Chapter 6

Overview and Conclusion
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OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

Overview

Dating has become quite common in Indian society, and so has dating conflict and violence. The present study purported to investigate conflict within dating relationship among young adult students and the different types of conflict tactics used to resolve these conflicts of interest. Associations between conflict tactics and aggressiveness, gender role identity and love attitudes of the subjects were also studied. In addition to these, prediction of the conflict tactics from aggression, gender role identity and love attitude was also attempted.

The dependent variable of the study was Conflict Tactics, which included Reasoning, Psychological Aggression and Violence. The independent variables were 1) Aggression (Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger and Hostility), 2) Gender Role Identity (Masculinity and Femininity), and Love Attitude (Eros, Ludus, Storge, Pragma, Mania and Agape).

The control variables selected for the study were classified under five subheads. 1) Demographic variables consisted of age, locality, religion and language. 2) Health variables comprised of physical health and mental health. 3) Family variables included size and type of the family, internal structure of the family and number of siblings, their age and sex. 4) Economic and educational status included total income of the family, educational qualification of the students, father’s occupation and mother’s work status. 5) Relationship variables incorporated length of the dating relationship, frequency of meeting the partner, frequency of exclusively meeting the partner and involvement in the relationship.

Five scales and a detailed information schedule were administered for the measurement of the dependent, independent, and control variables. For the measurement of the dependent variable, that is, the different types of tactics used during a conflict situation, the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) by Straus (1979) was
used. For the measurement of the independent variables, a) Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) by Buss & Perry (1992) to assess overall aggression and the four individual components of aggression, b) a cultural adaptation of the Bern Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) originally constructed by Bern (1981) to gender role identity, and c) the short form of The Love Attitude Scale (LAS) by Hendrick et al. (1998) to assess love profile of the subjects.

For the assessment of the control variables the following devices were used – a) a detailed information schedule for collecting pertinent personal, familial and relationship information, and b) The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28) by Goldberg and Hiller (1979) adapted by Basu and Dasgupta (1996) to detect any physical and psychological commotion.

The sample was collected by stratified random sampling technique and following some general inclusion and exclusion criteria. The sample comprised of 414 (207 women and 207 men) undergraduate and postgraduate students currently involved in a serious dating relationship. The subjects were selected from 10 different colleges in Kolkata (India) and data were collected individually from every participant.

Three sets of five hypotheses were formulated for the study. In the first five hypotheses the dependent variable was Reasoning tactics. In the second five, the dependent variable was Psychological Aggression, and the last five hypotheses were concerned with Violence. In each of these three sets of hypotheses, the first hypothesis tested the effect of sex on the usage of the specific conflict tactic. The second hypothesis was concerned with the association of self and partner's usage of the specific conflict tactic. The next hypothesis assessed the relationship between the aggressiveness of the partner and their usage of the specific conflict tactic. The fourth hypothesis was concerned with the association of gender role identity of the subject and the usage of the specific conflict tactic. The last hypothesis in each section was concerned with the association of the different love attitudes exhibited by the subjects and the employment of the specific conflict tactic. From the main research hypotheses a number of statistical sub-hypotheses were formulated. It was decided that if significant associations were found between the independent and dependent variables.
then accordingly prediction of conflict tactics from all the independent variables, that is, aggression, gender role identity, and love attitude, taken together would be attempted.

The statistical computations were done under 3 subheads. For the Descriptive Statistics section, means, standard deviations, standard error of means and skewness of the three types of conflict tactics scores were calculated. These were computed for the Total sample (N=414) and for the Women sample (N=207) and Men sample (N=207) separately. The functions were computed separately for self and partner conflict scores.

Since the violence scores were found to be extremely skewed in nature, these scores were treated differently. Following the CTS Handbook, the violence scores were transformed into chronicity scores. Chronicity scores were obtained by considering the mean number of times the acts in the violence scale were reported by those who used at least one of the acts in the scale.

The second section consisted of verification of the hypotheses. To observe the effect of sex on usage of conflict tactics, independent t-test was done. Though no significant sex difference emerged from the t-test, it was still decided to analyze the data separately for the Women and the Men, and also for the Total sample. This was done because earlier studies have indicated a sex difference behind the rationale of using different conflict tactics in a conflict situation.

