### PERSONALITY CORRELATES OF FEMALE AGGRESSION

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Abstract: The present study investigated the relationship between personality and aggression among females. The sample comprised 200 adolescent Indian females aged 13-15 years from H.P. The results show that there are some personality traits such as group dependency, low intelligence, excitability and impatience that contribute to physical, verbal and indirect aggression among females. Collectively, these personality traits accounted for 24% of the variance in female aggression. The findings were measured through stepwise regression analysis.

Key words: personality traits, group dependency, low intelligence, impulsively lively, impatience, physical aggression, verbal aggression, indirect aggression

#### INTRODUCTION

The whole world seems to be under the strain of aggressive acts of various kinds. The development of aggression is regarded as a topic of major importance, since aggression has always been an important concern of mankind. These days aggressive behavior has become a topic of vital importance and a major concern in most societies.

Various thinkers have defined aggression differently. Aggressive behavior ranges from various forms of physical violence to malicious gossip, and has in common the desire to injure or harm another person.

It has often been suggested that males are more aggressive than females and that the types of aggressive behavior displayed by the two genders differ as well.

The aggressive and by implication masculine qualities inherent in a capacity for mastering intellectual problems, attacking difficulties and making final decisions are considered fundamentally antagonistic to or incompatible with femininity.

The traditional female sex-role in our culture is that of wife and mother. She is supposed to be affectionate, sympathetic, understanding, compassionate, soft-spoken, warm, tender, etc.

Results of certain other studies have shown that the traits associated with masculine personality are independence, assertiveness, aggression-power-smartness, rationality, stability and intelligence, while feminine personality is associated with traits like elegance, attractiveness, sociability, warmth, submissiveness and peacefulness (Sharma, 1979).

Females show a lesser impulse to aggression than boys and come sooner into conformity with an environment at variance with their inclinations. This could be regarded as a need of their native constitution and a degree of precocity in socialized behavior (i.e., behavior in conformity with the social environment, Bhan, 1984).

Reviews of sex differences with respect to aggression usually agree on the fact that

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males of all age groups make more use of physical aggression than do females (Bjorkqvist, Niemela, 1992; Eagly, Steffen, 1986).

Eagly and Steffen's (1986) meta-analysis illustrated the importance of personal gender-related belief in expressing aggression. It was found that females were significantly less physically aggressive than males when they felt that they would bring harm to the victim, or themselves, or anticipated feelings of guilt or anxiety, thereby showing that personal gender-related belief can have a significant effect on the extent to which aggression is expressed. It was observed that men were somewhat more aggressive than females, although the sex difference in the male direction was greater for physical than for psychological aggression.

In a textbook by Moghaddam et al. (1993) on cross-cultural social psychology, the authors discuss what they perceive as an "almost universal tendency" for males to be more aggressive than females.

In a study on cultural and sex differences in aggression, Ramirez et al. (2001) found that in both Japanese and Spanish cultures, males reported more physical aggression, verbal aggression, and hostility as well as higher instrumental beliefs, whereas females reported more expressive representation than males.

A study conducted by Khatri and Kupersmidt (2003) on aggression, peer victimization, and social relationships among Indian youth observed gender differences in that males were more likely to be aggressors (physical and verbal) or victims than females.

Gender differences in subtypes of aggression may be apparent as early as at 3 years of age. In a study by Ostrov et al. (2004), findings revealed that females were found to commit and suffer more relational ag-

gression than males, whereas boys tended, although not significantly, to commit and significantly suffered more physical aggression than females.

In their study, Tapper and Boulton (2004) found a higher level of observed physical aggression amongst boys compared with females.

In a study by Selah-Shayavits (2004), beside physical aggression, results showed males to be verbally more aggressive than females.

Underwood et al. (2004), conducted a study to investigate social exclusion. 146 dyads of close friends (n = 292, ages 10, 12 and 14) were observed as they played a board game with a same gender confederate actor, trained to be a difficult play partner. Verbalizations and gestures were coded for verbal and non-verbal social exclusion, verbal aggression, and verbal assertion. The results indicated few developmental differences. For verbal responses in the presence of the actor, boys were more socially exclusive and verbally aggressive than were females.

