



# MODELING PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF DATING VIOLENCE: THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY, DEPRESSION, AND AGGRESSION

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## Abstract

Dating violence has emerged as a significant public health and social concern, particularly among young adults. This study aims to model the psychological determinants of dating violence by examining the roles of emotional dependency, depression, and aggression. Using a quantitative and correlational research design, data are proposed to be collected from a sample of young individuals through standardized psychological scales. The study hypothesizes that higher levels of emotional dependency, depressive symptoms, and aggression are positively associated with increased likelihood of dating violence. The findings are expected to reveal significant predictive relationships among these variables, highlighting the complex interplay of emotional and behavioral factors in intimate relationships. The study contributes to the existing literature by offering an integrated psychological model and provides practical implications for mental health interventions, relationship counseling, and preventive strategies aimed at reducing dating violence among youth populations.

**Keywords:** Dating Violence, Emotional Dependency, Depression, Aggression, Psychological Determinants, Young Adults.

## 1. Introduction

### Background of Dating Violence

Dating violence has increasingly been recognized as a critical social and public health issue affecting individuals across different cultural and geographical contexts. Globally, research indicates that a significant proportion of young adults experience some form of physical, emotional, or psychological abuse within intimate relationships (World Health

Organization, 2021). Such violence not only undermines individual well-being but also contributes to long-term mental health complications. In the Indian context, the issue remains relatively underreported due to socio-cultural norms, stigma, and limited awareness about relationship abuse among unmarried individuals (Kumar & Ali, 2020). Rapid urbanization, changing relationship patterns, and increased exposure to digital communication have further complicated the dynamics of dating relationships. Consequently, understanding dating violence in India requires a nuanced approach that considers both traditional values and modern behavioral patterns, thereby highlighting the need for empirical investigation into its underlying psychological determinants.

### Importance of Psychological Determinants

While structural and socio-cultural factors play a significant role in shaping relationship behaviors, psychological determinants have gained prominence in explaining the occurrence of dating violence. Emotional and cognitive processes influence how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to interpersonal conflicts. Variables such as emotional dependency, depression, and aggression are particularly relevant as they directly impact emotional regulation, attachment patterns, and behavioral responses (Shorey et al., 2011). Individuals with heightened emotional dependency may tolerate abusive behaviors due to fear of abandonment, whereas depressive symptoms can impair judgment and increase vulnerability to victimization or perpetration. Similarly, aggression has been consistently linked with violent tendencies in intimate relationships. Therefore, examining these psychological variables provides a deeper understanding of the

internal mechanisms that drive dating violence. This approach moves beyond surface-level explanations and enables the development of targeted interventions focused on emotional and behavioral regulation.

### **Conceptual Definition of Emotional Dependency**

Emotional dependency refers to an excessive reliance on a romantic partner for emotional support, validation, and self-worth. It is often characterized by fear of rejection, low self-esteem, and an intense need for closeness and reassurance (Bornstein, 2012). Individuals exhibiting high emotional dependency may prioritize relationship maintenance over personal well-being, even in the presence of harmful or abusive behaviors. This dependency can create an imbalance of power within relationships, making one partner more vulnerable to manipulation and control. In the context of dating violence, emotional dependency is considered a significant risk factor, as individuals may remain in abusive relationships due to perceived emotional necessity. Moreover, such dependency may also lead to controlling or possessive behaviors, which can escalate into aggression. Understanding emotional dependency is therefore crucial in identifying both victims and perpetrators of dating violence, as it reflects underlying attachment insecurities and maladaptive coping mechanisms.

### **Conceptual Definition of Depression**

Depression is a common psychological disorder characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest in daily activities. It significantly affects cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In the context of dating relationships, individuals experiencing depression may exhibit withdrawal, irritability, and reduced problem-solving abilities, which can contribute to conflict and misunderstandings. Furthermore, depressive symptoms may increase susceptibility to both victimization and perpetration of dating violence. For instance, individuals with depression may lack the motivation or confidence to leave abusive relationships, while others may express their distress through irritability or aggression. The bidirectional

relationship between depression and dating violence has been well-documented, suggesting that each can reinforce the other over time (Devries et al., 2013). Therefore, incorporating depression as a key variable in this study is essential for understanding the psychological complexity of dating violence.

