

# IMPULSIVITY AND LOW SELF-ESTEEM AS PREDICTORS OF JUSTIFICATION OF VIOLENCE: THE MODERATING ROLE OF GENDER AND PSYCHOPATHY

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## ABSTRACT

Understanding justification of violence requires looking beyond aggressive attitudes to the intricate interplay between impulsivity, psychopathy self-esteem and gender. The present study assessed whether low self-esteem and impulsive reactions predict justification of violence and also exploring the moderating role of psychopathy and gender. The data was gathered from 314 young individuals having equal number of males and females using convenience sampling method aged from 16 to 30 years old. The subjects filled in the validated instruments regarding their impulsivity, self-esteem, psychopathy and attitude towards violence (justification of violence was operationalized as attitude towards violence). The findings showed that Impulsivity strongly predict justification of violence while Self-Esteem failed to predict justification of violence. Gender differences were seen among the constructs as males reported higher justification of violence than females. In relevance to moderating effects, Psychopathy does moderate the relationship between impulsivity and attitude towards violence such that higher the levels of psychopathy stronger the association between impulsivity and attitude towards violence. Meanwhile, psychopathy does not moderate the relationship between self-esteem and attitude towards violence so the effect of self-esteem remains non-significant on justification of violence across varying levels of psychopathic traits. Furthermore, gender does not moderate the relationship between impulsivity/self-esteem and attitude towards violence.

**Keywords:** Impulsivity, Self-Esteem, Psychopathy, Attitude towards violence, Gender.

## INTRODUCTION

"No one commits violence believing themselves to be the villain of the story – they believe, in that moment, that they are simply the one who was right."

Violence remains one of the most pressing psychological and social concerns worldwide that affects the societies, communities, humanity and families. Throughout the history killing of the civilians was being justified through theological, political and nationalistic perspectives that recast

brutal murder as necessary and unavoidable. This patterns of justification are not new rather they are being deeply rooted in complex psychological mechanism through which perpetrators justify their inhuman acts. Individuals and institutions engage in moral disengagement through mechanisms such as moral justification, dehumanization's of victims, diffusion of responsibility, that allows violent acts such as war and genocide to be shown as honorable and benign that leads to create a positive outlook of

perpetrators in society despite committing serious harm (Bandura, 1999).

This pattern remains strikingly evident in contemporary conflicts. According to the institution for Economics and Peace (2025), for the thirteen time the world has become less peaceful in the last seventeen years that marks the six consecutive years of global deterioration in peacefulness, with seventeen centuries recording over 1000 conflict related deaths in one year (Institution for Economy and Peace, 2025). The same report illustrates that the global economic impact of violence reached nearly 20 trillion in 2024 alone that is approximately 11.6 % of global GDP. In Gaza, sustained military operations in October 2023 have resulted in significant civilian casualties with the Gaza Ministry of Health reporting over 70,000 deaths and more than 170,000 injuries were verified and reported by OCHA (2025). In Ukraine, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Missions (2026) verified that about 2514 civilians were killed, 12,142 injured in 2024 alone and 31% increases as compared to 2024 and majority of the destructions happens due to long range missile and drone strikes on civilians' infrastructure far from the frontline. (United Nation Human Rights Monitoring Rights in Ukraine, 2026). Despite of the humanitarian law that was explicitly designed to protect non-combatants, civilian harms remain persistent or even escalating feature of contemporary warfare.

Justification of violence refers to the cognitive processes through which individuals rationalize, approve and endorse violence as acceptable response across social contexts such as war, discipline and intimate relationships (Anderson et al., 2006). According to the General Aggression Model (GAM; Anderson and Bushman, 2002) aggressive and violent behavior emerges due to the dynamic interaction of person level factor such as personality, beliefs and attitudes which together shape individuals internal state such as cognition, affects and arousal that determine decision making processes.

A single impulsive act a slap, a punch or a pulled trigger can unfold in less time than it takes consciously register the decision. The entire chain

of psychological and social relevance was already in action in that fraction of second, a difficult pausing before responding, a fragile sense of self-worth masked in defensiveness (Patton et al.,1995). Before the violent acts occur, the belief exists it's a quite conviction that hitting, punishing or retaliating was some who justified and deserved that should not be avoided (Anderson et al.,2006). This belief is studied in this research more than the act.

