



Manual On Empowerment & Boundaries Assessment (EBA) And Boundaries Enhancement Therapy (BET): A Comprehensive Research Framework For Boundary Restoration Among Survivors Of Narcissistic Abuse

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Abstract

Narcissistic abuse represents a distinct and severe form of psychological trauma characterized by coercive control, gaslighting, emotional manipulation, and systematic erosion of personal boundaries. Despite growing recognition of its clinical impact, existing assessment instruments inadequately capture boundary dysfunction—the core mechanism through which narcissistic abuse operates. The present paper introduces the Empowerment & Boundaries Assessment (EBA) and Boundaries Enhancement Therapy (BET) as an integrated, empirically informed framework for assessment, intervention, and outcome evaluation among survivors of narcissistic abuse. The EBA is a multidimensional self-report measure assessing emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational boundary functioning, while BET is a structured, phase-based therapeutic model designed to restore autonomy, empowerment, and relational safety. This paper details the theoretical foundations, development, psychometric properties, administration, clinical applications, ethical considerations, and research implications of EBA and BET. Together, these tools provide a comprehensive, trauma-informed, and research-ready model for clinicians and scholars working in the field of narcissistic abuse recovery.

Keywords: Narcissistic abuse, psychological boundaries, empowerment, trauma-informed care, assessment, psychotherapy

1.0 Introduction to Empowerment & Boundary Science

Empowerment and boundary science form the conceptual backbone for understanding the psychological consequences of narcissistic abuse (Sindhu B, Puri A, Banerjee P, et al) Unlike general trauma, narcissistic abuse targets the survivor's sense of self, autonomy, and capacity to regulate interpersonal boundaries. This form of abuse undermines the survivors:

- Emotional independence
- Cognitive clarity
- Behavioural assertiveness
- Relational autonomy

Narcissistic abuse is typically characterized by:

- Coercive control
- Gaslighting
- Emotional destabilization
- Intermittent reinforcement
- Identity erosion

Over time, survivors experience:

- Diminished autonomy
- Vulnerability to manipulation
- Impaired emotional regulation
- Decision-making paralysis
- Chronic stress, dissociation, and trauma symptoms

Standard measures (e.g., DASS-21, IPDE, NPI) assess distress or personality traits but fail to capture boundary functioning, the central mechanism through which narcissistic abuse operates.

To address this gap, the Empowerment & Boundaries Assessment (EBA) was created. It evaluates boundary functioning across four domains:

- Emotional
- Behavioural
- Cognitive
- Social/Relational

To complement EBA, Boundaries Enhancement Therapy (BET) was developed a structured, multi-phase therapeutic model designed to repair boundary collapse and restore empowerment, identity, and autonomy. (Sindhu B, Puri A, Banerjee P, et al)

Together, EBA + BET form a comprehensive, empirically aligned system for:

- Clinical diagnosis
- Treatment planning
- Therapeutic intervention
- Outcome evaluation
- Doctoral-level research

2.0 Theoretical Foundations

The EBA and BET frameworks are grounded in five major theoretical domains:

2.1 Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-informed care emphasizes:

- Safety
- Empowerment
- Trustworthiness
- Collaboration
- Choice

These principles are essential because survivors of narcissistic abuse often enter therapy in states of hypervigilance, guilt, and dependency.

2.2 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

SDT proposes that individuals require:

- Autonomy
- Competence
- Relatedness

Narcissistic abuse disrupts all three needs. Boundary work becomes the pathway to restoring autonomy and self-direction.

2.3 Boundary Theory

Boundary Theory conceptualizes boundaries as permeable psychological filters regulating:

- Emotional input
- Cognitive influence
- Behavioural actions
- Relational involvement

Healthy boundaries promote self-protection without isolation. Narcissistic abuse erodes these filters.

2.4 Coercive Control and Psychological Abuse Models

These models explain how abusers systematically:

- Dominate
- Manipulate
- Isolate
- Weaken the self-concept

Boundary collapse is the primary mechanism of control, making boundary restoration essential for recovery.

2.5 Integrative Psychospiritual & Subconscious Energy Models

- Symbolic healing (mandala therapy)
- Somatic processing
- Subconscious emotional release
- Psychospiritual integration

These approaches acknowledge that empowerment is experiential, not only cognitive.

3.0 Understanding Narcissistic Abuse & Boundary Collapse

Narcissistic abuse leads to dysfunction in four major boundary domains:

3.1 Emotional Boundary Collapse

- Survivor internalizes the abuser's emotions.
- Experiences guilt, shame, self-blame.
- Emotional independence deteriorates.
- Emotional manipulation becomes normalized.