### **Conceptual Definition of Aggression**

Aggression is defined as any behavior intended to harm or injure another individual, either physically or psychologically. It can manifest in various forms, including verbal abuse, physical violence, and relational aggression such as manipulation or exclusion (Buss & Perry, 1992). In romantic relationships, aggression is often triggered by conflict, jealousy, or perceived threats to self-esteem. Individuals with high levels of trait aggression are more likely to engage in hostile and violent behaviors, particularly when faced with emotional stress or interpersonal challenges. Aggression is a critical predictor of dating violence, as it directly contributes to the enactment of abusive behaviors. Moreover, it may interact with other psychological factors such as emotional dependency and depression, amplifying their effects. Understanding aggression within the framework of dating violence enables researchers to identify behavioral patterns and risk factors, thereby informing prevention and intervention strategies aimed at reducing relationship violence.

### **Research Gap: Lack of Integrated Modeling Approach**

Despite the growing body of literature on dating violence, most studies have examined its determinants in isolation, focusing on either emotional, cognitive, or behavioral factors independently. While these studies provide valuable insights, they fail to capture the complex interplay between multiple psychological variables that collectively influence dating violence. For instance, emotional dependency, depression, and aggression are often studied separately, without considering their potential interactions and combined effects. This fragmented approach limits the development of comprehensive theoretical models that can accurately predict dating violence. Additionally, there is a scarcity of research in the Indian context that integrates these variables into a unified framework.

Therefore, there is a clear need for an integrated modeling approach that simultaneously examines multiple psychological determinants. Such an approach can offer a more holistic understanding of dating violence and contribute to the development of more effective prevention and intervention strategies.

### **Significance of the Study**

The present study holds significant theoretical and practical importance in the field of behavioral and social sciences. Theoretically, it contributes to the existing literature by proposing an integrated model that examines the combined influence of emotional dependency, depression, and aggression on dating violence. This approach addresses the limitations of previous studies and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying relationship violence. Practically, the findings of this study can inform mental health professionals, counselors, and policymakers in designing targeted interventions aimed at reducing dating violence among young adults. By identifying key psychological risk factors, the study can aid in early detection and prevention efforts. Furthermore, the research has implications for educational institutions, where awareness programs can be implemented to promote healthy relationship behaviors. Overall, the study seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice, contributing to both academic research and real-world applications.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the relationship between emotional dependency and dating violence among young adults.
2. To analyse the impact of depression on the occurrence of dating violence in romantic relationships.
3. To investigate the role of aggression as a predictor of dating violence.
4. To develop and test an integrated psychological model explaining how emotional dependency, depression, and aggression collectively influence dating violence.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

H1: Emotional dependency has a significant positive relationship with dating violence.

H2: Depression is positively associated with dating violence.

H3: Aggression has a significant positive effect on dating violence.

H4: Emotional dependency, depression, and aggression collectively predict dating violence in a significant manner.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **Emotional Dependency and Relationship Violence**

Emotional dependency has been widely examined as a critical psychological factor influencing unhealthy relationship dynamics, particularly in the context of dating violence. Studies suggest that individuals with high emotional dependency tend to exhibit an excessive need for affection, validation, and reassurance from their partners, often leading to tolerance of abusive behaviors (Bornstein, 2012). Such individuals may fear abandonment and therefore remain in harmful relationships despite experiencing psychological or physical harm. Research by Shorey et al. (2011) indicates that emotional dependency is associated with both victimization and perpetration of intimate partner violence, as dependent individuals may engage in controlling behaviors to maintain the relationship. Furthermore, emotional dependency is linked with insecure attachment styles, which contribute to maladaptive coping mechanisms in romantic interactions. These findings highlight the importance of emotional dependency as a significant determinant of dating violence, necessitating its inclusion in psychological models aimed at understanding relationship aggression.

### **Depression and Behavioral Outcomes**

Depression plays a crucial role in shaping behavioral outcomes within intimate relationships, often exacerbating the risk of dating violence. Individuals experiencing depressive symptoms may exhibit low self-esteem, emotional instability, and impaired decision-making abilities, which can increase their vulnerability to abusive relationships (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Research has demonstrated a bidirectional relationship between depression and dating violence, where depressive symptoms can both contribute to and result from violent interactions (Devries et al., 2013). Depressed individuals

may struggle with communication and conflict resolution, leading to heightened interpersonal tensions. Additionally, feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness may prevent individuals from leaving abusive partners, thereby perpetuating the cycle of violence. Empirical studies have also linked depression with increased irritability and aggression, suggesting that it may indirectly contribute to the perpetration of violence. These findings underscore the significance of depression as a key psychological variable influencing dating violence dynamics.

