

The Role of Gender in Personality Disorders

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ABSTRACT

Personality is referred to the individualist characteristics of a person which differentiate him from others. The deviant reflections of these characteristics lead to personality disorders. The current study intended to measure gender-based differences in personality disorders. The sample included 332 participants (188 men and 144 women). Personality Diagnostic Questionnaire 4 (PDQ4) was used to gather data. The gender-based analysis revealed that women had significantly higher levels of paranoid personality disorder, schizotypal personality disorder and borderline personality disorder. Men, on the other hand, had significantly higher levels of dependent personality disorder.

INTRODUCTION

Personality disorder is as an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the individual's culture, is pervasive and inflexible, has an onset in adolescence or early adulthood, is stable over time, and leads to distress or impairment [1]. The four core features which are common to all personality disorders are distorted patterns of thinking, problem in emotional response, difficulty in impulse control, and chronic interpersonal problems [1]. Destroying a person's functional productivity, personality disorders lead to several negative consequences e.g. violent and criminal behavior during adolescence, anxiety and depression later in life, absence of long-term relationships and substance abuse, and impairment in social functioning and reduced wellbeing.

Based on the common symptomology, personality disorders are grouped into three clusters in DSM-V. Cluster A includes paranoid, schizoid, and schizotypal personality disorders, characterized by 'eccentric' behavior. Antisocial, borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic personality disorders are grouped in Cluster B, characterized by 'dramatic and impulsive' behavior. Lastly, Cluster C groups avoidant, dependent, and obsessive-compulsive personality disorders characterized by anxiety and fear.

The psychodynamic model has conceptualized personality disorders as manifestations of a primary disturbance in a person's experience of self [2]. The cognitive theory of personality disorders emphasizes the dysfunction of internalized schema of an individual i.e. an individual's guiding beliefs about oneself and the world [3]. The interpersonal perspective has conceptualized personality as a social product of interaction of an individual with other people [4]. Personality disorders originate in childhood and prevail in every aspect of an individual's life. The prevalence rate of

personality disorders has been reported to be different in different countries, e.g., 4.1% in China, 76% in the United States, and 30.2% in Europe [5]. The current study was aimed to measure the prevalence of personality disorders in Pakistan which is an under-developed country. The levels of mental health literacy are quite low in the country [6]. People still consider seeking psychological help as a taboo [7] and use localized ways to overcome psychological problems [8].

METHODS

Participants

The participants of the study were 332 conveniently selected adults, including men (n=188) and women (n=144). They were selected from different education institutions from Pakistan.

Instrument

The study administered Personality Diagnostic Questionnaire (PDQ-4). The PDQ-4 is a well-known and heavily reliable instrument to measure personality disorders. The authors [9] claim the instrument to be used by practitioners in over 25 countries and more than 100 articles are written on the instrument itself. It comprises of 99 true / false items measuring paranoid personality disorder, schizoid personality disorder, schizotypal personality disorder, histrionic personality disorder, narcissistic personality disorder, borderline personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, avoidant personality disorder, dependent personality disorder, obsessive compulsive personality disorder, negativistic personality disorder, and depressive personality disorder. Each disorder has a specific criterion for diagnosis based on the required symptoms necessary to diagnose e.g. the paranoid personality disorder needs minimum 4 symptoms to be present in the respondent out of 7 symptoms listed. A formal permission to use the scale was obtained from the authors.

PROCEDURE

The researcher approached the respondents in different educational institutes and public offices. Each participant was informed about the purpose of the study and the consent to participate was obtained. All the procedures performed in this study were in accordance with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments. The data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences and results were tabulated.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Means, standard deviations, and t-test were calculated.

Table 1: Comparison (t-test) between men and women for personality disorders.

Personality Disorders	Men (n=188)		Women (n=144)		t-value	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Personality Disorders Total	51.15	9.223	52.90	9.169	1.723	.086
Paranoid Personality Disorder	4.12	1.270	4.43	1.372	2.153	.032
Schizoid Personality Disorder	3.63	1.336	3.73	1.307	.656	.512
Schizotypal Personality Disorder	5.07	1.744	5.74	1.633	3.557	.000
Histrionic Personality Disorder	3.84	1.585	3.81	1.491	.132	.895
Narcissistic Personality Disorder	4.94	1.756	4.59	1.593	1.880	.061
Borderline Personality Disorder	4.26	1.973	4.73	1.635	2.306	.022
Antisocial Personality Disorder	3.64	2.438	3.33	1.906	1.267	.206
Avoidant Personality Disorder	4.61	1.854	4.94	1.652	1.663	.097
Dependent Personality Disorder	4.30	1.723	3.94	1.433	1.990	.047
Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder	4.60	1.417	3.79	1.532	.426	.670

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The gender-based analysis (Table 1) revealed that women had significantly higher levels of paranoid personality disorder (M=4.43 vs 4.12; p=.032); schizotypal personality disorder (M=5.74 vs 5.07; p=.000); and borderline personality disorder (M=4.73 vs 4.26; p=.022). Men, on the other hand, had significantly higher levels of dependent personality disorder (M=4.30 vs 3.94; p=.047). The earlier studies have revealed diversified findings for personality disorders based on gender. Women, in some of the studies, have been reported to have higher levels of paranoid personality disorder [10] and borderline personality disorder [11] which is in align with the findings of the current study. Dependent personality disorder also had mixed findings in the earlier studies. Some studies found it higher in men [12] and some in women [13]. An earlier study conducted in Pakistan [14] also found significant differences between men and women for personality disorders. These differences were also mixed

whereby women scored higher on paranoid personality disorder, avoidant personality disorder and dependent personality disorder. Men, on the other hand, were found to have higher levels of borderline personality disorder and narcissistic personality disorder [14]. The most interesting finding revealed by the current study was men having significantly higher levels of dependent personality disorder.

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