

# ***How Early Experiences Affect Personality and Performance in Intimate Relationships***

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**Abstract:** There are five parts of the paper. Introduction gives a rough idea of what will be covered and what it all relates to and summarizes it. The second part is the relationship between early experiences and character formation, stating in segments that if a child is not well protected and treated in childhood, he or she may face many problems in future life in terms of psychological or social functioning, as well as describing how this can be a trigger for many illnesses. The third section talks about the link between personality traits and intimate relationships, such as the fact that more responsible partners can maintain longer marital relationships and feel happier. The fourth section describes the relationship between personality and violence, focusing on IPV and domestic violence. As mentioned in the second section, some people with personality disorders are violent to some degree and are used to solving problems with violence. The last conclusion is the thoughts that have been provoked by so many articles and research.

**Keywords:** Intimate relationship, violence, personality

## **1. Introduction**

Personality can determine how a person behaves in different situations, and early experiences have a strong influence on personality development. Research has shown that infants and children acquire social skills and the ability to regulate their emotions by bonding with others, enabling them to get along easily with peers or take on challenges [1]. If the family cannot maintain emotional stability, create a safe and comfortable environment to the child, and provide comfort in time or assistance to the child, there is a big possibility of lacking these skills, also it influences people on releasing stress or not focus on it [1]. There is a risk of various physical health problems, and if a child grows up in an unhealthy family relationship with abusive or neglectful parents, this can lead to or exacerbate personality and emotional deficits [1].

People usually define intimate relationship as couples, or relationships with sex, but it could also be the relationship between family or friends [2]. Extroverts are easier to take the initiative to make friends than introverts, also people who are more open can connect with people of different races or strong personalities easier [3]. Similarly, in an intimate relationship, couples who are more willing to express and proactively solve problems are more satisfied with the marriages and can last for a longer time [4]. In recent years, the divorce rate in Iran has risen considerably, and studies have shown that the personality traits of couples are one of the influencing factors, such as couples who are more responsible are more likely to stay married longer [4].

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a global problem that happens continually. The results show that women tend to be victimized when suffering from violence, lack of social support and fear for their own lives during the childhood, and the consequences include physical and psychological after-effects that last a lifetime and even make the victim vulnerable to remaining in an abusive relationship [5]. However, some men victims suffer physical abuse due to a lack of ability to assess their own risk of being harmed, and have stereotypes of men that trying to make excuses for their partners [6]. Even with a clear record of victimization, men are less likely than women to seek help from IPV [6]. Women who experienced IPV scored higher on some measures of mental illness, such as schizophrenia and paranoid personality [5]. Similarly, a research that did in Spain showed that some of aggressors had at least one personality disorder [7].

The aim of this study is to understand: 1. influence of early experiences on personality; 2. the relationship between personality and violence; 3. Personality and intimate relationships. This study focuses on understanding and integrating the research and search, as well as the results of theoretical learning.

## **2. Influence of Early Experience on Personality**

Early life experiences are key to the formation of a person's character, affecting future perceptions of various situations in life and how to solve problems. If an adult could think calmly and carefully when facing with stress or challenges, it is highly likely that it lived in an environment with a certain economic status and stable parental jobs during the childhood [8]. There is a study shows that people who abuse alcohol are also influenced by the early environment and the personality. People who lacked parental care, especially the mother's, during their childhood, are more prone to full of anxiety and stress than the peers when entering the society or going to work, but anxiety and fear are one of the major factors in abusing alcohol [9].