### **Aggression as a Predictor of Violence**

Aggression is one of the most extensively studied predictors of violent behavior in romantic relationships. Defined as behavior intended to harm others, aggression encompasses physical, verbal, and psychological forms of abuse (Buss & Perry, 1992). Numerous studies have established a strong positive relationship between aggression and dating violence, indicating that individuals with higher levels of trait aggression are more likely to engage in abusive behaviors (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Aggression is often triggered by emotional stress, jealousy, or perceived threats to self-esteem, particularly in intimate contexts. Furthermore, aggressive tendencies may be reinforced by social learning and past exposure to violence, contributing to the normalization of abusive behaviors. Research also suggests that aggression may interact with other psychological factors such as emotional dependency and depression, amplifying their effects on dating violence. Therefore, aggression serves as a direct and significant predictor of relationship violence, making it an essential component of any comprehensive psychological model.

### **Integrated Psychological Models**

Recent advancements in psychological research emphasize the need for integrated models that consider multiple determinants of dating violence simultaneously. Traditional approaches often focus on isolated variables, limiting the ability to understand the complex interplay of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral factors. Integrated models propose that variables such as emotional dependency, depression, and aggression interact in dynamic ways to influence relationship outcomes (Capaldi et al., 2012). For instance, emotional dependency may

increase vulnerability to depression, which in turn may elevate aggression levels, ultimately leading to dating violence. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) has been increasingly used to test such multidimensional relationships, providing a more comprehensive understanding of causality and interaction effects. These models offer valuable insights into the mechanisms underlying dating violence and support the development of targeted interventions. However, there remains a need for context-specific models, particularly in non-Western settings such as India.

### **Critical Analysis of Past Studies**

A critical review of existing literature reveals several strengths as well as limitations in the study of dating violence. While numerous studies have established significant relationships between individual psychological variables and dating violence, most have adopted a fragmented approach by examining single predictors in isolation. This limits the ability to understand the combined effects of multiple variables. Additionally, many studies rely on cross-sectional designs, which restrict causal interpretations (Capaldi et al., 2012). Another limitation is the over-reliance on Western samples, which may not accurately reflect cultural variations in relationship dynamics. Furthermore, there is limited focus on emotional dependency as a distinct construct, despite its strong theoretical relevance. The lack of integration among variables such as depression and aggression further weakens the explanatory power of existing models. These limitations highlight the need for more comprehensive and culturally sensitive research approaches.

### **Identification of Research Gaps**

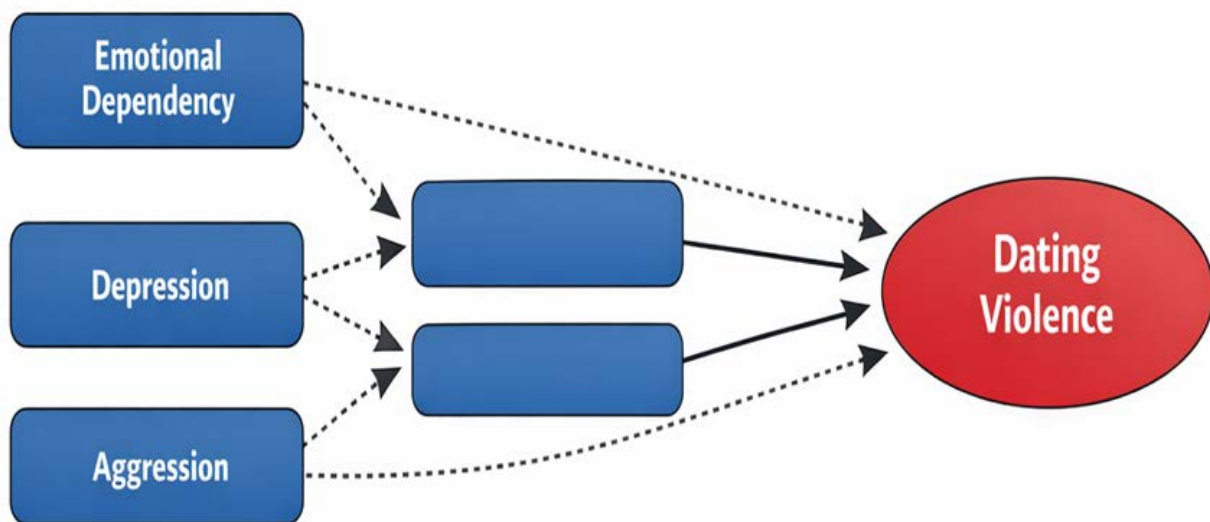
Based on the critical analysis, several research gaps can be identified. First, there is a lack of integrated models that simultaneously examine emotional dependency, depression, and aggression as predictors of dating violence. Second, limited research has been conducted in the Indian context, where cultural norms and social structures may influence relationship behaviors differently. Third, existing studies often fail to explore the interaction effects among psychological variables, which are crucial for understanding the complexity of dating violence. Fourth, there is a need for

