Proceeding Paper

Personality and Aggressive Behavior: The Relation between the Five-Factor and Aggression Models in a Domestic Violence Suspects Sample †

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the relationship between the five-factor model of personality and its association with aggression in 30 men and eight women who are suspects of domestic violence. The results show a positive correlation between neuroticism and hostility, a negative correlation between openness to experience and overall aggression, a negative correlation between agreeableness and physical aggression and anger, and a negative correlation between conscientiousness and anger. These results show us the need for personality assessment in domestic violence suspects and future research about personality and aggression.

Keywords: personality; aggressive behavior; five-factor model; domestic violence

1. Introduction

The five-factor model argues that personality is based on five core factors: neuroticism (calm, confident vs. anxious, pessimistic); extraversion (reserved, thoughtful vs. sociable, fun-loving); openness to experience (prefers routine, practical vs. imaginative, spontaneous); agreeableness (suspicious, uncooperative vs. trusting, helpful); and, finally, the conscientiousness (impulsive, disorganized vs. disciplined, careful) [1]. This model has been used to study offenses in general, antisocial behaviors, aggression, and violence [2]. Some studies [3–5] found that more neuroticism and less kindness and conscientiousness leads to problems related to antisocial personality and aggressive behaviors. Specifically, high neuroticism is associated with both increased aggression and mental distress in violent offenders [5].

2. Materials and Methods

The sample consisted of 38 suspects of domestic violence (n_{men} = 30 (78.9%); n_{women} = 8 (21.1%)), aged between 23 and 82 years old (M = 44.64, sd = 14.75) assessed in the Forensic Psychology Office of Forensic and Psychological Sciences Egas Moniz by Court and/or Public Prosecutor's Office. Most of the sample had middle school education (66.7% (n = 21)) and had mostly unqualified jobs (26.3% (n = 10)) or were unemployed (21.2% (n = 8)). Most individuals were single (52.8%), forward by married (25%) and divorced (22.5%). Regarding the relationship between our sample and their victims, a large proportion was ex-partners (36.8%). Regarding criminal history, 65.8% (n = 25) had previous contacts with the Justice System, including convictions in 39.5% (n = 15) of cases.

Data were collected from lawsuits, semi-structured interviews, collateral information, and clinical and forensic assessment tools (e.g., NEO-PI-R; BPAQ).

3. Results and Discussion

The results show that suspects of domestic violence have moderate neuroticism ($M = 61.21$; $sd = 25.24$). In the aggression assessment, the results show that domestic violence suspects had a greater tendency for hostility ($M = 18.23$; $sd = 30.05$). Table 1 shows the correlations between the five-factor model (NEO-PI-R) and aggression (BPAQ). The results show us a positive correlation between neuroticism and hostility, a negative correlation between openness to experience and overall aggression, a negative correlation between agreeableness and physical aggression and anger, and a negative correlation between conscientiousness and anger.

Table 1. Relationship between personality and aggression.

	Neuroticism	Openness to Experience	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
Physical aggression	−0.318	−0.479	−0.611 **	−0.319
Anger	−0.138	−0.380	−0.624 **	−0.559 *
Hostility	0.601 *	−0.410	−0.129	−0.240
Total agression	0.019	−0.487 *	−0.570 *	−0.427

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Results are discussed in terms of why personality should be considered in assessments of domestic violence suspects, and for that purpose, it is necessary for future research to be conducted. These results show us the need for personality assessment in domestic violence suspects and the need for a reasonable articulation in Forensic Psychology and Law.

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