Otherwise, early experience not only affects a person's personality and how to face life, it is also a predisposing factor for some diseases, such as Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and depression. Borderline personality disorder can be understood as seeking protection next to a specific individual when negative emotions such as feeling fearful or insecure come [10]. Recent research and observations in psychiatric clinics have shown that repeated witnessing of domestic violence in childhood, experienced domestic violence, and early experiences of separation are all predisposing factors and typical features of BPD [11]. The possibility exists to parents of people with borderline personality disorder also suffer from BPD, so they are unable to meet their children's needs in a timely manner, provide a safe and supportive environment for them to grow up, and are insensitive to their children's emotions. As a result, these neglected experiences or traumas have the potential to pathologize some personality traits. For example, a shy child who does not feel support and attention from the family may not have the courage to change the behavior when establishing relationships, they remain silent and unwilling to accept others, and not make changes or even become more severe as growing older, then will ultimately meet the diagnostic criteria for borderline personality disorder [10]. Some patients believe that their family cohesion is poor, but it is also true that families who have experienced abuse demonstrate more conflict and less expression among family members [11].

Families of depressed individuals can be divided into two categories, neglectful and overly concerned. Apart from the predisposing factors due to genetically inherited problems, the main causes of depression are centered on the family and relationship between parents and the child. Similar to BPD that not getting support and understanding from parents can easily end some good changes [12], such as trying to make new friends. If a child often lacks the care and encouragement of the family, there is a great likelihood that the child will feel inferior or uncomfortable when interacting and socializing in a public place, thinking excessively and caring about what other people think, even if no one notices at all, such as in schools and hospitals. If a child is over-controlled and over-attended

by the family, there may be a controlling mother or strict father in the family, so that he or she is unable to have an independent and private social life, is unable to be free, and feels pain that cannot resolve or get rid of. These somewhat extreme feelings from the family are not normal, but many young children do not realize these problems, and even if they feel pain, they will only change themselves, so that after a long period of repression, these emotions do not bring positive feedback gradually but turn into bad physical reactions, or morbidly negative thoughts.

Early experiences are like the foundation of a house. If it always undergoes fluctuations and is not treated well, the impact of adulthood is like a skyscraper built with this foundation, whether it is reliable and strong enough or not can be seen just by experiencing a big challenge. For example, a sustained heavy rainstorm can break the house [13]. As a result, most of the problems or social dysfunctions faced in life as one progresses into adulthood because that the full of unfavorable emotions continue to develop in childhood are not attended to and released in a timely manner. Whether it is good or bad to eradicate these things that have been following for a long time and have taken root is not certain, and there is no shortage of people who feel attached to them even though they are in pain. Therefore, the most important thing is to pay constant attention to the child's state, emotional changes, and needs from childhood, after all, the early years of life are the main aspect of shaping a person's character [13].

### 3. The Relationship Between Personality and Violence

There are studies that prove some the connection between violence and personality disorders or mental disorders, such as schizophrenia [14]. It was found that co-morbidity between antisocial and borderline personalities was prevalent in the sample, and that women accounted for up to 80% of the severe and damaging personality disorders [14]. Although the types of violence can be categorized into two, impulsive and controlled or premeditated, the purpose is the same, to satisfy one's own selfish desires or to solve one's own problems if others are in pain, and the results show that most men commit violence for the sake of excitement, but women do it for the sake of revenge or retribution [14].

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a global problem that primarily targets women, and there are many examples of IPV around almost everyone's life. It involves physical abuse and psychological control, and the damage caused to the victim is irreversible that even affects normal communication and life [7]. However, a series of experimental studies have shown that the damage caused by professional abusers is not as great as people usually thought, and the damage caused by ordinary abusers even is greater. Some explained that people can consider that professional abusers have a specific goal, and the violence ends when this goal is achieved. In the case of ordinary abusers, however, the violence mainly happens because of the emotional outbursts or sudden impulses, so the exact outcome is beyond their control [7]. Becoming an abuser is due in part to personality disorders and negative childhood experiences. Professional abusers have higher scores on obsessive-compulsive disorder and general batterers have higher scores on borderline personality, but professional abusers are less dependent on medication and therapy. This also means that general abusers with a higher predisposition to mental illness are prone to exhibit paranoia, narcissism, and other unrecognizable aberrant behaviors, which can lead to irreversible violence [7].

