



Predictors of vulnerability and aggression in severe intimate partner violence

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the characteristics of victim vulnerability as well as the violence perpetrated by abusers against women in relationships is essential for professionals in the field who are adopting intervention measures. The current study aimed to examine the differences between severe ($n = 805$) and less severe ($n = 805$) intimate partner violence (IPV) as well as to identify the variables that predict severe IPV. Chi-square test and logistic regression analysis were used to examine the information from police reports on IPV in Catalonia (Spain) between 2016 and 2017, obtained through the Police Risk Assessment Questionnaire (PRAQ). In relation to the victims, isolation, minimization of abuse, fear of being seriously assaulted, substance abuse and pregnancy increased the risk of suffering severe IPV, while being in a new relationship and the existence of prior police reports diminished it. As for the aggressor, previous sexual aggression and abuse, degrading treatment, threats, harassment, control, and jealousy increased the probability of committing severe IPV. Some implications for intervening between aggressors and victims of IPV are discussed.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 25 February 2020
Accepted 5 August 2020

KEYWORDS

Vulnerability; risk factors;
male batterers; battered
women

Femicide is a serious public health problem that requires urgent action to prevent (Stöckl et al., 2013; World Health Organization, 2013). In addition, this type of extreme aggression against women in relationships also causes harmful consequences for children who are exposed to a context of family violence (Davies et al., 2015; Hernández, 2018). Thus, it is essential to continue examining both the risk factors for becoming an aggressor and the vulnerability factors for becoming a victim of this type of severe violence.

Intimate partner violence can be classified as either severe or less severe (Cunha & Gonçalves, 2016; Dobash et al., 2007). Severe intimate partner violence (S-IPV) includes attempted or completed femicide, as well as the assault that endangers a woman's life, such as physical abuse that results in bone fractures or hospitalization (Bendlin & Sheridan, 2019; Campbell et al., 2003; Echeburúa et al., 2009; Hernández, 2018). Less severe intimate partner violence (LS-IPV) includes other types of abuse, such as psychological or minor physical violence (Cunha & Gonçalves, 2016; Echeburúa et al., 2008). Knowledge of the etiology of both S-IPV and LS-IPV has important