



ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF-ESTEEM AND THE BIG-FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS



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Abstract

History of abusive relationships can relate to one's self-esteem and personality traits. Data was collected through an online survey with a sample of men and women who have experienced abusive relationships. This study has shown that support received during and after the traumatic experience of an abusive relationship will increase one's self-esteem. Specific personality traits correlated with self-esteem after the traumatic experience. This study supports previous data and encourages different approaches for future research involving self-esteem.

Introduction

Abusive relationships can be in both physical and psychological forms. Abusive relationships are often hidden or excused by the victims (Edwards, et.al., 2012). While abusive relationship has been a noted topic for the last couple years, research on the subject and its effects need more focus as well. There are not many studies about the relationship between self-esteem and abusive relationship. Research has shown that relationship satisfaction is related to commitment, and psychological abuse reduced satisfaction (Rhatigan, & Axsom, 2006). Self-esteem before, during and after abuse relationships is relevant to one's life, and some personality traits might have a relationship with self-esteem as well, which will also be important while dealing with treatment for traumatic abuse relationships. This study analyzed self-esteem and its relationship with support and the Big-Five personality traits.

Method

Participants: Participants were men and women aged 25 and up who had been in an abusive relationship. Two groups were examined, participants who report having stayed in an abusive relationship for six months or less, and participants who report having stayed in an abusive relationship for more than six months.

Variables and Measures: Participants were asked about their age, gender, and relationship status. Five different scales were used to collect data: The Adverse Childhood Experience Scale – used to determine any difficult childhood experiences; The Big Five Inventory-2 (BFI-2) – used to measure personality traits; The Rosenberg Self-Esteem – used to identify the level of self-esteem; The Crisis Support Scale – used to establish how much support participants received during the time of abuse.

Data Collection: Data was collected using Amazon's Mechanical Turk, an online tool that has a crowdsourced convenience sample of about 15,000 U.S. participants at any one time.

Results

The majority of the sample was 25-34 years old (57.47%) and 35-44 (20.69%) and 88.61% reported to have suffered from both physical and psychological abuse. Furthermore, 78.95% of the sample experienced physical abuse and 97.37% psychological abuse.