Most studies prove that abusers often have one or more mental disorders. However, due to the lack of financial assistance and social support, the victims are not well protected and cannot fully escape from the distressing situation, and some of them will suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a self-critical personal style afterwards. However, due to the lack of protection after the fact or still having illusions about the abuser, all these can aggravate the intensity of PTSD symptoms. And while children who have witnessed domestic violence are easier to suffer from mental illness or

personality disorders, growing up in such a family and being disciplined by mentally unstable parents is difficult to avoid entirely. This goes on a vicious cycle [5].

In addition to IPV, there's school violence, workplace bullying, and emotional abuse happening all around everyone, and it's possible to get caught up in it if you're not careful. Violence can cross national boundaries and cultural boundaries and is a problem that everyone can experience [5]. Often the abuser will have some physical or mental handicap, and it is possible that it is also just a small problem, but none of it has been properly attended to and addressed, piling up into a situation that cannot be reversed. Victims need to seek help in time and find a way to get themselves out of the situation, without any illusions or reliance on the abuser, as this can be a weapon to harm themselves. Of course, it is important to focus on issues that may go unnoticed such as the victim's mental health and personality changes, as these changes affect more than just a moment.

#### 4. Personality and Intimate Relationship

Intimate relationship is not only of sexual relationship, but also about friends and family [2], but this paper will focus on the couples. Through the research, it can be found that neuroticism has a significant impact on marital satisfaction because neuroticism can cause relationships and events to be distorted or to overreact when negative situations come. In addition to this, people who are unwilling to initiate problems or are uncooperative when confronted with them have a big possibility that the marriages end in failure. A prime example of this is someone with an avoidant personality, such people are unable to fully seek social support from their partner, and by the same token, are unable to give their partner the support by needs. This makes it impossible to work through the difficulties in the marriage, and resentment towards each other gets piled up and eventually explodes towards divorce [15]. What's more, when a person feels useless or no needed in a relationship, irritability can set in, or be self-contemptuous, and it manifests itself differently for each person. However, the same is that if this seemingly small problem is not solved in time, the marriage can quickly come to the end, because one's own disposability in a relationship is also accompanied by hostility towards the partner, and the two are closely related [15].

A person's personality can determine how they will behave in a relationship and the way they express themselves. People who are responsible, good communicators more open to new things will have more satisfying marriages, but neuroticism is the most crucial point. An experiment showed that the most neurotic group of couples had a marital satisfaction rate of only 0.26 [16]. People with neurotic tendencies tend to be more critical, scornful, and defensive of others than they are complimentary, encouraging and accepting. This behavior can hurt a relationship, but it can also be used to improve intimacy with one another; it's all about how it's done [16]. The reason for caring about a relationship, especially romantic The reason for this satisfaction is because a happy, long-lasting relationship can make people look younger, be healthier, and live longer [17]. A lot of times when choosing a person to talk to one will go for someone who seems amiable because it will be easier to communicate with this type of person, but studies have also proved that amiable people will be more inclined to maintain a positive relationship with others and will be willing to further contribute to a close relationship [17].

#### 5. Conclusion

One common point that can be accessed through different articles but all of them is that a person's character is the most important point that shapes that person. Personal traits can determine a person's style of doing things, the way they speak, their attitude when facing difficulties, how they solve problems, whether they are responsible, whether they are easy to communicate with, and whether they are a good companion or friend. The early childhood experiences play a crucial role in the

formation of character. If you don't get enough support from your parents to feel secure in your childhood, it's easy to grow up feeling shy or not having the courage to take the initiative to start something. Conversely, if one grows up in a healthy environment where needs and emotions are attended to in a timely manner, it is a completely different style of behavior. Different personalities determine the way to solve problems, and children raised by radical parents may not be able to think calmly and seriously when facing with problems and may choose to use inappropriate or even extreme methods, as the parents. It can be thought as planting a seed of violence, so many studies have shown that most abusers have personality disorders or mental illnesses, some are more serious and some are less serious, but if they go down the road of violence, it will basically only aggravate their condition, because the thrill of seeking excitement or appreciating other people's pain as a way to solve the problem is going to make them addicted to it.

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