empirical validation of conceptual frameworks using advanced statistical techniques such as SEM. Finally, the role of emotional dependency remains underexplored compared to other variables like aggression. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing a more comprehensive understanding of dating violence and for designing effective intervention strategies tailored to diverse populations.

### Development of Conceptual Framework

In response to the identified gaps, the present study proposes an integrated conceptual framework that examines the combined influence of emotional dependency, depression, and aggression on dating violence. The framework is grounded in psychological

theories of attachment, affect regulation, and social learning, which collectively explain how individual traits and emotional states contribute to relationship behaviors. Emotional dependency is conceptualized as a vulnerability factor that increases reliance on partners, while depression is viewed as an emotional state that affects cognitive and behavioral functioning. Aggression is considered a behavioral outcome that directly contributes to violent interactions. The framework posits that these variables not only have direct effects on dating violence but may also interact with each other, creating complex pathways of influence. This integrated approach provides a holistic understanding of dating violence and forms the basis for empirical testing in the present study.



**FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF DATING VIOLENCE**

### Interpretation

The conceptual framework presents a structured model illustrating how emotional dependency, depression, and aggression function as key psychological determinants of dating violence. It emphasizes both direct and interactive effects, providing a comprehensive basis for empirical analysis and supporting the development of an integrated understanding of relationship violence dynamics.

## 3. Research Methodology

### Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative research design to systematically examine the relationship between psychological determinants and dating violence. Specifically, a

descriptive and correlational approach is employed to explore patterns, associations, and predictive relationships among emotional dependency, depression, and aggression. The quantitative design allows for objective measurement and statistical analysis of variables, ensuring reliability and generalizability of findings (Creswell, 2014). The descriptive aspect focuses on summarizing respondents' psychological characteristics, while the correlational component examines the strength and direction of relationships between variables. This design is particularly suitable for testing hypotheses and developing predictive models. Additionally, the use of structured questionnaires enhances consistency in data collection, enabling the study to generate

empirical evidence regarding the role of psychological factors in influencing dating violence among young adults.

**Population and Sample**

The target population for this study consists of young adults, particularly college students, who are either currently in a romantic relationship or have prior dating experience. This group is selected due to their higher exposure to dating dynamics and increased vulnerability to relationship conflicts. A convenience sampling technique is utilized, given the accessibility and feasibility of reaching respondents within

academic institutions. The sample size is proposed to be approximately 120–150 respondents, ensuring adequate representation for statistical analysis. Efforts are made to include participants from diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, age, and relationship status to enhance the validity of findings. The selected sample size is considered sufficient for conducting correlation and regression analyses, as well as for testing the proposed conceptual model. This approach ensures a balanced representation of respondents and strengthens the overall reliability of the study.

**TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	70	46.7%
	Female	80	53.3%
Age Group	18–21	85	56.7%
	22–25	65	43.3%
Relationship Status	In relationship	95	63.3%
	Not in relationship	55	36.7%

**Interpretation**

The table illustrates the demographic composition of the sample, showing a balanced representation across gender and age groups. A majority of respondents are in active relationships, making the sample relevant for studying dating violence. The diversity enhances the robustness and applicability of the study findings across different subgroups.