Impulsivity has been widely recognized as important components that contribute in the justification of violence defined as the tendency to react rapidly without even considering about the consequences (Patton et al.,1995). Impulsivity shows up in the literature again and again as a factor that contributes to shape beliefs that make such violent behaviors as acceptable. Greater impulsivity among young adults is being linked with greater sexual drive and more violent in intimate relationships (Linars et al., 2021). While research among adults have found that impulsivity contributes to shape the belief in which humans rationalize and justify dating violence that in turn predicts actual perpetration (Costa et al.,2024).

But impulsivity rarely works alone. From decades psychologist think that low self-esteem also plays important role in justification as people having low self-esteem would be insecure about themselves, they would feel that they are not important or loveable and socially rejected that lastly cause an individual to lash at people in order to compensate. Researches support this idea that low self-esteem is a risk in external behavior rather than the high self-esteem to violence from last two decades of research (Walker and Bright, 2009) low self-esteem has specifically been linked to more favorable violent attitudes among offenders' population (O` Hangan et al., 2019).

Not everyone who is impulsive or having low self-esteem would justify their wrong doings but personality factors are also included in this just like psychopathy marked as callousness, manipulateness and a lack of empathy and remorse (Levenson et al.,1995). Psychopathic traits diminished emotional regulation, increasing the likelihood that impulsive tendencies and low self-worth would contribute to hostile attitude

towards others. Where a normal person would feel guilty after hurting someone the psychopathic person would enjoy the pain of others, they don't have a sense of realization that what their actions caused to other beings.

Gender adds another layer to this story. Across a range of contexts like war, punishment to relationships and everyday conflict men have consistently reported more justification of violence as compared to women (Anderson et al., 2006). Yet it's not like "more men, less women" recent studies says that the same psychopathic traits can manifest very differently depending on gender as one facet was linked to anger and hostility in men while another facet was linked more strongly to women (Kjaervik and Thomson, 2025). This suggests that gender does not just shift the amount of violence justification attitudes present but also reshape the psychological pathways through which they are formed.

Despite decades of research has been done in examining impulsivity, self-esteem, psychopathy and gender but little research brought these threads together to ask who they interact so the present study addresses this gap by examining impulsivity and low self-esteem as predictors of justification of violence, while testing the moderating role of psychopathy and gender in shaping these relationships that aims to move beyond isolated risk factors towards a more integrated understanding of how personal vulnerability, identity and personalities interact to make violence more justifies to people.

### **Purpose of the study**

Foregoing in view, the present research therefore examines the psychological factors that contribute to the justification of violence particularly emphasizing the interplay between individual dispositions and broader social self-influence in shaping such belief systems. It is further aimed to explore the contribution of cognitive, affective, and personality-based variables in fostering justification for violent behavior. In addition, the study examines the moderating and interactive effects of salient personality traits, including impulsivity (Barratt, 1994) and psychopathy (Levenson et al., 1994), and psychological

constructs such as diminished self-esteem and gender-related expectations in shaping attitudes towards the justification of violent behaviors, specifically violence (Heise, 1998). By highlighting these factors, this research may contribute to the formation of theories of emotional and psychological reasoning, social cognition, and aggression that would in turn benefit the educational programs and policymaking.

### **Aims and Objectives**

- To examine the extent to which impulsivity and low self-esteem was associated with justification of violence.
- To investigate the direct predictive effects of impulsivity and low self-esteem on justification of violence.
- To examine the moderating role of psychopathy in the relationship between impulsivity, low self-esteem and justification of violence.
- To examine the moderating role of gender in the relationship between impulsivity, self-esteem and justification of violence.
- To assess gender differences among impulsivity, self-esteem, psychopathy, justification of violence.

### **Hypothesis**

1. Impulsivity, self-esteem and psychopathy will be significantly correlated with the justification of violence.
2. There will be a significant gender difference in the impulsivity, self-esteem, psychopathy and justification of violence.
3. Impulsivity, self-esteem, and psychopathy would significantly predict justification of violence, such that higher impulsivity and psychopathy and lower self-esteem will predict higher justification of violence.
4. Psychopathy and gender would moderate the relationship between impulsivity and justification of violence.
5. Gender moderates the association between self-esteem and justification of violence, such that the association between lower self-esteem and greater justification of violent behavior will be stronger among males than females.

## Method

### Participants

In present study, the correlational research design was used. The relationship between impulsivity, self-esteem, psychopathy and justification of violence was evaluated among young adults in general population of Pakistan. Random sampling was used to select 314 participants having equal number of males and females ranging in age from 16 to 30 years old. Using convenience sampling via an online questionnaire, a sample of 314 Pakistani young adults aged 16 to 30 was recruited through student and graduate networks. Additionally, participants who don't met the specific age range and also who provide invalid and incomplete sample were excluded from the study.