3.2 Cognitive Boundary Distortion

Gaslighting and thought manipulation cause:

- Confusion
- Self-doubt
- Lost trust in one's perceptions
- Impaired decision-making
- Difficulty maintaining reality-testing

3.3 Behavioural Boundary Erosion

Fear-based behaviour emerges:

- Difficulty saying “no”
- Compliance to avoid conflict
- Loss of personal priorities
- Chronic self-sacrifice

3.4 Relational Boundary Damage

The abuser isolates the survivor by:

- Discouraging friendships
- Controlling social exposure
- Creating dependency
- Undermining support systems
- The EBA directly measures impairments in these areas.

4.0 Development of the Empowerment & Boundaries Assessment (EBA)

4.1 Conceptualization

The scale was conceptualized through:

- Extensive literature review
- Clinical experiences with victims
- Analysis of boundary-related symptoms
- Integration of empowerment theory

The four domains were identified as essential components of boundary functioning.

4.2 Item Generation

The creation process involved:

- Initial development of 40 items reflecting boundary constructs.
- Expert review by psychologists and researchers.
- Removal of redundant or unclear items.
- Finalization of 25 items across four domains.
- These items capture subtle manifestations of empowerment and boundary health specific to narcissistic abuse survivors.

4.3 Response Format

- 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).
- Allows nuance while maintaining clarity.
- Quick to administer, easy to score.

5.0 Psychometric Structure & Standardization of the EBA

5.1 Reliability

Total Scale: $\alpha = .92$

Subscales: $\alpha = .84\text{--}.89$

Test-Retest (4 weeks): $r = .87$

These scores indicate excellent reliability and stability.

5.2 Validity

- Construct Validity: PCA confirmed four-factor structure.
- Convergent Validity: Strong negative correlations with depression, anxiety, and stress.
- Discriminant Validity: Minimal association with social desirability.
- Criterion Validity: Lower EBA scores predicted personality vulnerabilities on IPDE.

5.3 Significance

EBA is the first standardized tool designed specifically to measure empowerment and boundaries in survivors of narcissistic abuse.

6.0 Administration & Scoring Manual

6.1 Target Population

- Adults experiencing narcissistic abuse
- Both genders (including underrepresented male survivors)
- Clinical, research, and community settings

6.2 Administration Time

10–15 minutes

Suitable for repeated use across therapeutic timelines

6.3 Scoring Procedure

- Emotional Boundaries: 6–30
- Behavioural Boundaries: 6–30
- Cognitive Boundaries: 6–30

- Social/Relational Boundaries: 7–35
- Total Score Range: 25–125

Higher scores indicate stronger boundaries.

7.0 Interpretation Guidelines

7.1 Strong Boundaries (100–125)

- High empowerment
- Clear self-identity
- Low vulnerability to manipulation

7.2 Moderate Boundaries (75–99)

- Some boundary inconsistencies
- Requires therapeutic strengthening
- At moderate risk for relational manipulation

7.3 Weak Boundaries (Below 75)

- High vulnerability
- Collapsed emotional and relational autonomy
- Strong recommendation for BET or trauma-informed therapy

8.0 Clinical Applications of EBA in Psychotherapy

EBA assists clinicians by:

8.1 Case Formulation

Identifies weaknesses across four domains.

8.2 Treatment Planning

Examples:

Emotional impairments → affect regulation

Cognitive impairments → cognitive restructuring

Behavioural impairments → assertiveness training

Relational impairments → social reconnection

8.3 Progress Monitoring

Administer at:

- Intake
- Mid-treatment
- Termination
- 3, 6, 12-month follow-up

8.4 Risk Assessment

- Low boundary scores may indicate:
- Susceptibility to returning to the abuser
- Difficulty exiting toxic dynamics

9.0 Foundations of Boundaries Enhancement Therapy (BET)

BET is a structured therapeutic model integrating:

- Trauma therapy
- Empowerment psychology
- Cognitive-behavioural principles
- Expressive therapies
- Subconscious energy healing
- Somatic and mindfulness techniques

BET aims to:

- Restore autonomy
- Rebuild emotional independence
- Liberate cognitive clarity
- Strengthen assertiveness
- Reconstruct relational safety

10.0 BET Protocol: Phases, Techniques & Structure

BET consists of five structured phases:

10.1 Phase 1: Stabilization & Psychoeducation

Focus:

- Emotional safety
- Understanding narcissistic abuse
- Dismantling self-blame

Techniques:

- Grounding
- Nervous system stabilization
- Psychoeducation
- Narrative reframing

10.2 Phase 2: Boundary Reconstruction**Focus:**

- Emotional clarity
- Behavioural independence
- Cognitive autonomy

Techniques:

- Assertiveness training
- Thought restructuring
- Emotional labelling
- Values clarification

10.3 Phase 3: Empowerment Enhancement**Focus:**

- Reclaiming identity
- Strengthening agency
- Restoring confidence

Techniques:

- Empowerment reframing
- Seht-based emotional processing
- Mandala therapy for symbolic empowerment

10.4 Phase 4: Relational Reintegration**Focus:**

- Rebuilding healthy social networks
- Establishing safe relational engagement

Techniques:

- Social mapping
- Relationship skills training
- Re-establishing family/friend connections

10.5 Phase 5: Maintenance & Relapse Prevention**Focus:**

- Future-proof boundary health
- Preventing relational regression

Techniques:

- Boundary scripts
- Crisis plans
- Empowerment mapping

11.0 Integration of EBA With BET for Outcome Tracking

EBA provides quantitative tracking for BET

- Integration Cycle
- Baseline EBA
- Initiation of BET
- Mid-Treatment EBA
- Post-Treatment EBA
- Long-Term Follow-up

This allows for:

- Measurable therapeutic outcomes
- Research validation
- Client self-awareness

12.0 Ethical Guidelines

Ethical treatment of survivors requires:

- Strict confidentiality
- Trauma-informed delivery
- Non-judgmental communication
- Safeguarding autonomy
- Careful handling of disclosures
- Prioritizing emotional safety
- Informed consent and assent at every step

13.0 Research Guidelines for PhD Scholars Using EBA & BET

13.1 Recommended Research Designs

- Correlational studies
- Longitudinal outcome studies
- Randomized/controlled trials
- Mixed-methods approaches
- Cross-cultural validation studies

13.2 Sample Size Requirements

Minimum N = 200–300 for factor analysis

Smaller sample acceptable for qualitative or mixed-method studies

13.3 Hypothesis Examples

- BET significantly increases EBA scores over time
- Boundary restoration mediates emotional recovery
- EBA scores predict susceptibility to manipulation
- Cognitive boundary scores predict gaslighting vulnerability

13.4 Data Analysis Techniques

- PCA/CFA
- correlation matrix
- regression analysis
- structural equation modelling (SEM)
- mediation/moderation analysis
- repeated-measures ANOVA

14.0 Conclusion

The integration of the Empowerment & Boundaries Assessment (EBA) and Boundaries Enhancement Therapy (BET) represents a landmark advancement in the psychological understanding and treatment of narcissistic abuse.

The EBA provides:

- A psychometrically validated assessment
- A multidimensional map of boundary functioning
- An evidence-based diagnostic tool

BET offers:

- A structured therapeutic model
- Stepwise boundary restoration
- Empowerment-based healing
- Long-term resilience building

Together, they create a holistic, clinically grounded, research-backed system for:

- Clinicians
- Doctoral scholars
- Researchers
- Trauma specialists
- Therapists specializing in abuse recovery

This manual stands as a comprehensive theoretical and practical framework for advancing the field of narcissistic abuse research and treatment.

The Empowerment & Boundaries Assessment (EBA)**Response Format****5-point Likert scale:****1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree****Domain 1: Emotional Boundaries (6 items)**

1. I can identify when my emotions are influenced by my partner's words or actions.

2. I can maintain my emotional stability even when my partner is critical.

3. I recognize when I feel guilt or shame that is induced by my partner.

4. I can separate my feelings from my partner's anger or mood swings.

5. I can acknowledge my emotions without judgment, even after conflict.

6. I can recover emotionally after my partner manipulates or criticizes me.

Domain 2: Behavioral Boundaries (6 items)

7. I feel comfortable saying “no” to my partner when something feels wrong.

8. I can limit my time or engagement with my partner to protect my well-being.

9. I can refuse to comply with my partner’s unreasonable demands.

10. I avoid doing things out of fear of my partner’s reaction. (reverse-scored)

11. I can enforce consequences if my partner crosses personal limits.

12. I act in ways that prioritize my safety and well-being over appeasing my partner.

Domain 3: Cognitive Boundaries (6 items)