Female aggression is much less investigated than its male counterpart. Two possible reasons for this situation are: 1) the phenomenon itself (male aggression, being typically [or stereotypically] physical, is easier to discern and therefore a more obvious object of study); and 2) factors concerning the researchers (the majority being males, they may, for personal reasons, find male aggression easier to understand and a more appealing object of study). Frodi, Macaulay, and Thome (1977), in their careful review of gender differences in regard to aggression, commented that of 314 experimental studies conducted in the period 1967-1974, 54% concerned men only, while in comparison, they could find only 8% of experiments describing aggression in which only females took part. This fact is certainly revealing and the trend of researches has underplayed the females.

Eventhough society does not expect females to be aggressive, they are not free from aggressive behavior either. Rather than showing direct aggression, most of the females opt for some other, subtler forms of aggression that they do not consider to be against their femininity.

The psychodynamics of aggression in females also stems from similar etiological factors (Rana, 2003). Since it is underplayed, it would accordingly be reasonable to explore the factors contributing to various forms of aggression.

The fact that in India sex differences appear to be greater in aggression compared with those in the west may reflect differences in cultural norms and status between the sexes.

With regard to aggressive behavior, the role of culture deserves more attention because what is considered to be aggressive in one particular culture or ethnic group may not be so in another. Culture is a label for all the many different features that vary from society to society and that comprise the independent variables (Segall, 1984) that psychologists must use in their research on human behavior. Therefore, the discipline of psychology must be cross-cultural.

Anthropologists have learned that human behavior - including aggression and altruism - varies tremendously from culture to culture. Some peoples are warlike, and others are peaceable. Some are cooperative, and others individualistic (Fiske, 1991). For example, members of different cultures respond very differently to an insult or provocation. In western societies most people feel angry and want to strike back (Carlson, Miller, 1988). However, in many Asian cultures, like those of Japan or

China, people prefer to withdraw or conform to the other's wishes in order to avoid conflict (Triandis et al., 1988).

Japanese social norms also dictate that it is often better to yield than fight, as reflected in the expression *Makeru ga kachi* "to lose is to win" (Alcock et al., 1988; Triandis et al., 1988).

Norms that promote aggression sometimes infect entire societies. In 1987, the United States suffered one of the highest homicide rates in the world for young men between the ages of 15 and 24: 22 per 100,000 (Howard, 1990). Among twentyone industrial nations, no other country had a rate even one-fourth as high as that. Israel's rate was 3.7, despite ongoing armed conflict in that country, and Japan and the major nations of Western Europe have rates below 1.5 per 100,000 young men. Several prevalent norms in mainstream U.S. culture promote aggression (Smith, Mackie, 1995).

Many cross-cultural studies have emphasized cultural differences in aggression (McDavid, Harari, 1994). Aggression is seated within a culture: it is learned in the same way a language is learned. Farver and her colleagues found that Korean-American children, whose culture emphasizes a relational mode characterized by group interdependence and sensitivity to others, responded in a cooperative fashion to peer's play initiations and were nonconfrontational in their dyadic play. They avoided using communicative strategies that required them to direct another child's behavior, to set and enforce rules, or to decide roles or scripts. Anglo-American children, on the other hand, whose culture emphasizes an aggregate mode, characterized by independence and a preoccupation with the self and its expression, were frequently aggressive and responded negatively to peer's initiations, rejected their partners' contributions, and their play was often conflictual (Farver, Kim, 1994; Farver, Kim, Lee, 1995; Farver, Lee, 1997).

Aggressive behavior is also a product of cultural influences, acting largely through culturally mediated childhood experiences and, while biology is surely implicated, it is dangerously incorrect to conclude that aggression is simply instinctive (Segall et al., 1999).

"Violence has been studied from a multitude of theoretical perspectives. Macro theories suggest that broad cultural forces promote or allow violence to occur" (Butkatko, Daehler, 2003).

From the above studies, it seems that cultural differences play an influential role in aggression.

It appears that "ground rules" for aggression are set up by a particular culture early in life, and once established, these rules strongly influence such behavior throughout the rest of adult life.

The studies described above make it clear that we cannot understand human aggression without viewing it from a cross cultural perspective. But relying solely on cultural factors would be an injustice to a study on human behavior, and a study of human behavior that ignores factors other than the culture does so at great peril.