### Instruments

#### Barratt Impulsivity Scale (BIS-11)

The Barratt Impulsivity Scale (BIS-11) is a self-report scale developed by Patton, Stanford and Barratt (1995) to evaluate impulsivity specifically the tendency to act quickly without even considering the consequences. There are 30 items in the scale, ranging from ranging from Rarely/Never to Almost/Always on a 4-point Likert scale. The items are divided into three subscales: attentional impulsivity, which shows difficulties in sustaining attention and concentration, motor impulsivity which captures acting on the spur of the moment while non planning impulsivity involves a lack of consideration of the future and all these subscales combine to yield a total impulsivity score higher the scores greater the impulsivity. The BIS-11 has demonstrated a good internal consistency in previous research ( $\alpha = .79-.83$ ) while in the present study the internal consistency was  $\alpha = .799$  while the subscale consists of their own reliability, as attentional impulsivity consists of .59 to .74, motor impulsivity consists of .70 to .75, and non-planning impulsivity consists of .72 to .83, which demonstrates good reliability (Patton et al.,1995).

#### Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RES)

The self-esteem was measured using a Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale developed by Rosenberg in

1965. It's a widely used 10 items unidimensional measure rated on a 4- point Likert Scale ranging from 1(Strongly disagree) to 4(Strongly agree). Five items were reversed scored and the total scores were summed, higher scores reflecting higher global self-esteem. The RES has demonstrated a good internal consistency in previous research ( $\alpha = .77-.88$ ) while in the present study the internal consistency was  $\alpha = .803$  (Rosenberg,1965).

#### Revised Attitude towards violence scale (RATVS)

Attitude towards violence was measured using Revised Attitude towards Violence Scale that was developed by Anderson, C.A., Benjamin, A.J., Wood, P.K., and Bonacci, A.M. in 2006. It's a 39 items self-report measure assessing the acceptance and justification of violence across four domains: War, Penal Code Violence, Intimate Violence, Corporal Punishment of Children. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1(Strongly Disagree) to 5(Strongly Agree) with higher scores reflecting greater acceptance and endorsement of violence within that domain along with an alpha reliability of .921. (Anderson et al.,2006).

#### Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (LSRP)

Psychopathic traits were measured using the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale developed by Levenson, Kiehl and Fitzpatrick in 1995.It's a 26-item scale rated on 4-point Likert Scale ranging from 1(Strongly disagree) to 4(Strongly Agree). The scale consists of 2 subscales: Primary Psychopathy (16 items= reflecting lack of empathy, manipulative and selfish traits) and Secondary Psychopathy (10 items reflecting impulsivity and an unstable lifestyle). Higher scores indicating greater psychopathic tendencies. The LSPR has demonstrated a good internal consistency in previous research ( $\alpha = .80-.87$ ) while in the present study the internal consistency was  $\alpha = .771$  (Levenson et al.,1995).

### Procedure

Informed consent was taken from each participant and the Ethical Review Board of Government College University; Lahore approved this study. It

was found that there were no major ethical risks in this study. To safeguard confidentiality, names and contact information of participants were not collected and instead each participant was assigned a different ID number. Measures and demographic items were used to create a web-based survey, which was shared on social media for access and participation of participants. Before the start of the survey, participants had to sign a consent form outlining the necessary information and goals of the study. Data were gathered through an online form on Google Forms and spread through several social networks, mainly through Instagram and WhatsApp. The data collection technique used to maximize reach and meet the sample size was a mixed online method called convenience and chain-referral (snowball) sampling, in which the first eligible respondents were encouraged to share the survey link with others with whom they are in business, academic and/or personal relations. It is pertinent to mention here that all ethical considerations were

assessed and followed in accordance with the declaration of Helsinki.

#### Data analysis

To evaluate the relationship between the variables, SPSS version 25 for windows was used to perform descriptive statistics, reliability analysis and stepwise regression analysis. Independent sample T test was applied on gender to understand its role in justification of violence. To understand the moderating role of psychopathy and gender in the relationship between impulsivity, self-esteem and justification of violence, moderating analysis was conducted using PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes 2017). As the primary sample of this research was young adults aged 16 to 30 years, the original English language versions of the Barratt Impulsivity Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem, Revised Attitude towards Violence and Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale were spread among participants, as they were competent enough in English language to understand the content and items of scale in English language.

