

Intimate Partner Violence and Resilient Women

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Background

Intimate partner violence (IPV) disproportionately affects women on welfare with an estimated prevalence two to three times larger than the national prevalence rates of IPV for all women. Current IPV rates among welfare recipient women range from 8.5% to 41.4%; estimates of lifetime physical abuse range from 40% to 60%.

Economic dependency is frequently mentioned as a principle reason why victimized women do not leave their abusers. Being employed moves women towards economic independence, and increases the power balance within the relationship. IPV's influence on victim's employment may be dependent on the interactions of multiple demographic (e.g. age, education, race, home environment) and mediating factors (e.g. social support, physical health, mental health, parenting stress).

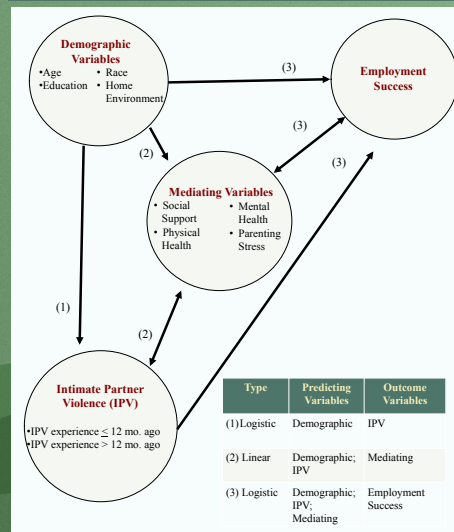
Purpose

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of IPV on employment among women leaving welfare in the State of Florida.

Specifically, this study's main goals were to:

1. Examine the impact of demographic differences on the experience of IPV.
2. Look at the impact of mediating variables on employment success, and the degree to which experiencing IPV influences this relationship.

Figure 1. Theoretical Model and Quantitative Analysis



Adapted from Coulter & Harrison, 2004

Methods

Design Cross-sectional, Mixed Methods
 • This study focuses on the quantitative phase of a complementary, mixed methods approach to explore the complex relationship between employment and IPV

Inclusion Criteria

- Women
- ≥18 years old
- Speak English
- Were/had ever been 2000-2002 WAGES (Work and Gain Economic Self Sufficiency) recipients under Florida's welfare reform bill
- In an intimate partner relationship at the time of the interview

Measures

Demographic Variables

- race, marital status, family size, family income, education level, and place of residence

Intimate Partner Violence Assessment

- Revised Conflicts Tactics Scale (CTS2)
- Physical Assault, and Psychological Aggression scales
- 5 additional items proposed by advisory board and a local shelter o isolation, jealousy, control, and injury

Mediating Variables

- Social support
- Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ)
- Employer support
- Two items indicating if employer was supportive of the employee during personal problems
- Parenting stress
- Parental Distress (PD) Subscale of the Parenting Stress Index/Short Form (PSI-SF)
- Physical and mental health
- Physical Health (PCS-12) and Mental Health (MCS-12) Scales, of the SF-12 Health Survey
- Employment success
- Defined as 6 months of employment, average of 30 hrs/week

Data Collection Structured telephone interviews

Analysis Data were analyzed using SPSS v10
 Descriptive analyses for overall sample
 • Frequencies, and cross-tabulations
 Stepwise logistic regression were used to:
 • Predict scores on the mediating variables, by using demographic measures and IPV indicators
 • Predict employment success, by using demographic measures, IPV indicators, and the mediating variables

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of the Study Participants (N=218)

	Percent (%)
Suitable home	
Live in house, apt, trailer	98%
Home big enough for family	85%
Condition acceptable	90%
Safe neighborhood	84%
All of the above	72%
Never married ^a	59%
Technical educ./special skills training	50%
Any further education, past year	17%
Race^b	
White	42%
Black	51%
Other	7%
Age, in years^c (mean ± standard deviation, range)	32.6 ± 8.57, 19-58

^a Age F(1, 410)=10.06, p<.01 ^b Never-married Chi-square (1)=5.01, p<.05
^c Race (African-American vs. White or Other) Chi-square (1)=8.22, p<.01

Table 2. Distribution of Intimate Partner Violence Incidence Scores (N=218)

Detailed Instrument Outcomes	Mean	Standard Deviation (DV)
Recent IPV incidents (within the past 12 mo.)		
Psychological	25.90	34.69
Physical	4.56	11.44
Combined (Phy-Psy)	30.46	43.17
Prior IPV incidents (before the past 12 mo.)		
Psychological	.51	1.38
Physical	1.12	2.52
Combined (with another partner)	.11	.89
Combined (with same partner)	1.53	3.53
Group Differences		Percent (%)
Recent IPV (past 12 mo.)		88%
Combined (Phy-Psy) Recent IPV ^a		60%
Combined (Phy-Psy) Prior IPV ^b		61%

