

## Comparison of aggression in married men and women

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### Abstract

**Objective:** To examine aggression in married men and women in comparison to each other.

**Method:** The comparative cross-sectional study was conducted from January to September 2017 in Jinnah, Lyallpur, Madina and Jaranwala towns of Faisalabad in the Punjab province of Pakistan, and comprised an equal number of married men and women. Data was collected using a demographic information form and the Aggression Questionnaire. SPSS 20 was used for data analysis.

**Results:** Of the 300 subjects, 150(50%) each were men and women. Among the men, 90(60%) and 110(73%) among the women were in the 31-40 years age bracket. The men showed significantly higher tendency towards physical aggression while verbal aggression was found more in women ( $p < 0.05$ ). The difference was non-significant with respect to anger and hostility ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** Married men were found to be more involved in physical aggression than married women. Conversely, married women were found to be more involved in verbal aggression than married men. Anger and hostility were traits common in both genders.

**Keywords:** Men, Women, Aggression, Anger, Hostility, Faisalabad. (JPMA 70: 1723; 2020)

**DOI:** <http://doi.org/10.47391/JPMA.11193>

### Introduction

Aggression is a behaviour that may harm, injure or hurt others.<sup>1</sup> Theorists have labelled aggression as disruptive behaviour.<sup>2</sup> Though in some situations aggression is expressed to protect self, it may damage self and others.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, it is deemed as the dark side of human personality.<sup>4</sup> A person with aggressive tendencies may verbally and physically assault another one.<sup>5</sup> Expression of aggression can also be seen in the form of physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility.<sup>6</sup> The severity of aggression varies among cultures<sup>7</sup> but the overall goal of aggression is to harm and injure others.<sup>8</sup>

Literature has described significant gender difference in aggression, such as boys are more aggressive compared to girls.<sup>9,10</sup> Men tend to express more physical violence,<sup>11</sup> whereas women tend to express more passive anger.<sup>12</sup> All over the world, men are found to be more aggressive than women.<sup>13</sup> However, some studies have found a non-significant gender difference in aggression.<sup>14,15</sup>

The current study was planned to explore the difference in aggression in married men and women, with the hypothesis that there would be a significant difference along gender lines.

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### Subjects and Methods

Having permission from the Ethical Review Committee of affiliated institution (Govt. College Women University Faisalabad), the comparative cross-sectional study was conducted from January to September 2017 in Jinnah, Lyallpur, Madina and Jaranwala towns of Faisalabad city in the Punjab province of Pakistan, and comprised an equal number of married men and women. The sample size was calculated using G-Power<sup>16</sup> with 0.95 statistical power and effect size 0.5. The sample was raised from the community using snowball sampling technique. Those included were married individuals aged 31-50 years, married for at least 3 years and living in a joint family system. Only one participant was recruited from one family.

Demographic information form (DIF) was used to collect demographic data, including age, educational level, marriage duration, family system, family size, children and residency.

Aggression was examined using the 29-item Aggression Questionnaire<sup>6</sup> which has four subscales: Physical aggression (9-items), Verbal aggression (5-items), Anger (7-items) and Hostility (8-items). All the items are scored on a 5-points scale, where 1 = extremely uncharacteristic of me, 2 = somewhat uncharacteristic of me, 3 = neither uncharacteristic nor characteristic of me, 4 = somewhat characteristic of me, and 5 = extremely characteristic of me.

The AQ is a valid and reliable tool with a reported internal consistency of 0.85 for physical aggression, 0.72 for verbal aggression, 0.83 for anger and 0.77 for hostility.<sup>6</sup> Test-retest reliability for the subscale of physical aggression is 0.81, verbal aggression 0.72, anger 0.88, hostility 0.57 and for total aggression it is 0.81.<sup>17</sup> Reliability of the Urdu version of physical aggression is 0.90, verbal aggression 0.65, anger 0.88, hostility 0.75 and for total aggression it is 0.92.<sup>18</sup>

The data was collected after taking informed consent during individual meetings with the participants at the place of their choice which was either office or home.

Data was analysed using SPSS 20. Shapiro-Wilk normality test was computed to examine the normal distribution of the obtained data. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise demographic information, whereas chi-square test was used to test the main hypothesis.

## Results

Of the 300 subjects, 150(50%) were men with a mean age of  $37.8 \pm 5.21$  years, and as many women with a mean age of  $36.6 \pm 4.55$  years. Among the men, 90(60%) and 110(73%) among the women were in the 31-40 years age bracket. Other demographic data was also noted (Table-1).

Normal distribution of AQ data was not found as the alpha value was  $<0.05$ , and the value of kurtosis was  $<1$  (Table-2).

Significant difference was found between married men and women in respect to physical aggression and verbal aggression (Table-3).

