

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Improving the mental health of women intimate partner violence survivors: Findings from a realist review of psychosocial interventions

Sharli Anne Paphitis<sup>1\*</sup>, Abigail Bentley<sup>2#</sup>, Laura Asher<sup>3</sup>, David Osrin<sup>4</sup>, Sian Oram<sup>1</sup>

**1** Institute of Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience, King's College London, London, United Kingdom, **2** Gender Violence and Health Centre, Department of Global Health and Development, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, United Kingdom, **3** Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, United Kingdom, **4** Institute for Global Health, University College London, London, United Kingdom

# Current address: Institute for Research in Social Welfare Politics (Polibienestar), University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain

\* [sharli.paphitis@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:sharli.paphitis@kcl.ac.uk)



## OPEN ACCESS

**Citation:** Paphitis SA, Bentley A, Asher L, Osrin D, Oram S (2022) Improving the mental health of women intimate partner violence survivors: Findings from a realist review of psychosocial interventions. PLoS ONE 17(3): e0264845. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0264845>

**Editor:** Michelle L. Munro-Kramer, University of Michigan, UNITED STATES

**Received:** September 8, 2021

**Accepted:** February 17, 2022

**Published:** March 17, 2022

**Peer Review History:** PLOS recognizes the benefits of transparency in the peer review process; therefore, we enable the publication of all of the content of peer review and author responses alongside final, published articles. The editorial history of this article is available here: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0264845>

**Copyright:** © 2022 Paphitis et al. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

**Data Availability Statement:** All relevant data are within the paper and its [Supporting Information](#) files.

## Abstract

### Background

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is highly prevalent and is associated with a range of mental health problems. A broad range of psychosocial interventions have been developed to support the recovery of women survivors of IPV, but their mechanisms of action remain unclear.

### Methods

Realist review following a prospectively published protocol in PROSPERO (CRD42018114207) and reported using the Realist and Meta-narrative Evidence Synthesis: Evolving Standards (RAMSES) guidelines.

### Results

Evidence was extracted from 60 reviews and triangulated in expert consultations. Mechanisms of action were categorised as either associated with intervention design and delivery or with specific intervention components (access to resources and services; safety, control and support; increased knowledge; alterations to affective states and cognitions; improved self-management; improved family and social relations).

### Conclusions

Findings suggest that psychosocial interventions to improve the mental health of women survivors of IPV have the greatest impact when they take a holistic view of the problem and provide individualised and trauma-informed support.