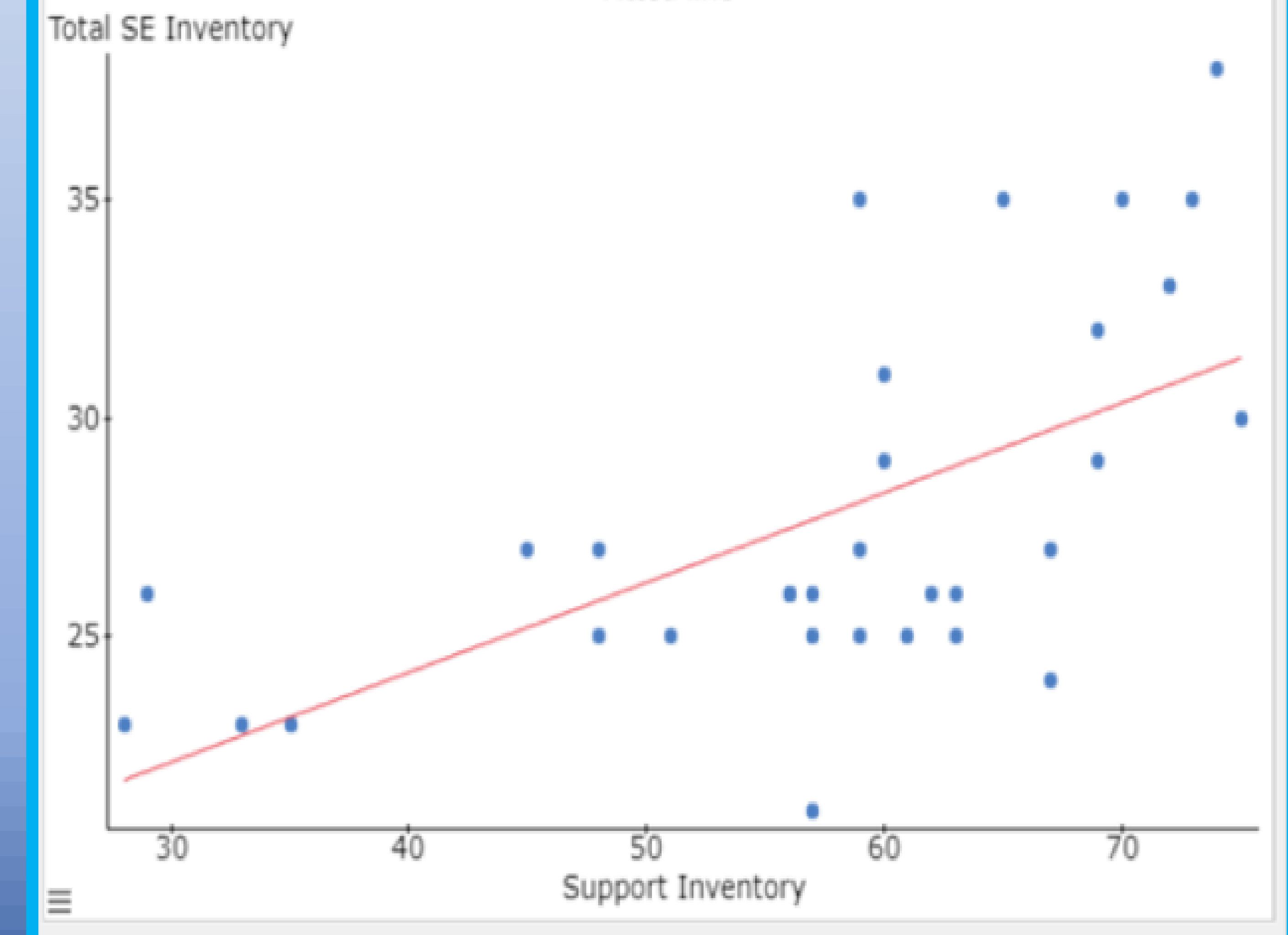
This study did not find a significant relationship between physical abuse and self-esteem ($r = .828, p = .43$).

Using linear regression, it was possible to conclude that there was a relation between self-esteem and support received during or after the crisis ($r = .6052, p = .0002$). Therefore, the more support an individual received during or after the crisis, the more one's self-esteem increased.

Comparing the Big-Five personality traits and self-esteem, it was possible to conclude that there was a relationship between the following traits: openness ($r = -.5252, p = .0017$), conscientiousness ($r = -.4122, p = .0139$), and agreeableness ($r = -.5073, p = .0022$).

Still using linear regression, there was not enough evidence to support a relationship between self-esteem and the personality traits extraversion ($r = .00477, p = .9793$), and neuroticism ($r = .0968, p = .5861$).

There was a negative linear relationship for the traits of openness ($r = -.5252, p = .0017$), conscientiousness ($r = -.4122, p = .0139$) and agreeableness ($r = -.5073, p = .0022$). Therefore, that the less open, agreeable or conscientious the individuals were the higher their levels of self-esteem were as well.



Discussion

This study has shown that there was no relationship between physical abuse and self-esteem. One of the limitations for this result was the lack of measurement of self-esteem before the crisis happened. For future studies, it would be interesting to ask subjects questions regarding their history of self-esteem and compare it to their self-esteem after abuse.

As previous studies have shown, support helps women escape abusive relationship, and this research found that support during and after crisis positively correlates with self-esteem as well.

Although neuroticism and extraversion did not have significant results compared to self-esteem, the other three personality traits from the Big-Five had interesting results. The lack of results for neuroticism and extraversion were surprising, but the results for the other traits make sense when looking at specific facets.

For future research, it would be interesting to look at the Big-Five personality traits and compare it with individuals who have not experienced any type of abuse and individuals who have.