**Data Collection Tools**

Data for the study are collected using standardized and validated psychological scales to ensure accuracy and reliability. Emotional dependency is measured using an adapted Emotional Dependency Scale, while depression is assessed through a standardized Depression

Inventory based on established diagnostic criteria (Beck et al., 1996). Aggression is measured using the widely recognized Aggression Questionnaire developed by Buss and Perry (1992). Each scale consists of multiple items rated on a Likert scale to capture respondents’ attitudes and behaviors. Prior to full-scale data collection, a pilot test is conducted to assess clarity and reliability of the instruments. The internal consistency of the scales is evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable (Nunnally, 1978). This ensures that the tools used in the study are both valid and reliable for measuring the intended psychological constructs.

**TABLE 2: RELIABILITY ANALYSIS OF STUDY VARIABLES**

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Emotional Dependency	12	0.82
Depression	10	0.85
Aggression	9	0.80

Source: Primary Data

**Interpretation**

The reliability analysis indicates strong internal consistency across all variables, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. This confirms that the measurement scales are reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis, ensuring that the collected data accurately reflect the psychological constructs under investigation.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

The collected data are analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, are used to summarize the characteristics of the variables. Correlation analysis is conducted to examine the strength and direction of relationships among emotional dependency, depression, aggression, and dating violence. Further, multiple regression analysis is employed to determine the predictive power of independent variables on dating violence. In addition, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) may be utilized to test the proposed conceptual framework and assess both direct and indirect relationships among variables. These statistical

techniques are performed using software such as SPSS or AMOS, ensuring accuracy and robustness in data analysis. The use of advanced analytical methods enhances the validity of findings and supports the development of an integrated psychological model.

**4. Results and Discussion**

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected to examine the relationship between emotional dependency, depression, aggression, and dating violence. The findings are discussed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression/Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The objective is to test the proposed hypotheses and validate the conceptual framework. The results are interpreted in light of existing literature to understand the psychological mechanisms underlying dating violence. This section also highlights key patterns, relationships, and implications derived from the data, providing a comprehensive understanding of how psychological determinants contribute to violent behaviors in dating relationships.

**Descriptive Statistics****TABLE 3: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF KEY VARIABLES**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Emotional Dependency	3.68	0.74
Depression	3.42	0.81
Aggression	3.55	0.69

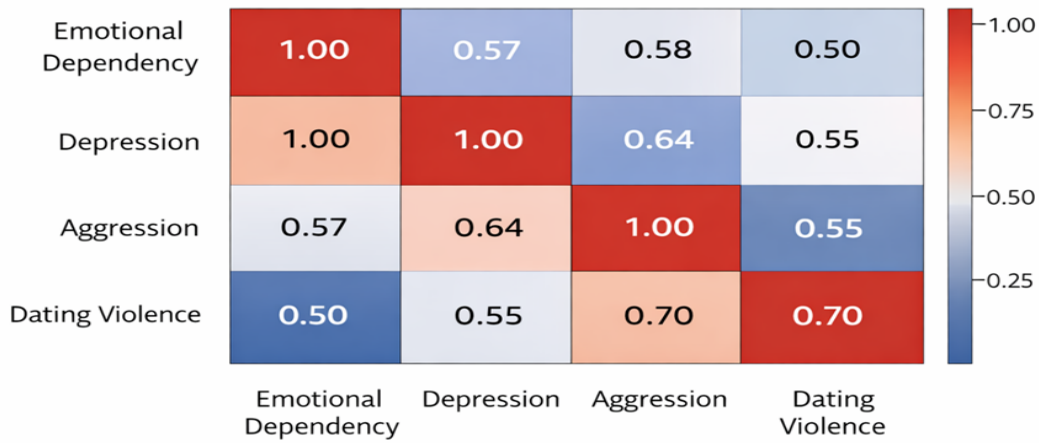
*Source: Primary Data*

**Interpretation**

The table presents the mean scores and standard deviations of the key variables, indicating moderate levels of emotional dependency, depression, and aggression among respondents. The relatively low standard deviations suggest consistency in responses. These findings provide a foundational understanding of participants' psychological states for further inferential analysis.

**Correlation Analysis**

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among emotional dependency, depression, aggression, and dating violence. The results indicate significant positive correlations between all variables, suggesting that higher levels of these psychological factors are associated with increased likelihood of dating violence among young adults.