#### Results

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variable of the Sample.**

| Variable                 | F   | %    |
|--------------------------|-----|------|
| <b>Gender</b>            |     |      |
| Female                   | 157 | 50.0 |
| Male                     | 157 | 50.0 |
| <b>Age</b>               |     |      |
| Below 18                 | 15  | 4.8  |
| 19-25                    | 278 | 88.5 |
| 26-30                    | 21  | 6.7  |
| <b>Educational level</b> |     |      |
| Matric                   | 8   | 2.5  |
| Intermediate             | 44  | 14.0 |
| Bachelors                | 229 | 72.9 |

|                            |     |      |
|----------------------------|-----|------|
| Masters                    | 32  | 10.2 |
| Mphil                      | 1   | 3    |
| <b>Working status</b>      |     |      |
| Student                    | 216 | 68.8 |
| Part-time job              | 25  | 8.0  |
| Self-employed/Freelance    | 15  | 4.8  |
| Student and full-time job  | 26  | 1.6  |
| Unemployed                 | 27  | 8.6  |
| <b>Area of residency</b>   |     |      |
| Urban                      | 267 | 85.0 |
| Rural                      | 47  | 15.0 |
| <b>Living arrangements</b> |     |      |
| Family                     | 223 | 71.0 |
| Hostel                     | 87  | 27.7 |
| Alone                      | 4   | 1.3  |
| <b>Income</b>              |     |      |
| Below 50,000               | 177 | 56.4 |
| 600,000-1,000,000          | 104 | 33.1 |
| Above 1,000,000            | 33  | 10.5 |
| <b>Marital Status</b>      |     |      |
| Single                     | 283 | 90.1 |
| Married                    | 14  | 4.1  |
| Dating                     | 18  | 5.7  |
| <b>Religion</b>            |     |      |
| Islam                      | 308 | 98.1 |
| Christianity               | 3   | 1.0  |
| Atheist                    | 2   | .6   |

Prefer not to say

1

.3

Note: f = frequency, %=percentage.

Table No. 1 shows demographics of sample characteristics. Assumptions were met and criteria were met. As per data, 157 (50%) participants were females and 157 (50%) were males. In terms of age, 15 (4.8%) were below 18 years old, while 278 (88.5%) were 19-25 years old, and about 21 (6.7%) were 26-30 years old. In terms of education level, about 8 (2.5%) were in matric, while 44 (14.0%) were in intermediate, 229 (72.9%) were from the bachelor's level, 32 (10.2%) were from the master's level, and 1 (0.3%) was from the MPhil level. In terms of working status, about 216 (68.8%) were students, 25 (8.0%) were doing part-time jobs, 15 (4.8%) were self-employed, and 26 (1.6%) were students and doing full-time jobs at the same time,

while 27 (8.6%) were unemployed. In terms of residency, 267 (85.0%) belongs to urban areas while 47 (15.0%) belong to rural areas. In terms of living arrangements, 223 (71.0%) were living with parents, 87 (27.7%) were living in hostels, and 4 (1.3%) were living alone. In terms of income, 177 (56.4%) were having less than 50,000, 104 (33.1%) were having income in the 60,000-100,000 range, and 33 (10.5%) participants were having income above 100,000. In terms of marital status, 283 (90.1%) were single, 14 (4.1%) were married, and 18 (5.7%) were dating. In terms of religion, 308 (98.1%) belong to Islam, 3 (1.0%) are Christians, 2 (.6%) are atheists, and 1 (.3%) participant reported preferring not to say.

**Table 2 Intercorrelation among Self-Esteem, Psychopathy, Impulsivity, and Justification of Violence.**

| Variable | M       | SD      | 1      | 2      | 3      | 4     |
|----------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| Psych    | 22.4395 | 4.51386 | -      | .377** | .215** | .096  |
| JOV      | 84.93   | 13.996  | .337** | -      | .362** | .003  |
| Impulse  | 69.044  | 8.327   | .215** | .362** | -      | -.039 |
| SE       | 104.97  | 21.93   | .096   | .003   | -.039  | -     |

Note. M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation, Psycho=Psychopathy, JOV=Justification of Violence, Impulse=Impulsivity, SE=Self-Esteem. (N=314)