Association between self and partner’s usage of conflict tactics was tested by using Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient. Significant associations were found between the self and partner’s usage of reasoning tactics, psychological aggression and violence tactics. Pearson’s product moment correlation was also computed to determine the interrelationship between conflict tactics and aggression, gender role identity and love attitude. In several instances, significantly high correlation values between the dependent and the independent variables were obtained. Hence, prediction of the dependent variable from the independent variable was attempted.

In the third section the predictability of the Reasoning tactics and Psychological Aggression was investigated by Forward Stepwise Regression
Analysis. To deal with the extremely skewed violence distribution, the violence scores were dichotomized (violence=1, and non violence score=0), and Forward Conditional Logistic Regression was used.

**Conclusions**

From the statistical analyses, the following conclusions could be drawn.

1. The following conclusions were drawn for the *Reasoning* tactics.
   (i) No significant sex difference was observed in case of self and partner scores of Reasoning tactics.
   (ii) High association was found between the self and partner’s usage of Reasoning tactics.
   (iii) Reasoning (self) was correlated negatively with Physical Aggression and Mania for the Women sample.
   (iv) Reasoning (partner) was correlated negatively with LAS-Storge for the Total sample. It was correlated negatively with Physical Aggression for Women sample.

   Since high AQ score stands for less aggression, the negative correlation values actually indicate that high Reasoning and High Physical aggression in personality go together. Similarly, high LAS score stands for absence of the specific love style (for example, Mania and Storge in this case), and negative correlation means a positive association between the Reasoning and the specific Love style.

   (v) Reasoning used by the Women-self could be predicted from Mania and Physical Aggression. Percentage of the total variance explained by these two independent variables taken together was 3.9%.

   (vi) In case of Reasoning used by the partner of the Total sample, the only predictor variable was Storge. The percentage of variance explained was 1.1%. For Reasoning used by the Women (partner), the predictor variable was Physical Aggression only and the percentage of variance explained was 1.6%. Reasoning for men could not be predicted.
2. The following conclusions were drawn for Psychological Aggression.

(i) No significant sex difference was observed in case of self and partner scores of Psychological Aggression.

(ii) The association between self and partner’s usage of Psychological Aggression was quite high.

(iii) Psychological Aggression (self) was correlated negatively with Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger, Hostility, Masculinity, Femininity and Mania, and was positively correlated with Pragma for the Total sample. For the Women sample, Psychological Aggression (self) was correlated negatively with Total Aggression, Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger, Hostility, Masculinity, Femininity and Mania. For the Men sample, Psychological Aggression (self) was negatively correlated with Total Aggression, Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger, Hostility, Masculinity, Femininity and Mania. Apart from that, Psychological Aggression (self) was positively correlated with high scores of Storge.

Since high AQ score stands for less aggression, the negative correlation values actually indicates that high Psychological Aggression as a conflict tactic and high Aggression in personality go together. Similarly, high LAS score stands for absence of the specific love style, and negative correlation means a positive association between the specific Love style variable and Reasoning. However, for the Femininity and Masculinity variables, high score indicates presence of the variables to a higher degree, and the direction of correlation coefficients can be interpreted directly.

(iv) Psychological Aggression (partner) was negatively correlated with Total Aggression, Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger, Hostility, Masculinity, Femininity and Mania, and positively correlated with Pragma for the Total sample. For the Women sample, Psychological Aggression (partner) was negatively correlated with Total Aggression, Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger, Hostility, Masculinity, Ludus and Mania, and positively with Storge. For the Men sample also, Psychological Aggression (partner) was correlated negatively with Total Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger, Hostility, Masculinity, Femininity and Mania.

As mentioned earlier, a high AQ or LAS score stands for less aggression or love attitude respectively, and hence, the direction of the correlation values actually
indicates an opposite direction of association. For the Gender Role Identity variables, the same direction is applicable for interpretation.

(v) Psychological Aggression of the Total (self) sample could be predicted from Anger, Masculinity, Verbal Aggression, Mania and Pragma. The percentage of variance explained by all the five independent variables taken together was 15.1%. For Women (self), the predictor variables were Anger, Masculinity and Physical Aggression, and the percentage of variance explained was 13%. In case of Men (self), Psychological Aggression could be predicted from Anger, Femininity and Mania, and percentage of variance explained were 14.9%.