Therefore, the present research is an attempt to study the causal factors related to female aggression. In other words, the main emphasis of this research is to study the role of personality factors in female aggression.

#### **METHOD**

### **Participants**

A sample of 200 females from 13-15 years of age took part in the present study. The participants were randomly selected

from different schools in Palampur (H.P.), India.

#### Material

In the present investigation the following research tools have been used.

- a) Direct and Indirect Aggression Scales (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992).
- b) Jr. Sr. High School Personality Questionnaire "HSPQ" (Kapoor, Mehrotra, 1967).

#### a) Direct and Indirect Aggression Scales

This scale was developed by K. Bjorkqvist, K.M.J. Lagerspetz and K. Osterman (1992). It consists of three subscales: Physical, verbal and indirect aggression. Of the 23 items, physical aggression comprises 7 items, verbal aggression 5 items and indirect aggression 11 items.

Ratings are made on a five-point scale, ranging from 0 to 4; 0 = never, 1 = seldom, 2 = sometimes, 3 = quite often, 4 = very often. Minimum and Maximum scores for physical aggression are (0-28), for verbal aggression (0-20) and for indirect aggression (0-44).

## b) Jr. Sr. High School Personality Questionnaire

This scale was developed by S.D. Kapoor and K.K. Mehortra (1967). It measures 14 distinct dimensions or traits of personality that have been found by psychologists to come near to accounting for the total variance in personality. There are a total of 114 questions in this questionnaire.

With regard to scoring, the answer sheet is scored by a streamlined hand stencil key. Key number 1 of the cardboard stencil is placed on the left-hand side of the answer sheet, adjusting it as described on the key itself. All necessary instructions for applying the hand stencil key to get "raw scores" for seven of the factors are also printed on the key itself. The same is done with cardboard stencil key number 2 to get the other seven raw scores. Raw scores are then converted into standard scores.

#### Procedure

In the present investigation, same sex peer estimated data was used for the Direct and Indirect Aggression Scale. To this end, the pairs were made for peer rating. After that participants were asked to rate their peer under the options they felt to be relevant, while for "HSPQ", self-estimated data was taken. It was made clear to subjects that there were no right or wrong answers and there was no particular time limit, but they were asked not to waste much time on any single item. It took about one hour for the participants to complete the questionnaire. Scoring of the responses was done carefully.

#### **RESULTS**

In order to obtain the results, intercorrelations among all the different variables i.e., aggression and personality factors were computed through Pearson's product moment method of correlation.

After that stepwise regression analysis was computed to determine the factors contributing most to aggression.

Correlational Analysis of Physical Aggression with Verbal and Indirect Aggression; and Factors of Personality among Females

Table 1 illustrates how physical aggression is positively and significantly correlated with verbal aggression (r = .58, p <

.01) and indirect aggression (r = .66, p < .01).

Regarding personality factors, factor 'B' i.e., less intelligent vs. more intelligent (r = -.20, p < .01) and factor 'Q2' i.e., sociably group-dependent vs. self-sufficient (r = -.22, p < .01) are significantly and negatively correlated with physical aggression. On the other hand, factor 'D' i.e., undemonstrative vs. excitable (r = .19, p < .05) and Factor 'F' i.e., sober vs. enthusiastic (r = .18, p < .05) are positively and significantly correlated with physical aggression among females.

Correlational Analysis of Verbal Aggression with Indirect Aggression and Factors of Personality among Females

As indicated by Table 1, verbal aggression is positively and significantly correlated with indirect aggression (r = .68, p < .01).

In the case of personality factors, factor 'C' i.e., affected by feelings vs. emotionally stable, is significantly but negatively correlated with verbal aggression (r=-.14, p<.05). Factor 'Q2' i.e., sociably groupdependent vs. self-sufficient (r=-.17, p<.05) and Factor 'Q3' i.e., uncontrolled vs. controlled (r=-.17, p<.05) have also shown negative and significant correlation with verbal aggression, whereas a significant and positive correlation is shown by factor 'D' i.e., undemonstrative vs. excitable (r=.18, p<.01) and factor 'O' i.e., self-assured vs. apprehensive (r=.15, p<.05) with verbal aggression.