Table No. 2 shows the Pearson product-moment correlation that was conducted to understand the intercorrelation among self-esteem, impulsivity, psychopathy, and attitude towards violence. The assumptions were made and criteria were met. The results showed that psychopathy was significantly and positively associated with attitude towards violence ( $r = .377, p < 0.05$ ), which explains that increase in psychopathy increases violence. Psychopathy was positively and significantly associated with impulsivity ( $r = .215, p < 0.05$ ) and positively and non-significantly associated with self-esteem ( $r = .096, p > .05$ ). Justification of

violence was positively and significantly associated with psychopathy ( $r=.377, p<0.05$ ); justification of violence was positively and significantly associated with impulsivity ( $r=.362, p<0.05$ ); and it was positively and non-significantly associated with self-esteem ( $r=.003, p>0.05$ ). Furthermore, impulsivity shows a positive and significant association with psychopathy ( $r=.215, p<0.05$ ), a positive and significant association with attitude towards violence ( $r=.362, p<0.05$ ), and a negative and non-significant association with self-esteem ( $r=-.039, p>0.05$ ). Moreover, self-esteem was positively and non-significantly associated with psychopathy ( $r=.096, p>0.05$ ), positively and non-significantly associated with attitude towards violence ( $r=.003, p>0.05$ ), and negatively and non-significantly associated with impulsivity ( $r=-.039,$

$p > 0.05$ ). The results indicated self-esteem was non significantly associated with all variables.

**Table 3 Regression Analysis examining the predictive effect of Self-Esteem, Gender, Psychopathy and Impulsivity on Justification of Violence.**

| Model         | B      | SE    | $\beta$ | T     | P    | 95% OF CI |        |
|---------------|--------|-------|---------|-------|------|-----------|--------|
|               |        |       |         |       |      | LB        | UB     |
| 1. (Constant) | 56.819 | 7.119 |         | 7.981 | .000 | 42.811    | 70.827 |
| Impulsivity   | .567   | .083  | .362    | 6.855 | .000 | .404      | .730   |
| 2. (Constant) | 48.775 | 7.157 |         | 6.815 | .000 | 34.692    | 62.858 |
| Impulsivity   | .485   | .083  | .309    | 5.874 | .000 | .322      | .647   |
| Psychopathy   | 10.143 | 2.308 | .231    | 4.394 | .000 | 5.601     | 14.685 |
| 1. (Constant) | 39.759 | 7.603 |         | 5.229 | .000 | 24.799    | 54.720 |
| Impulsivity   | .459   | .082  | .293    | 5.617 | .000 | .298      | .620   |
| Psychopathy   | 10.532 | 2.278 | .240    | 4.622 | .000 | 6.048     | 15.015 |
| Gender        | 7.080  | 2.226 | .162    | 3.180 | .002 | 2.699     | 11.461 |
| 2. (Constant) | 38.251 | 9.738 |         | 3.928 | .000 | 19.091    | 57.412 |
| Impulsivity   | .460   | .082  | .294    | 5.614 | .000 | .299      | .622   |
| Psychopathy   | 10.466 | 2.297 | .239    | 4.556 | .000 | 5.945     | 14.986 |
| Gender        | 7.159  | 2.252 | .163    | 3.179 | .002 | 2.727     | 11.590 |
| Self-Esteem   | .062   | .251  | .013    | .248  | .804 | -.431     | .555   |

Note. CI = Confidence Interval.

Table 3 shows the Hierarchical Regression analysis. The assumptions were made and criteria were met. In step 1 impulsivity was entered as a predictor, and the model was statistically significant,  $F(1, df) = 846.99$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , having a variance of 13.1% in the justification of violence. In step 2 psychopathy was entered that was significantly predictor of justification of violence  $F(1, df) = 19.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , having a variance of additional 5.1%. In step 3, gender was added that was significantly predicting justification of violence  $F(1, df) = 10.11$ ,  $p = .002$ . The results

indicate that gender further added a 2.6% of variance. In step 4, Self-Esteem was entered. The results indicate that self-esteem did not contribute to any additional variance  $F(1, df) = .06$ ,  $p = .804$ . Moreover, the final model explained 20.8% of variance in justification of violence. The results explained that gender, psychopathy and impulsivity were positively predicting justification of violence while self-esteem was non-significant. Impulsivity was strongest predictor followed by psychopathy and gender while male reported greater justification as compared to females.

**Table No. 4 Independent sample t test to assess the Gender Differences on Impulsivity, Psychopathy, Self-Esteem and Justification of Violence.**

| Variable  | F     | P    | T      | Df  | MD       | 95% OF CI |          |
|-----------|-------|------|--------|-----|----------|-----------|----------|
|           |       |      |        |     |          | LB        | UB       |
| JOV       | 2.967 | .001 | -3.233 | 312 | -7.88535 | -12.6845  | -3.08617 |
| Impul     | .022  | .883 | -1.576 | 312 | -2.48408 | -5.58510  | .6169    |
| Psycho    | .751  | .387 | .563   | 312 | .03185   | -.07941   | .14310   |
| Self-Este | .254  | .008 | 2.651  | 312 | 1.3376   | .34467    | 2.33049  |

Note. JOV= Justification of violence, MD=mean difference, CI=Confidence Interval, Impul= Impulsivity, Psycho= Psychopathy, Self-Este=Self-Esteem.