(vi) Psychological Aggression used by the Total (partner) sample could be predicted from Hostility, Mania, Femininity and Agape. The percentage of variance explained by these four independent variables taken together is 13%. In case of Psychological Aggression used by the partner of the Women sample, the predictor variables were Hostility, Mania, Pragma and Physical Aggression. The variance explained was 21.9%. In case of Men (partner), Psychological Aggression could be predicted from Verbal Aggression, Mania, and Femininity. The total variance explained by all the 3 independent variables was 8.9%.

3. The following conclusions were drawn for Violence.

(i) No significant sex difference was observed in case of self-scores of Violence tactics. But in case of partner scores, there was significant sex difference. Compared to the Women sample, the Men sample reported that their partners had used considerably more violence against them.

(ii) High association was found between the self and partner’s usage of Violence tactics.

(iii) For both Total sample and Women sample, Violence (self) score was correlated negatively with Physical Aggression. For the Men sample, none of the correlation values were significant.

(iv) In case of Total sample, Violence (partner) score was correlated negatively with low scores of Physical Aggression, Ludus, and Storge, and positively with
Masculinity. Violence (partner) score was correlated positively with Anger scores in case of the Women sample.

Since high AQ score stands for less aggression, and high LAS score stands for absence of the specific love style, the direction of correlation values actually indicates an opposite direction of association. For the Gender Role Identity variables, the same direction is applicable for interpretation.

(v) The Logistic Regression analysis showed the extent to which Violence could be predicted from the independent variables. It should be noted that the $R^2$ in Logistic Regression suggests a different meaning compared to “percentage of variance” obtained from ordinary regression. It is more of an index of the strength of relationship and hence should be treated as such.

Violence used by the Total (self) sample could be predicted from Physical Aggression, Mania and Agape. The percentage of correct prediction was 73.9%. For Women (self), the only predictor variable for Violence was Physical Aggression. The percentage of correct prediction was 68.6%. For Men (self), the predictor variables were Femininity, Physical Aggression, Eros and Agape. The percentage of correct prediction was 77.3%.

(vi) Violence used by the Total (partner) could be predicted from Masculinity, Physical Aggression and Mania. The percentage of correct prediction was 74.9%. In case of Women sample, violence used by their partners was predicted from Physical Aggression, Hostility, Storge and Mania. The percentage of correct prediction was 74.4%. The only predictor variable for Violence used by Men (partner) was Mania. The percentage of correct prediction was 80.7%.
Limitations of the Study

The study suffers from the following limitations:

1. The present research sample was not large enough (N=414) and involved only middle-class college students from Kolkata. Considering the diversity of the Indian culture, inclusion of individuals from other metropolis inclusion of individuals from other metropolis and socio-economic background of India might have yielded a different pattern of relationships. An indication of this has been found in Straus (2004), where a survey of dating violence was conducted on college students from Pune (India), which has a distinctly different social and cultural pattern compared to Kolkata. In this western city of India, a significant sex difference was reported in the usage of violence (Straus, 2004), whereas in the present study, no sex difference was reported in case of individual's usage of violence. Hence, considering individuals from different socio-cultural background would have enriched the methodology and enhanced the meaningfulness of the findings. Also, the number of subjects is slightly lower than what is usually recommended for using Stepwise Multiple Regression, thus enhancing the chance of inflated value.

2. The age range of the subjects in the present study was 18 to 25 yrs. Since in many cases dating starts in early adolescence, and extends more than 25 yrs of age, a larger age range might have uncovered important information to the study. Partitioning the age into smaller groups like 15 to 18 yrs, 18 to 21 yrs, 21 to 24 yrs, etc, would have also enhanced the methodology, since age has a significant effect on usage of conflict tactics (Fiebert & Gonzales, 1997).

3. The 'length of the relationship' should also have been partitioned into smaller groups, like 1 to 2 yrs., 2 to 4 yrs, etc. Since the relationship quality changes with years of acquaintance, resolution of conflict is also expected to change with the length of the relationship.