13. I trust my own judgment even when my partner contradicts me.

14. I can differentiate my beliefs and values from those imposed by my partner.

15. I avoid doubting myself when my partner tries to manipulate my thinking.

16. I maintain clarity of thought in the face of gaslighting or blame-shifting.

17. I am able to make independent decisions without fear of disapproval.

18. I recognize when my thoughts are being influenced by manipulation rather than reality.

Domain 4: Social/Relational Boundaries (7 items)

19. I maintain relationships with friends or family even if my partner disapproves.

20. I can ask for support without feeling guilty or weak.

21. I protect my personal information and privacy from my partner's control.

22. I can spend time alone or pursue personal activities without guilt.

23. I recognize when my social interactions are being restricted by my partner.

24. I maintain a support system outside the relationship.

25. I feel empowered to seek help when I experience abuse or distress.

Administration Guidelines

Target Group: Individuals who identify as victims of narcissistic abuse in intimate relationships.

Duration: 10–15 minutes.

Format: Self-report; paper-pencil or digital administration.

Timepoints: Pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up (e.g., 3 months, 6 months, 12 months).

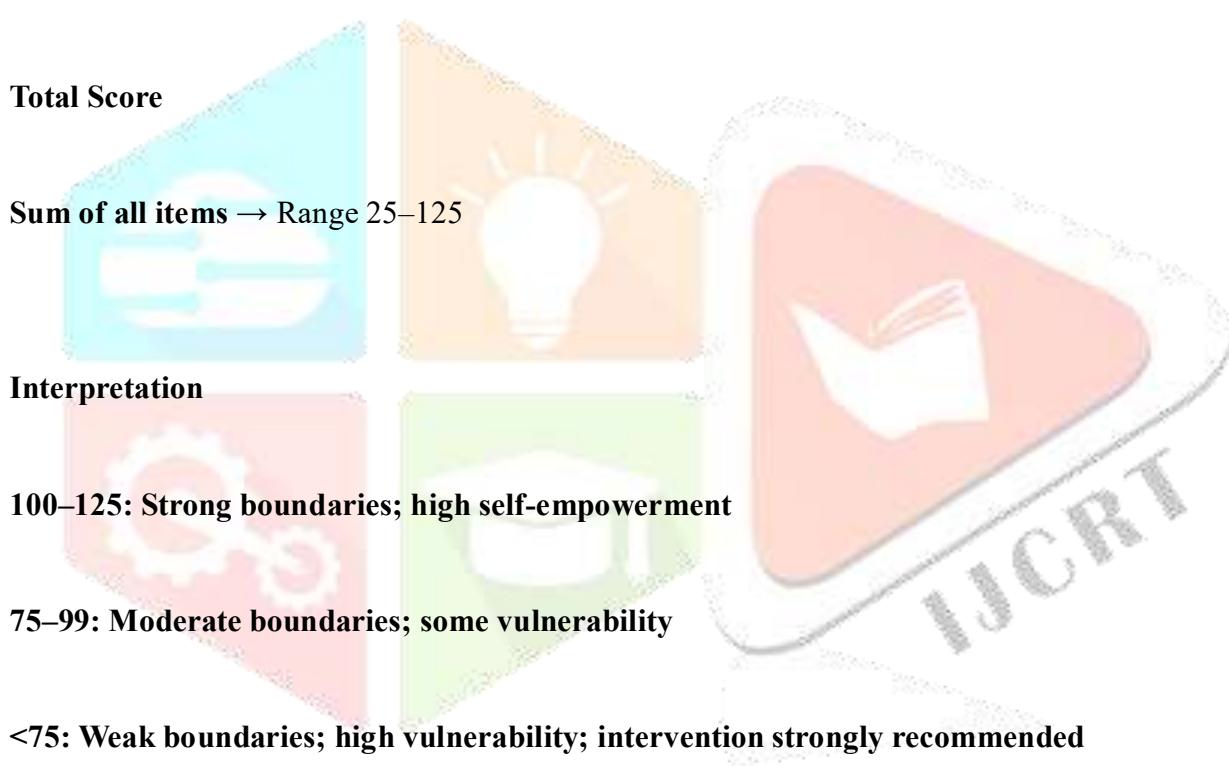
Subscale Scores

Emotional Boundaries: Items 1–6 → 6–30

Behavioral Boundaries: Items 7–12 → 6–30

Cognitive Boundaries: Items 13–18 → 6–30

Social/Relational Boundaries: Items 19–25 → 7–35



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