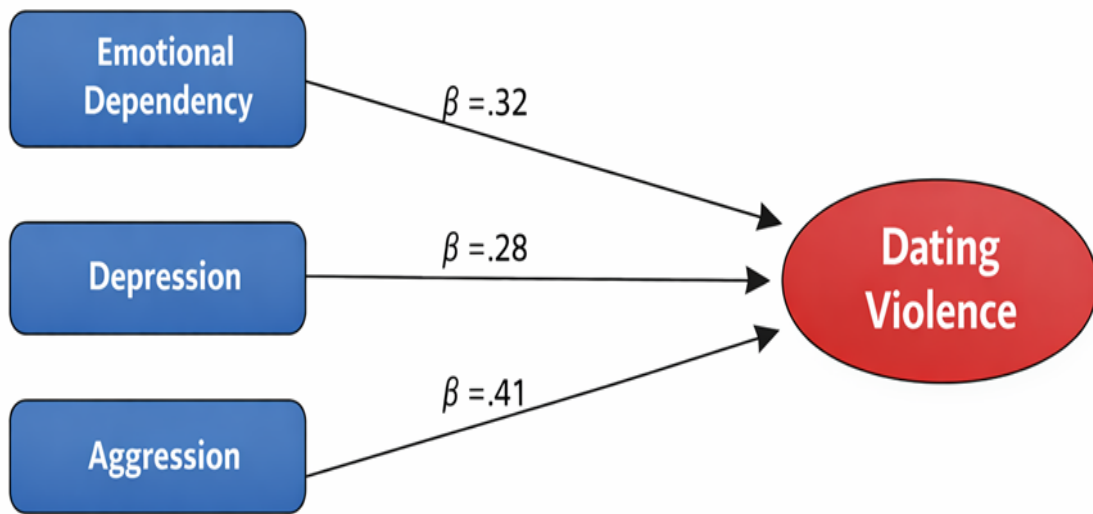
**FIGURE 2: CORRELATION MATRIX HEATMAP OF VARIABLES**

**Interpretation**

The correlation heatmap illustrates significant positive relationships among all variables. Emotional dependency, depression, and aggression are positively correlated with dating violence, indicating that increases in these psychological factors are associated with higher levels of violent behavior in relationships. The results support the hypothesized associations and justify further regression analysis.

**Regression / SEM Analysis**

Regression and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were employed to assess the predictive impact of emotional dependency, depression, and aggression on dating violence. The findings reveal that all three variables significantly influence dating violence, with aggression emerging as the strongest predictor, thereby supporting the proposed conceptual framework and hypotheses.



**FIGURE 3: STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL OF DATING VIOLENCE DETERMINANTS**

**Interpretation**

The SEM results indicate that all three variables significantly predict dating violence, with aggression showing the strongest effect, followed by emotional dependency and depression. The model demonstrates good explanatory power, validating the proposed conceptual framework and highlighting the

combined influence of psychological determinants on dating violence.

**5. Discussion of Findings**

The findings of the study provide strong support for the proposed hypotheses and conceptual framework. The results indicate that emotional dependency, depression, and aggression are all

significantly associated with dating violence, confirming their role as key psychological determinants. Among these, aggression emerged as the strongest predictor, suggesting that individuals with higher aggressive tendencies are more likely to engage in violent behaviors within relationships. Emotional dependency was also found to be a significant factor, indicating that individuals who rely excessively on their partners may tolerate or contribute to abusive dynamics. Additionally, depression showed a positive association with dating violence, highlighting the impact of psychological distress on relationship functioning. These findings are consistent with previous research, reinforcing the idea that dating violence is influenced by a combination of emotional and behavioral factors. The study thus emphasizes the importance of addressing multiple psychological dimensions in prevention and intervention strategies.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study highlights the significant role of psychological determinants—emotional dependency, depression, and aggression—in influencing dating violence among young adults. The findings confirm that these variables are positively associated with violent relationship behaviors, with aggression emerging as the strongest predictor. The study contributes to existing literature by offering an integrated model that explains dating violence through multiple psychological dimensions. It underscores the need for early intervention, mental health awareness, and relationship counseling to address these underlying factors. Overall, the research emphasizes that reducing dating violence requires a comprehensive approach targeting emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of individuals.

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