4. The present study relied on the response from only one member of the couples. Especially, in case of the CTS scores, the individual was asked to rate themselves and also their partners, which is actually their own perception of their partner's action. Obtaining the response directly from both the partners, and also considering the
partner’s aggressiveness, their gender role identity and their love attitude, would have helped in a better understanding of the relationship between the variables.

5. In the present study, only the number of times different conflict resolving strategies used was considered. It would have been better if it was noted who initiated the various resolving tactics, and whether the specific tactics was in response to what the partner had used.

6. The situational causes behind the conflicts and the usage of Psychological Aggression and Violence were not taken into account. Considering the causes would have helped in a clearer understanding of the dynamics of using Psychological Aggression and Violence in different situations.

7. In the present study, Lee’s (1976) six love styles, which were mostly based on the western culture, were used as independent variables. But Hendrick & Hendrick (1986) indicated that there is a possibility that more than six love styles are relatively dominant in different cultures.

8. The satisfaction level of the subjects was judged by a single question in the Information Schedule. Instead, separate questionnaire measuring the relationship satisfaction would have brought clearer results.

9. All the measures used were self-report inventories. The possibility of faking and response biases is ingrained in such measures. Moreover, use of fixed response category may force respondents to deal with concepts that are alien to their thinking and lack personal meaning (Straus, 1990). These errors could have been taken care of by the use of supplementary tools, projective tests, qualitative measures, detailed interview or external criteria. These were not resorted to in the present study owing to shortage of time.

10. The study design was correlational in nature and the findings suffer from the usual limitations of such designs, including the uncertainty about causation.

11. The use of Stepwise Multiple Regression for prediction has certain inherent problems. The results are not generalizable with confidence, as the use of this statistic entails chance of Type I error. However, Stepwise Regression Analysis was used despite this limitation as it could provide an idea about the most significant predictor variables. Caution is needed to interpret and use the findings. It is probably best to
consider the results as indicator of probable significant factors of conflict tactics and need to be verified in detail in later research.

**Achievements of the Study**

1. The most important achievement of the present study was that this is the first in-depth scientific research on dating conflict and violence in Kolkata, or for that matter, in the eastern zone of India. Previously, the only documented research work on dating violence in India was published by Straus (2004) which was a survey report on the dating violence used by college students in Pune (India) which is a city in the western zone. The survey conducted by Straus (2004), on the college students of Pune was only a small part of the International Dating Violence Study, which considered 16 countries and 31 universities.

2. The present study brought to notice that incidence of violence in dating relationships does occur in our society. In the past few years quite a few incidents of severe violence and murder attempts among dating young couples have been reported in the local newspapers. But dating violence never was considered as a serious threat in our society and hence was never explored.

3. Although many studies in West have studied dating conflict, most of them have dealt with Violence and Psychological Aggression. Very few researchers studied the usage of Reasoning tactics used during dating conflict. In the present study Reasoning, along with Psychological Aggression and Violence was measured as conflict resolving tactics.

4. Personality variables like general aggressiveness of the subject, their gender role identity and love attitude were studied to see their effect on dating conflict tactics. Previously very few studies, had taken into account all these variables together while studying dating conflict.
Overview and Conclusion

5. Dating is relatively new in our society. Hence, the present study is a part of the general exploration of the effect of western culture on our traditional Indian culture.

Application of the Study

1. Clinical Applications:

1(a) Conflict management among romantic partners
Conflicts do occur among dating couples, resulting in psychological distress and, at times, physical injury. Studies have reported that dating conflict and subsequent break-ups create stress among young adults. Conflict in dating relationships, experiences of psychological and physical abuse and romantic break-ups can cause severe depression and can even lead to suicide attempts (Brendt et al., 1993; Fessenden, 2000; Joyner & Udry, 2000; Monroe et al., 1999).

The clinical psychologist is in a position to help such individuals in distress owing to intimate conflict (i) to understand the inevitability of dating conflict to a certain extent, (ii) to recognize when the conflict is exceeding the boundary of normalcy, (iii) to understand the meaning of constructive vs. destructive conflict, (iv) to teach the dating couple about the interpersonal and intrapersonal genesis of conflict, and (v) to promote changes toward constructive conflict management.