Table 4 shows an independent sample t test that was used to assess the gender differences among justifications of violence. The assumptions were made and criteria were met. The results revealed a significant higher difference between groups having  $t(312) = -3.23$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $f = 2.967$ , with a mean difference of  $-7.88$  that shows that males reported significantly higher justification of violence as compared to females. Moreover, the impulsivity shows no gender differences between groups having  $t(312) = -1.576$ ,  $p = .883$ ,  $f = .022$  with a mean square of  $-2.48408$  that indicates that both

groups differ slightly but that not statistically significant. The psychopathy shows no significant gender differences as  $t(312) = .563$ ,  $p = .387$ ,  $f = .751$  with a mean square of  $.03185$  that indicates that both groups performed identically on psychopathy scale. Furthermore, the self-esteem shows significant differences between males and females  $t(312) = 2.65$ ,  $p = .008$ . Females ( $M = 23.108$ ) reported significantly higher in self-esteem as compared to males ( $M = 21.7707$ ) with a mean difference of  $1.34$ .

**Table 5 Moderation Analysis of Psychopathy and Gender in the Relationship of Impulsivity and Self-Esteem with Justification of Violence.**

| Variable         | B        | SE      | P     | 95% of CI |         |
|------------------|----------|---------|-------|-----------|---------|
|                  |          |         |       | LL        | UL      |
| Model 1          |          |         |       |           |         |
| Low psychopathy  | .3294    | .1133   | .0039 | .1065     | .5523   |
| High psychopathy | .6571    | .1139   | .0000 | .4224     | .8918   |
| Psychopathy (Y)  | -17.7784 | 14.2054 | .2117 | -.45.7296 | 10.1728 |
| Impulsivity (X)  | .0018    | .2560   | .9944 | -.5020    | .5056   |
| Y x W            | .3276    | .1645   | .0473 | .0040     | .6513   |
| Model 2          |          |         |       |           |         |
| Self-esteem(X)   | 1.2858   | .8059   | .1116 | -.2999    | 2.8715  |
| Psychopathy(W)   | 35.8388  | 12.1862 | .0035 | 11.8607   | 59.8168 |
| X x W            | -.9981   | .5307   | .0610 | -2.0423   | .0462   |
| Model 3          |          |         |       |           |         |
| Self-esteem (A)  | .2199    | .8640   | .7992 | -1.4802   | 1.9201  |
| Gender (B)       | 9.1502   | 12.5562 | .4667 | -15.5560  | 33.8565 |
| Ax B             | -.0475   | .5488   | .9311 | -1.1274   | 1.0324  |
| Model 4          |          |         |       |           |         |
| Impulsivity (C)  | .5482    | .2702   | .0433 | .0166     | 1.0798  |
| Gender (B)       | 6.6372   | 14.2205 | .6410 | -21.3437  | 34.6180 |
| C x B            | -.0013   | .1655   | .9938 | -.3269    | .3243   |

Note. Y x W= Interaction between impulsivity and psychopathy, X x W= Interaction between Self-esteem and Psychopathy, A x B= Interaction between self-esteem and gender, C x B= Interaction between impulsivity and gender

In Table no 5 Moderation Analysis were conducted. The process SPSS Macros was used for the analysis of the data (Hayes, 2022). In Model 1, Impulsivity that was independent variable was having a non-significant effect on the dependent variable that was justification of violence.