Correlational Analysis of Indirect Aggression with Factors of Personality among Females

It can be seen in Table 1 that among personality factors, factor 'C' i.e., affected

by feelings vs. emotionally stable (r = -.17, p < .05) and factor 'Q2' i.e., sociably group-dependent vs. self-sufficient (r = -.27, p < .01) have negative and significant tion (r = .17, p < .01).

correlation with indirect aggression while factor 'D', i.e., undemonstrative vs. excitable shows positive and significant correla-

Table 1. Correlation matrix of factors of aggression and personality variables (females)

(1011	remares)																
	P	V	ΙA	Α	В	С	D	Е	F	G	Н	I	J	О	Q2	Q3	Q4
Р		.58 **	.66 **	.00	20 **	05	.19	.11	.18	.00	04	01	04	.10	22 **	11	.09
V			.68 **	06	02	14 *	.18	.06	.08	13	05	09	.06	.15	17 *	17 *	.05
IA				03	11	17 *	.17	.10	.06	03	03	.00	.08	.04	27 **	13	.12
A					.24	.18	13	.00	.20	.16	.23	02	06	16 *	16 *	.14	22 **
В						.03	.03	19 **	.07	.09	06	07	.06	.00	.07	03	18 *
С							27 **	07	.13	.28	.34	16 *	11	.18	.14	.23	33 **
D								06	02	16 *	33 **	.16 *	.16	.30	10	09	.31
Е									.03	18 *	.10	10	.15	.06	07	37 **	.04
F										02	.22	.06	14 *	.03	11	03	04
G											.13	12	12	26 **	.13	.29 **	30 **
Н												17 *	21 **	25 **	06	.12	24 **
I													03	.12	03	.01	.24
J														.05	03	21 **	.24
О															01	26 **	.28
Q2																.14	14 *
Q3																	19 **
Q4																	

<sup>\* = .05</sup> level of significance; \*\* = .01 level of significance

### Regression Analysis

After computing the intercorrelations, stepwise regression was computed mainly to examine the unique contribution of different factors of personality in the development of aggression among females.

Among personality factors, factor 'Q2' i.e., sociably group-dependent vs. self-sufficient has emerged as the most contributing one  $\beta = -.22$ ,  $R^2$  ch = .05, F = 10.47, p < .01. It explains 5% of variance. Factor 'B' i.e., less intelligent vs. more intelligent emerged as the next significant contributing factor  $\beta = -.19$ ,  $R^2$  ch = .03, F = 7.56, p < .01. It explains 3% of variance. Factor 'F' i.e., sober vs. enthusiastic and Factor 'D' i.e., undemonstrative vs. excitable have significantly and positively predicted physical aggression by explaining 2% of variance each, with  $\Box \beta = .14$ ,  $R^2$  ch = .02,

F = 5.21 and 5.20, p < .05 (see Table 2).

On the whole, it can be seen that personality factors i.e., 'Q2', 'B', 'F' and 'D' have contributed 12% of variance in physical aggression.

### Verbal Aggression

Regarding verbal aggression, factor 'Q2' i.e., group-dependent vs. self-sufficient significantly and negatively predicts verbal aggression,  $\beta$  = -.16,  $R^2$  ch = .03, F = 5.39, p < .05 while factor 'D' i.e., undemonstrative vs. excitable, significantly and positively predicts verbal aggression,  $\beta$  = .14,  $R^2$  ch = .02, F = 4.00, p < .05 (see Table 3).

Results indicate that among the personality factors, factors 'Q2' and 'D' collectively contribute 5% of variance in verbal aggression.

Table 2. Stepwise regression analysis of personality factors with physical aggression among females

Variables	Order of Entry	Value r	Reg. Coff.	Beta weight β	t	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> change	F-ratio
Q2	1	22**	53	22	-3.23**	.05	.05	10.47**
В	2	20**	37	19	-2.75**	.08	.03	7.56**
F	3	.18*	.36	.14	2.28*	.25	.02	5.21*
D	4	.19*	.35	.14	2.28*	.27	.02	5.20*

<sup>\* = .05</sup> level of significance; \*\* = .01 level of significance

Table 3. Stepwise regression analysis of personality factors with verbal aggression among females