1(b) Premarital counseling
Various studies (Stets & Pirog-Good, 1987) have pointed out that violence in dating is a precursor for violence in marriage. A number of authors (Erikson, 1968; Furman & Flanagan, 1997; Sullivan, 1953) have suggested that experiences of early romantic relationships may influence the nature of subsequent close relationships, including marriages. In many cases battered women report that they were first assaulted by their husband during courtship (Kelley & Loesch, 1993; Roscoe & Benaske, 1985). Therefore, it can be said that dating violence is often a precursor of spousal abuse.
Hence patterns that have been observed among the married couples can be understood by examining violence among dating couples.

It is possible to apply the findings regarding the role of personality and relationship variables to have an educated guess about the degree and nature of future conflict, and to counsel the premarital dyad accordingly. The clinical psychologist can also prepare a primary and secondary intervention program to romantic partners planning marriage based on the findings of the present study.

2. Social Application:

Since dating, as an accepted interpersonal interaction, is a relatively new mode of relationship in our country, the youngsters themselves, their family members, as well as the college authorities are often in confusion about the moral sanction and social and personal consequences of such intimate heterosexual relationship. The problems are of two types. On the one hand, the partners and the family members may suffer from undue anxieties centered around issues of family honor, betrayal, psychological and physical abuse, marital prospect etc. Paucity of scientific knowledge as to the prevalence of dating adds to the anxieties. On the other hand, many rebellious youths consider dating as a mode of defiance against the family and institution and fall in undesirable conditions by rash and unscrupulous commitment.

The present study provides a body of knowledge about the nature and dynamics of dating and clarifies different aspects and factors of the relationship. Thus, it may serve as a source of scientific understanding for the family as well as for the social workers. Since it was conducted on college and University students, the findings can be utilized by the institutional authorities for formulating proper attitude toward the spontaneous romantic involvement of the students.

3. Administrative and Legal Applications:

At times, violence and abuse surpasses any limit of normal conflict. In a recent incidence in Kolkata (reported in Anandabazar Patrika, January 10, 2004), a 16-year
old girl was attacked with a knife by her boyfriend and was seriously injured. Later the reason found out for this attack was clearly conflict in their relationship. In another incident (reported in Hindustan Times, January 22, 2003), a 22-year old college student was murdered with an ax by her boyfriend. While dealing with such incidents from an administrative, forensic and legal perspective, the psychological status of the couples involved become a crucial factor. The present study is a pioneering one in India to suggest the role of certain significant psychological variables in this respect.

**Guidelines for Further Research**

1. The generalizability of the current finding is somewhat restricted as it dealt with Bengali middleclass college students residing in urban Kolkata only. Exploration of the sample to include other social and cultural contexts would give it a broader perspective.

2. The present study deals with college dating couples between ages 18 to 25yrs. It would be worthwhile to explore other age groups, for example, adolescent dating couples (age 15 to 18yrs.) or dating couples who are no more students (above 25yrs), to see whether relationship pattern varies across age groups or not.

3. Considering the ‘length of the relationship’ as an independent variable or partitioning the length of the acquaintance into smaller sections (like, 1 to 2 yrs., 2 to 4yrs., etc.) may bring about interesting results.

4. The present study depended entirely on self-report inventories. Even if the possibility of direct distortion is refuted, there still remains the fact that there is a gap between reality and perception of the individual. Especially in case of variables like conflict tactics used, there may be an incongruity between actual behavior and that of reported behavior.

5. Considering both the partners in a dating couple regarding the usage of conflict tactics would give a clearer picture.
6. Along with reports of usage of violence, it would have been better to ask the subjects who initiated the acts of violence and whether any of those were in self-defense.

7. From the present study it was apparent that tradition and culture played a major role in the choice of various tactics in the resolution of dating conflict. But more in-depth investigation of how culture influenced the behavior of the young adults should be done.

8. The non-clinical subjects were studied in the present research. It needs to be verified that whether psychopathology of one or both the partners influences relationship otherwise.

9. Personality and socio-demographic variables other than those considered in the present study might be significant.

10. Last, but not the least, the present study has significant practical implications, especially in the field of premarital counseling. It needs to be examined, with well-designed action research programs, whether the findings can really be utilized for clinical and social application.