patriarchal attitudes can accept aggression in dating relationships, and individuals with traditional views on patriarchal family dynamics are accepting and indulge in dating violence (You & Shin, 2020; Lane & Gwartney-Gibbs, 1985).

Social construction influences gender roles and power dynamics, which can be related to aggressiveness (Bell et al., 2011). Individuals learn gender roles and power dynamics through social constructs, such as men being the breadwinners, the best decision-makers, and providing more contributions to society. Power dynamics lead to aggression towards women, particularly gender-based violence (Strebel et al., 2006; Bell et al., 2011). Gender roles are shaped by various factors, such as parenting styles and social construction, which lead individuals to learn from their childhood and exhibit aggressiveness as well as gender stereotypes through observation (Janicik, 2014; Berke et al., 2024; Berke et al., 2015).

Jealousy may act as an intervening variable between aggressiveness and Intimate Partner Violence (Haack et al., 2023). Intimate Partner Violence may occur due to jealousy or revenge (Kaufman-Parks et al., 2018; Sergeeva, 2022; Aloyce et al., 2023). The study found that individuals with a high rejection of sensitivity tend to experience high-intensity jealousy, which has a significant correlation with aggressiveness compared to individuals with a lower rejection of sensitivity (Downey et al., 2000; Romero-Canyas

et al., 2010; Weeks, 2011; Chester & DeWall, 2017; Murphy & Russell, 2016). Jealousy leads to coercing partners into controlling and manipulating them to do what the jealous person wants (Buller et al., 2022; Verschuere et al., 2021; Bhona et al., 2020; Mullen, 1995). Jealousy is associated with an intensified drive to dominate relationships, leading to physical aggression. The study stresses that jealousy and possessive tendencies are factors of aggression, emphasising the prevalence in intimate partner violence (Pichon et al., 2020)

According to prior studies, victims of dating violence have a high tolerance for aggression in dating relationships, and their acceptance of abuse grows as the frequency of aggression they experience increases. This means that they are more prone to victimisation (Fernández-Antelo et al., 2020). The study suggests that prolonged acceptance of aggressiveness can turn the aggressor into a victim (Williford et al., 2011; Reuda & Fawson, 2018). Some victims turn to aggressors towards aggressive partners to cope with aggressiveness in dating violence (Akymbek et al., 2024; Meyer et al., 2010). This coping strategy may be learned from their partners, as they may subconsciously observe each other and switch roles (Lahav et al., 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative theoretical methodology to explore the dynamics of dating violence through conceptual interpretations rather than empirical data collection. It employs a multi-theoretical framework that draws on social learning theory, power-control theory, frustration-aggression theory, general strain theory, relative deprivation theory, and feminist theory. These frameworks were selected for their relevance in examining the behavioural patterns and social constructs behind aggression in intimate relationships. Aggression was analysed as both an independent and dependent variable, linked to constructs such as family structure, parenting style, drug usage, victim precipitation, and socialisation. Literature sources were critically reviewed and synthesised to construct a strong conceptual model that maps aggression onto dating violence dynamics. Deductive reasoning and reflexivity help the theoretical analysis, with special attention to the cultural and relative factors affecting dating relationships in India. This methodology enables a narrow and interdisciplinary understanding of intimate partner violence without depending on empirical measurements.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Many theoretical matters can be appealed to concerning the relationship between learning and violent behaviour. The six theories that have received the most attention in the literature are social learning theory, power control theory, frustration-aggression theory, general strain theory, relative deprivation theory, and feminist theory. Using these theoretical frameworks, the explanation of the dynamics and implications of dating violence is much more relatable.

According to Bandura's (1977to) Social Learning Theory (SLT), there are three types of models: live, verbal instructional, and symbolic. Through these models, individuals can learn from witnessing others unintentionally experience direct first-hand experiences. The first model of SLT is the Live model which explains childhood memories of witnessing the aggressive conflict between the parents of the individual who is most likely to indulge in dating violence perpetration and victimisation (Chapple,

2003; Paat & Markham, 2019).