( $B = .0018$ ,  $p = .9944$ ). Moreover, the moderator psychopathy was having nonsignificant effect on justification of violence ( $B = -17.7784$ ,  $p = .2117$ ). The interaction between psychopathy and impulsivity was significant on justification of violence ( $B = .3276$ ,  $p = .0473$ ). Furthermore, the

conditional effect demonstrates that higher levels of psychopathy lead to stronger effect of impulsivity on justification of violence ( $B=.6571$ ,  $p=.0000$ ) and lower levels of psychopathy lower the effect on impulsivity on justification of violence. ( $B=.3294$ ,  $p=.0039$ ). In model 2, self-esteem that was independent variable was having a non-significant effect on the dependent variable that was justification of violence ( $B=1.2858$ ,  $p=.1116$ ). The impact of moderator on attitude towards violence was significant. ( $B=35.8388$ ,  $p=.0035$ ). Moreover, the interactive effect of psychopathy and self-esteem was non-significant ( $B=-.9981$ ,  $p=.0610$ ). In model 3, impulsivity was having a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable that was justification of violence. ( $B=.5482$ ,  $p=.0433$ ). The moderator gender was non-significant on justification of violence ( $B=6.6372$ ,  $p=.6410$ ). The interactive effect of impulsivity and gender was negative and non-significant ( $B=-.0013$ ,  $p=.9938$ ) that demonstrates that impulsivity predicts justification of violence but this relationship is not moderated by gender. In model 4, impulsivity was an independent variable that was having a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable that was justification of violence. ( $B=.5482$ ,  $p=.0433$ ). The moderator gender was non-significant on justification of violence ( $B=6.6372$ ,  $p=.6410$ ). The interactive effect of impulsivity and gender was negative and non-significant ( $B=-.0013$ ,  $p=.9938$ ) that demonstrates that impulsivity predicts justification of violence but this relationship is not moderated by gender.

### Discussion

The present study examined impulsivity and low self-esteem as predictors of justification of violence while testing the moderating effect of psychopathy and gender. The study yield unexpected results as some of the hypotheses were partially supported that reveals unexpected patterns targeting the theoretical frameworks.

An unexpected picture emerged while examining that who these variables were correlated to each other. Consistent with the expectations the psychopathy was positively and significantly correlated with justification of violence and

impulsivity that reinforce the well-established view about psychopathic traits that says that lack of empathy and callousness are deeply connected with the cognitions that justify causing harm (Levenson et al.,1995). While self-esteem showed a non-significant relationship with all the variables like psychopathy, justification of violence, impulsivity. These results targets the traditional assumptions that says that lower the self-esteem more the justification of violence while these results were consistent with the Baumeister et al. (1996) that clears that no link was found between self-esteem and justification of violence and also one echoed in most recent work that says that weak connection was found between self-esteem and aggressive cognitions unless it would be examined with other personality factors (Linares et al.,2021).

Gender emerged as a meaningful though selective dividing line across the variables. Men reported high in justification of violence as compared to females that was supported with the Social Role Theory (Eagly,1987) that explains that men and women are being socialized into different behavioral roles as males are linked to dominance, assertiveness and using force to exert power and control on others to solve problems which received an empirical support in contemporary research that says that higher justification beliefs were found across war, punishment and relationships among males (Anderson et al.,2006). Meanwhile women reported higher self-esteem in this research which is against the large-scale meta-analysis that favors the males (Kling et al.,1999 and Khan et al. (2024) argue that the cultural and contextual factors must be shaped different in this sample as compared to the western population. While impulsivity and psychopathy showed no gender differences that indicated that these trait level vulnerabilities are distributed differently across males and females.

A clearer hierarchy of influence was found when all the predictors were considered together. Once tested with self-esteem, psychopathy and gender in a combined model impulsivity role become more noticeable which is consistent with the Self Control Theory (Gottfredson and Hirschi,1990) which states that low self-control is amongst the

stronger predictor of antisocial and violence supported behavior across virtually every context studied. This is echoed in the recent study that says that consistent, replicable associations with aggressive and violence endorsing outcomes were found in impulsivity related facets across wide range of population (Bresin, 2019). Particularly self-esteem failed to predict justification of violence despite having prominence in popular and scholarly explanation of violence. As this pattern fit in with the Threatened Egotism Theory (Baumeister et al., 1996) that explains that violence does not come into action because of low self-worth but the reviews from others that challenges an individual's self-views. These findings were also consistent with the latest multi informed longitudinal study of 674 families that shows that no systematic effect of self-esteem was found on aggression even after narcissism was controlled (Orth et al., 2026). Taken together impulsivity and psychopathy which are dispositional traits are more likely to shape an individual's tendency to perceive and respond to the suffering of others that carry far more explanatory load for violence justification attitudes as compared to how people feel about themselves as argued by Kazmi et al. (2024). Perhaps the most unexpected findings of this study emerged when psychopathy emerged as a moderator rather than just a predictor. Psychopathy appeared as a buffer in this study that weaken the relationship at higher levels of psychopathic traits rather than just intensifying the link between impulsivity and violence justification. Triarchic Model of Psychopathy better explains this concepts by conceptualizing that psychopathy is composed of boldness, meanness and disinhibition operating somewhat independently as individuals high in psychopathic meanness hold more violence justification attitude that are already stable and elevated in psychopathic traits that further leave little room for impulsivity to further shift those attitude towards upwards (Patrick et al., 2009 and Iftikhar et al. (2025) that are consistent with the recent research that states that rather than impulsivity linked traits the affective and interpersonal traits tend to dominate the prediction of violent