Variables	Order of Entry	Value r	Reg. Coff.	Beta weight β	t	$\mathbb{R}^2$	R <sup>2</sup> change	F-ratio
Q2	1	17*	29	16	-2.32*	.07	.03	5.39*
D	2	.18**	.27	.14	2.00*	.08	.02	4.00*

<sup>\* = .05</sup> level of significance; \*\* = .01 level of significance

Table 4. Stepwise regression analysis of personality factors with indirect aggression among females

Variables	Order of Entry	Value r	0	Beta weight β	t	$\mathbb{R}^2$	R <sup>2</sup> change	F-ratio
Q2	1	27**	-1.09	27	-3.93**	.07	.07	15.39**

<sup>\* = .05</sup> level of significance; \*\* = .01 level of significance

### Indirect Aggression

Table 4 shows that among personality factors, only 'Q2' factor i.e., sociably group-dependent vs. self-sufficient shows 7% of variance i.e.,  $\beta = -.27$ ,  $R^2$  ch = .07, F = 15.39, p < .01.

If one looks at the total contribution of personality factors to the total of aggression then it can be observed that personality factors contribute 24% of variance towards aggression among females.

All those factors of personality that have positive and significant correlation with physical, verbal and indirect aggression but have not shown any direct contribution to aggression were taken care of by the other factors (i.e., as explained earlier) with which they were significantly and positively correlated.

# DISCUSSION

The present endeavor was undertaken in order to assess the role of personality factors in the development of aggression among females. The personality factors can tap the organismic variables that may partly explain inheritance and the role of environmental factors.

Variables in the form of personality factors (which are adjuncts to heredity and environmental influences) taking the form of temperament may also be all important in explaining female aggression. A variety of contemporary theories are relevant for understanding associations between personality and aggressive behavior (e.g., Anderson, Bushman, 2002; Berkowitz, 1993; Caprara et al., 2002; Huesmann, 1998). Female aggressive behavior may accordingly be described as resulting from a complex combination of cultural, situational and individual-specific factors. (Bjorkqvist, Niemela, 1992).

The result of the present study shows that among personality factors, factor Q2 i.e., group-dependent vs. self-sufficient has played the most dominant role in all three types of aggression. It is negatively and significantly correlated with physical, verbal and indirect aggression among females with physical aggression 5% of variance, verbal aggression 3% of variance and 7% of variance in indirect aggression i.e., on the whole, factor Q2 has explained 15% of variance in aggression among adolescent females (see Tables 2, 3, and 4). It shows that group dependence contributes most to aggression.

Studies have shown that high level of involvement with delinquent peers can lead aggressive children to higher levels of serious delinquency during adolescence (O'Donnell et al., 1995) especially for those children who are only moderately aggressive to begin with (Vitaro et al., 1997). In some cases, adolescents may increase the level of aggressive kinds of behavior in order to gain approval and acceptance among peers (e.g., starting

fights over what appear to be trivial issues (Kenneth et al., 1999).

The peer group is an important social influence factor that is related to delinquent behavior in adolescents (Paetsch, Bertrand, 1997; Snyder et al., 1986). Through social learning processes, association with a deviant peer group is likely to foster attitudes and beliefs that promote aggressive kinds of behavior as well as provide opportunities to learn and practice these new kinds of behavior (Akers et al., 1979).

As children age, they tend to take their lead from peers. Peers, however, can reinforce an aggressor's actions. If peers also show aggression or do not correct aggressive acts, the aggressive behavior is encouraged. Many aggressive children have a network of aggressive friends.

There is a general idea among people that females are not aggressive. In Indian culture, females are not supposed to be aggressive. Docility should be the hallmark of the personality of Indian females, especially in rural areas and more especially in the areas from where the data has been drawn.

Going by the results of the present study group dependency seems to be an important platform in the development of aggression among females. The group gives them courage in showing their aggression. It provide opportunities to learn and practice these types of new behavior and to give an outlet to their pent-up feelings.

Indian females are by no means unaggressive, and the low interpersonal aggression in schools has to be explained in other ways. Studies by Iqbal and colleagues (1993), Kanekar et al. (1993) suggest that Indian women score higher than men on intra-aggression (i.e., repressed aggression, and self-blame). These studies

bring to mind western studies of covert female aggressive tendencies, which will not necessarily show at the overt, behavioral level.