John Hagan's Power Control Theory (1989) is highly relatable to the dating violence. This theory contends that gender variations in delinquency and risk-taking behaviours are driven by family dynamics and power structures. According to Family structures and dynamics, males who have experience in patriarchal families are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours, including dating violence. However, males from egalitarian families are less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours, including dating violence. In patriarchal families, the structures for male individuals are less strict than those for female individuals within the families, who are more likely to indulge in risk-taking behaviour. In contrast, egalitarian family structures occupy the other end of the spectrum (Coleman & Straus, 1986).

Frustration-aggression theory (1939) was first proposed by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower, and Sears, who defined it as "the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression". In terms of dating violence, this form of aggression may include perpetration. When an individual refuses to allow their partner to perform a function that the individual dislikes, in contrast, the individual partner likes to do so, which may end up in coercion. This coercion causes frustration among the employees. The above theory suggests that frustration can lead to aggression. Here, the frustration of partners is directly proportional to dating violence perpetration.

General Strain Theory (1992) was proposed by Agnew. This theory is a sequel to the frustration-aggression theory of dating violence. According to this theory, anger, frustration, depression, and fear are negative emotional states caused by several forms of strain. Maintaining these negative emotional states leads to violent behaviours. Due to the accumulated anger and frustration of the partner within the dating relationship, when they are incapable of coping with their negative emotions, they may indulge in dating violence.

Samuel Stouffer first proposed Relative Deprivation Theory in the book 'The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath' published in 1949. He proposed this theory only for groups of people. However, Runciman (1966) linked this relative deprivation theory to the individual. According to Runciman, an individual is deprived of "something" in four stages: First, when an individual does not have that "something"; secondly, when that individual knows that some other person has that "something"; thirdly, when that individual wants to have that "something"; finally, when that individual believes there is a reasonable chance of having that "something" something. After Runciman, Ted Robert Gur, a political sociologist, connected relative deprivation theory with aggression. This relative deprivation triggers aggression, which is a vital source of violence (Longley 2021). This theory is connected to this research on dating violence by former spouses. In addition, the current partner may have spent more time with others than the individual. This may lead to emotional aggressiveness by isolating friends, family, and others.

Feminist theories play a vital role in understanding the concepts of dating violence. These feminist theories have been proposed under different conditions, by different researchers, and at different times. The most effective concepts in the feminist approach to dating violence are gender roles and social constructs. Simone de Beauvoir

(1949) explores gender constructs in her book "The Second Sex" and explains the systematic oppression of women. In every phase of a woman's life, gender roles play out very well, as well as in the dating phase. The starting point of coercive control of women is these gender roles and social constructs. Accepting coercive control in dating relationships leads to women's victimisation in the context of dating violence. This increases the urge to accept coercive control due to gender roles and social constructs in dating violence perpetration. Using physical violence as a coping mechanism to escape coercive control leads to dating violence perpetration (Ditcher et al., 2018).

DISCUSSIONS

Generally, women go through different phases of life, such as childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Every woman has witnessed different partners' entry in different phases, such as parents, friends, colleagues, and romantic partners. Women may experience violence in each phase from strangers and from people they know. The violence faced by women comes in various forms, such as physical, psychological, financial, and sexual. Dating violence does not only have direct victims but also has a significant impact on family members, friends, coworkers, and society at large. This includes any activities that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, terrify, terrorise, compel, threaten, blame, harm, injure, or wound others (*Domestic Violence Dynamics - What Domestic Abuse What It Does to Family*, 2025). However, while women experiencing these kinds of violence with an additional add-on of aggression give hard scar victimisation more than violence against women happening in silent mode. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, all violent acts are aggressive, but not all aggressive acts end in violence. However, aggression has the catalytic power to enhance the victim's victimisation implications. In this study, we examine aggression in women's victimisation only in the dating phase and by dating partners.

Dating violence may have occurred as a result of exhibiting aggression in dating relationships with partners. Aggression can accumulate in various ways within dating relationships. This study proposes that aggression can accumulate in two ways: internally and externally. If the factors for an individual's aggression develop inside pressure, that is, within that individual, for example, learning or strain. This is called the Internal Way. Second, the external way is developing aggression in an individual through outside pressure, that is, the influence of drugs (Tomlinson et al., 2016), victim precipitation (Cortina, 2017), and self-defense strategies.