outcomes once both are entered in to the same statistical model (Hoyle et al., 2019). Gender by contrast did not significantly moderate the relationship between impulsivity and justification of violence, indicating that although men and women differ in their overall endorsement of violence justifying beliefs, the specific pathways through which impulsivity translates into such beliefs operates similarly across genders (Kazmi et al., 2023).

Not every hypothesized interaction held up scrutiny, however self-esteem influence on violence justification attitude were more consistent than gender or psychopathy level with neither this variable was moderating this relationship. This stability is more consistent with the Sociometer Theory that explains that self-esteem is an internal monitor of social belongings and relational language that operates in fundamentally similar way across individuals regardless of the gender or personality factors that reflecting that its quite universal psychological process rather than one that shifts depending on gender or psychopathic traits (Baumeister and Leary, 2000).

Taken as a whole these findings sketch a portrait of violence justification attitude that is more interacting and conditional than any of the variable could explain on its own. The findings confirm that psychopathy and impulsivity are strong predictors of justification of violence while offering a more nuanced resolution to the ongoing debate on self-esteem's role that indicates that it must be having genuine yet statistically obscured unless considered along with other personality factors. The dampening effect of psychopathy indicated that the relationship among these traits is not purely cumulative instead they may function as upper limit under certain conditions thus risking who far one risk factor can drive an already elevated tendency to justify violence.

### Limitation

Despite the contributions of the present study several limitations should also be acknowledged. Cross sectional research design was utilized in the research due to which we cannot prove cause and affect relations but it can show the association and

moderation between the variables. All the variables were assessed by using self-report questionnaires that are susceptible to social biases and response distortions. The sample may not be representative of the broader population that limits the generalizability of finding to other population such as clinical or forensic sample. Gender was likely treated as a binary variable in the moderation analysis which does not captures the full spectrum of gender identity. Finally, the study does not account for potentially relevant confounding variables such as trauma history, exposure to violent media which are linked to the violence justification attitudes in prior literature and could partially explain the observed relationships.

### Implications

This study offers a meaningful shift in who we understand who is likely to justify violence and why. By showing that impulsivity and psychopathy drive violence justification attitude this suggest that real world prevention efforts may see greater impact in society by teaching emotional regulation and impulse control this would reshape school counseling programs and youth community-based mentorship initiatives and community-based violence prevention efforts. This underscores the value of distinguishing between different personality profiles while assessing the risk factor rather than treating all high-risk individuals at uniform group this can improve the accuracy and fairness of psychological assessment in clinical, forensic and educational settings.

For humanity this research offers a pathway to prevention rather than punishment. By identifying the psychological roots of violence justification beliefs this work can inform school programs, parenting resources, community interventions and rehabilitation efforts that intervene early before attitudes becomes action. Ultimately this research contributes to reduce the human tendency to rationalize harm and to build communities where empathy, self-awareness and emotional regulation are nurtured as genuine alternatives to violence.

### Conclusion

This study sets out to understand a question that lies at the heart of human conflict this not only explains why people become violent but also why they justify their acts. The findings explain that this belief is shaped not because of individual perception about themselves rather it happens because of individuals' tendency to react quickly without considering the consequences and psychopathic traits plays a significant role in violence justifying beliefs. Self-Esteem emerged as a non-significant predictor of justification of violence. Clear gender differences were also found as males reported high justification of violence, females reported high on self-esteem, impulsivity and psychopathy remained similar across genders. When tested together impulsivity emerged as a strong predictor of justification of violence with gender and psychopathy contributing significantly, psychopathy in particular standing out as powerful and independent force. Moderation analysis yield results that psychopathy softened the relationship between impulsivity and violence justification while gender was not having the same relationship neither it changes show that self-esteem is related to violence justification beliefs and psychopathy too left the self-esteem violence link largely unchanged. These results together give a picture of violence justification in which impulsivity personality factors strongly contributes to violence justification that was differently experienced by men and women. Rather than offering a simple overview on why people justify violence this study provides a more layered reality in which some psychological factors work independently, others quietly in the background and still others not at all in the ways expected.

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