IPV=intimate partner violence
 CTS2 score >9 (called Combined Recent IPV in this table) Chi square (1)=16.80, p<.0001 ^aPrior IPV Chi square (1)=3.61, p=.05

Table 3. Relationship Between IPV Indicators and Mediating Variables (N=218)

Correlations (r)	Social Support ^a	Employer Support	Physical Health	Mental Health	Parenting Stress ^b
Age, in years	.02	.09	-.31***	-.00	-.04
African American	-.05	-.01	.07	-.02	-.04
Ever married	.05	.09	-.17*	-.02	.08
Technical training/skill	.06	-.05	-.07	.04	.12
Education, past year	.02	.07	.14*	-.02	.02
Suitable housing	.29***	.06	.12	.16*	.20**
Prior IPV (before past 12 mo.)	-.27***	-.08	-.13	-.19**	-.09
Recent IPV (past 12 mo.)	-.27***	-.12	.01	-.35***	-.25***
Mean ± Std. Dev.	11.22 ± 3.82	18 ± 1.19	44.51 ± 12.03	44.89 ± 12.05	41.71 ± 8.53

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001
^aSocial support: F(1,409)=4.66, p<.05 ^bParenting stress: F(1,409)=6.13, p<.05

Table 4. Linear Regression Analyses of IPV and Mediating Variables (N=218)

	Social Support	Physical Health	Mental Health	Parenting Stress Index
Overall Equation	F(3,214)=14.03***	F(3,214)=11.71***	F(2,215)=16.75***	F(8,209)=10.74***
Age, in years	Removed in Step 4	F=.46***	Removed in Step 5	Removed in step 4
African-American (Y/N)	Removed in Step 2	Removed in Step 3	Removed in Step 3	Removed in Step 1
Ever married (Y/N)	Removed in Step 5	Removed in Step 1	Removed in Step 4	Removed in Step 6
Technical education (Y/N)	Removed in Step 1	Removed in Step 2	Removed in Step 1	Removed in Step 5
Education, past year (Y/N)	Removed in Step 3	F=4.30*	Removed in Step 2	Removed in Step 3
Suitable Housing (Y/N)	F=1.90***	F=4.30*	F=2.89 (ns)	F=3.20, p<.05
Prior IPV (before past 12 mo.)	F=-1.31*	Removed in Step 5	Removed in Step 6	Removed in Step 2
Recent IPV (within past 12 mo.)	F=-1.55**	Removed in Step 4	F=-7.74***	F=-3.99***

(ns)=not significant IPV=intimate partner violence
 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Implications & Limitations

This study's analyses were focused on those participants who reported being in a current intimate partner relationship at the time of the interview, the majority of which also reported never having been married. Most significant findings include:

- Nearly half (49%; n=107) of all participants met the criteria for employment success, which was more likely if the respondent was in good physical health (OR=1.05) and had experienced IPV in the period prior to the past 12 months (OR=2.17).
- Those who had experienced IPV prior to the past 12 months (prior IPV) were almost four times more likely to have also experienced IPV within the past 12 months (recent IPV).
- Women who were currently in a relationship and who had at least technical training or a specialized skill were significantly less likely to have experienced recent IPV.
- Social support, mental health, and parenting stress were positively correlated with having a suitable residence, and also negatively correlated with Prior and Recent IPV.
- Experiencing recent IPV also predicted lower levels of social support
- Nearly half of all women currently in an intimate relationship met the criteria for employment success, which was more likely if the respondent was in good physical health and had experienced IPV in the period prior to the past 12 months (prior IPV).
- Physical health was negatively correlated with age and was positively correlated with education in the past year.
- Prior IPV was associated with higher levels of current violence, lower mental health, and less social support.

Implications & Recommendations

The interrelationships of the impact of violence with demographics, social support, physical and mental health, parenting stress, and technical education provide directions for intervention which may increase the likelihood of employment success. Additionally, the support of family and community linkages – available at higher levels among African-American or other racial/ethnic minorities – may assist many resilient women in successful transitions from welfare to work.

Social workers and others providing services to women transitioning from welfare to employment are suggested to focus on such variables noted above to alleviate the effects of IPV. Future research directions include the exploration of the possible differential relationships of mediating variables when encountered by women currently in a relationship and those not currently in a relationship.

Limitations

- It may be argued that women who had a somewhat more positive experience in the WAGES program might be most likely to respond to a general recruitment effort.
- The study should not be generalized to the general welfare-recipient IPV victims population due to the exclusion of welfare-recipient, male victims of IPV.

Disclaimer:

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