Internally, factors that provoke aggression can be subconsciously learned from parents. It is based on the family structure and power dynamics of the family to which the individual belongs. This study found that this factor may be applicable to both victimisation and perpetration. Gender roles play a vital role in this movement. If a male is from a patriarchal family structure, he may exhibit agtowardsveness toward his partner, resulting in issues within the relationship. In contrast, a female from the same family structure may accept aggressiveness in dating violence. This acceptance of aggressiveness may lead to more perpetration by the perpetrator. On the other hand, if a female individual is from a matriarchal or egalitarian family structure, she may exhibit aggressiveness towards her partner, resulting in issues within the relationship. However, if a male individual is from the same family as discussed earlier, that male individual may accept aggressiveness in dating violence. This aggression may result in physical or

emotional abuse.

Additionally, parenting styles play a significant role in the expression of aggressiveness (Salavera et al., 2024; Zhong, 2022; Arzeen et al., 2023). There are four types of parenting: authoritative, permissive, democratic, and neglectful (Rahman 2024). Here, except for individuals raised in democratic parenting, the other three types may exhibit aggression. A lack of empathy in relationships with partners may lead to aggression. Authoritative parenting is significantly correlated with lower empathy levels (Lin et al., 2023). This parenting type indirectly taught individuals to exhibit aggressiveness during childhood.

Moreover, another finding of this research is that strain can lead to aggressiveness (Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013), as Robert Agnew (1992) stated in general strain theory. This strain can result from coercive control learned from society. Individuals may learn the gender roles and social constructs from society to enact the gender roles and social constructs within the relationships, and perpetrators may use coercive control towards the partner. After accepting prolonged coerciveness from perpetrators, victims may exhibit aggressiveness for self-defence. Eventually, the victim may become the perpetrator, and vice versa. This aggressiveness may result in physical, emotional, or financial abuse.

Drug usage and jealousy are additional factors in exhibitowardsggression toward a partner in dating relationships (Tomlinson et al., 2016). Jealousy is a factor in Runciman's relative deprivation theory. Jealousy leads former partners to betowardsggressive toward each other. When perpetrators identify their former partners as happy or with someone else, they indulge in aggressiveness towards their former partner or their former partner's friends, which may end in physical or emotional abuse of the victims. Jealousy within current partnerships may lead to emotional abuse, such as isolating partners from their family or friends; when a jealous individual sees their partner happy with others, they may become aggressive, and if they do not cope with that aggressiveness, they may indulge in violence towards the partner.

CONCLUSION

In this era, there are pieces of literature that establish the socio-legal aspects of Intimate Partner Violence and its victims. However, in India, intimate partner violence only covers domestic violence and not dating violence. There are no legal aspects for victims who suffer from dating violence. Unlike other countries, Indian dating couples treat themselves as if they are married. They follow the cultural norms of married couples, even when they are unmarried. Breakups in dating relationships are treated as family breakdowns. In the Indian context, dating relationships are less intimate than those in other countries. Consequently, the factors and variables of intimate partner violence may leave a gap in understanding dating violence, and Indian dating relationships are culturally different from those in other countries.

Violence faced by unmarried youth couples in India should be studied to identify the pattern of dating violence, the factors that help to motivate violence in dating relationships, and the factors that motivate couples not to be involved in violent activities. Men and women victimised by dating violence suffer psychological trauma regarding relationships, which may lead to misogyny and androgyny. Research should be conducted to highlight the magnitude of dating violence in the Indian context and

its disguised threat to society as a whole. Additionally, it seeks to illuminate the experiences of victims and suggest humanistic approaches for society at large. Finally, it seeks to identify potential legal strategies to address this issue.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

1. Lack of empirical evidence

Because this study is purely theoretical, it does not include quantitative or qualitative data to support the point statistically. Future studies should verify the correlation between aggression, family structure, parenting styles, and dating violence to strengthen theoretical claims.

2. Limited Representation of Gender Perspectives

This study addresses violence between males and females and does not include other forms of violence. Further research can incorporate LGBTQIA+ individuals to study dating violence.

3. Absence of Longitudinal Insight:

This study does not account for the extent to which these variables are correlated over time. Therefore, long-term studies should help identify how these variables correlate with time.

4. Absence of online dating violence dynamics:

This study only includes the dynamics of dating violence in personal relationships. Future research may also contribute to online dynamics.

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