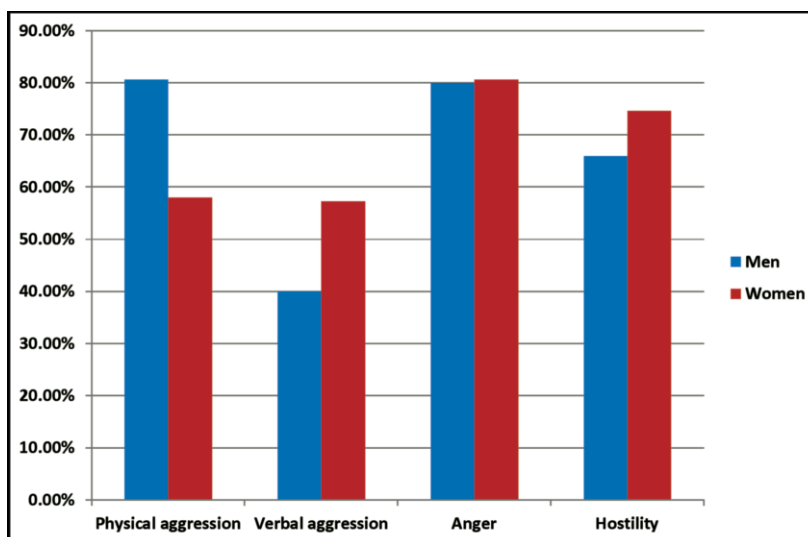


Figure: Prevalence of aggression in married men and women (N=300).

Table-1: Demographic characteristics (N=300).

Demographic characteristics	Married Men		Married Women	
	F	%	F	%
<b>Age (years)</b>				
31-40	90	60*	110	73 *
41-50	60	40	40	26
<b>Educational level</b>				
Matric	33	22	73	48.6 *
Intermediate	55	36.6*	33	22
Bachelor	42	28	21	14
Master	20	13	23	15.3
<b>Duration of marriage</b>				
3 years	86	57*	49	32.6
> 3 years	64	42	101	67.3*
<b>No of Children</b>				
1-4	133	88 *	130	86.6 *
5-8	17	11.3	20	13.3
<b>No. of Family members</b>				
10	77	51*	48	32
>10	73	48.6	102	68%

Table-2: Summary of Shapiro-Wilk normality test output.

Variables	Shapiro-Wilk Statistics	df	p-value
Aggression Questionnaire	0.982	300	0.001

Table-3: Summary of chi-square test output.

Variables	Men		Women		$\chi^2$
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Physical Aggression	121(80.6%)	29 (19.3%)	87(58%)	63(42%)	18.12
Verbal Aggression	60(40%)	90 (60%)	86(57.3%)	64(42.6%)	9.02
Anger	120(80%)	30(20%)	121(80.6%)	29(19.3%)	0.02
Hostility	99(66%)	51(34%)	112(74.6%)	38(25.5%)	2.70

The difference was non-significant between the groups in respect of anger and hostility.

The overall pattern and prevalence of aggression in both groups was noted (Figure).

## Discussions

Findings showed that married men expressed more physical aggression than married women, whereas married women expressed more verbal aggression than married men. Studies have also shown greater number of men reporting aggression<sup>19</sup> and physical aggression<sup>17,20</sup> than women, and verbal aggression has been reported higher in females<sup>21,22</sup> compared to the males.

Men express physical aggression to sustain their dominance and autonomy. Also, men are more self-oriented and use aggression as a way to have more social rewards.<sup>23</sup> Men value their power and status in a patriarchal society, and tend to be more physically aggressive than women who tend to avoid physical harm,<sup>24</sup> and use their verbal ability to express aggression while arguing and disagreeing.

Women, from the beginning, are confined to a certain set of activities and culturally learn to express aggression using indirect means. Conversely, men are more related to laborious and risk-taking activities and sometime need to be physically aggressive in order to do their duty successfully. Socially, they are accepted for using aggression as a way to release their tension and stress. But women receive criticism for their aggressive acts even when they are provoked to do so.<sup>25</sup>

Though a non-significant difference among married men and women was observed on the variable of hostility, the number of married women (74.6%) was greater than married men (66%) on that count. Hostility encompasses feelings of cynicism, mistrust and injustice.<sup>6</sup> Women, being more sensitive towards interpersonal relationships, instantly perceive negativism and curse their fate, especially encountering problems within in-laws' family and with husband as well.

In the present study, married men and women did not significantly differ in relation to anger. Previous studies also yielded that both men and women express anger, but women, owing to social constraints, hardly identify their emotions.<sup>26</sup> Notwithstanding, both married men and women equally express anger in their daily life as they face similar challenges, like managing family finances, children's education, family conflicts and so on.

One significant limitation of the present study is its sample selection procedure which was done using only social network and referrals that covered the population of only four towns of a single city. Snowball sampling in combination with respondent-driven sampling could have been more conducive, as it reduces sampling error and biasness. Randomisation can also reduce the sampling error to a great extent. Besides, the focus of the study was solely on the difference of aggression in married men and women rather than its causes, triggering factors and consequences. Considering these limitations, future studies are recommended to delve into causative factors besides looking for the impact on family and

children. In this regard, comparison of aggression is also required between married and unmarried people and between husbands and wives.

## Conclusion

Married men and women differed in expressing physical and verbal aggression towards external environment. Men appeared to be more physically aggressive than women, whereas women appeared to be more verbally aggressive than men. However, both more or less equally exhibited their anger and hostility as part of their daily routines.

**Disclaimer:** The text is based on an M. Phil thesis.

**Conflict of Interest:** None.

**Source of Funding:** None.

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