The next greatest contributing factor in female aggression is factor 'D' i.e., undemonstrative vs. excitable; it has significantly and positively contributed 2% of variance each in physical as well as in verbal aggression (see Tables 2 and 3).

It shows that excitable, impatient and overactive females display more aggression compared with deliberate and inactive ones. Hyperactivity is predominantly genetically determined (Goodman, Stevenson, 1989). Children who show this restless, impulsive pattern of behavior do not necessarily start off as aggressive, but over time a proportion become so (Taylor et al., 1996).

Factor 'B' i.e., less intelligent vs. more intelligent, is significantly and negatively correlated with physical aggression, contributing 3% of variance in physical aggression (see Tables 1 and 2). It reflects the fact that less intelligent adolescent females are mostly found to be high in physical aggression. Less intelligent students are usually not organized in their thoughts; therefore, it is difficult for them to find an outlet, hence, they show aggressive behavior especially when led by others, especially when they cannot monitor their thoughts properly.

Intelligence acts as a check on unruly behavior and is the wise monitor of our conduct, of whose consequences it warns us. Less intelligent people try to compensate for feelings of inferiority by aggressive acts. That is why aggressive people show a greater need for power than the normal (Bhan, 1984).

Delinquents have repeatedly been shown to have an IQ that is 8-10 points lower

than their law-abiding peers, and this before the onset of antisocial kinds of behavior (Moffitt et al., 1994).

Factor 'F' i.e., sober vs. enthusiastic has shown a significant positive correlation with physical aggression with only 2% of variance among females (see Tables 1 and 2). I.e., enthusiastic and happy-go-lucky females are found to be physically more aggressive.

The contributions of personality in all three types of aggression are as follows: personality factors have contributed 12% of variance in physical aggression, 5% of variance in verbal aggression and 7% of variance in indirect aggression. In sum, personality factors have contributed 24% of variance.

Laboratory studies reveal that females behave as aggressively as males when they are not in danger of being recognized, hence of being retaliated against (Grusec, 1972; Mallick, McCandless, 1966). This fact supports the view that females are as aggressive as males, as far as the motivation to hurt is concerned.

Research seems consistent in recognizing that heritability influences kinds of adolescent behavior. The present results regarding the relative contribution of personality factors determine aggression to a great extent. Personality factors in terms of heredity and environmental influences are so strongly entwined that they cannot be separated. Genetics can only go so far, environment works to shape the child's mind.

As the participants of the present study were taken from a particular area of India, the role of culture cannot be ignored. The fact that in India sex differences appear to be greater in aggression in comparison with those in the west may reflect differences in cultural norms and status between the sexes.

Members of different cultures respond very differently to an insult or provocation. In western societies most people feel angry and want to strike back (Carlson, Miller, 1988). However in many Asian cultures, like those of Japan or China, people prefer to withdraw or conform to the other's wishes in order to avoid conflict (Triandis et al., 1988).

Bergeron and Schneider (2005) conducted a quantitative review on peer-directed aggression to determine whether cross-national differences in aggression could be predicted from differences in national values. In general, cultures characterized by collectivistic values, high moral discipline, a high level of egalitarian commitment, and which emphasize values that are heavily Confucian showed lower levels of aggression than their counterparts.

It appears that 'ground rules' for aggression are set up by a particular culture early in life and once established, these rules strongly influence such behavior throughout the rest of adult life. Therefore, female aggressive behavior may accordingly be described as resulting from a complex combination of cultural, situational and individual-specific factors (Bjorkqvist, Niemela, 1992).

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## OSOBNOSTNÉ KORELÁTY AGRESIVITY U ŽIEN

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Súhrn: Štúdia sa venovala skúmaniu vzťahov medzi osobnosťou a agresivitou u žien. Výskumná vzorka pozostávala z 200 indických adolescentiek z H.P. vo veku 13-15 rokov. Dosiahnuté výsledky ukazujú, že niektoré osobnostné črty ako skupinová závislosť, nízka miera inteligencie, excitovanosť a netrpezlivosť prispievajú k fyzickej, verbálnej a nepriamej agresivite u žien. Celkovo tieto osobnostné črty vysvetľovali 24% variancie v agresivite u žien. Výsledky boli získané krokovou regresnou analýzou.