

ABSTRACT

Existing research on borderline personality disorder (BPD) is overrepresented by women, despite an equal prevalence of the disorder between both genders. Although data on how BPD presents in intimate partnerships has been established, the participants with BPD are almost always women. Recognizing that women overrepresent the data on BPD, the current study aims to examine behavioral differences between men and women with borderline personality traits (BPT) in their intimate partner relationships. The current study conducted a secondary analysis of data taken from The International Dating Violence Study (IDVS), 2001-2006. A total of 2,303 male and female participants who scored high in BPT completed questionnaires that assessed the frequency or intensity of intimate partner relationship behaviors and attitudes. The following behaviors and attitudes were explored: frequency of negotiation received from partner and given to partner, frequency of physical assault received from partner and given to partner, frequency of psychological abuse received from partner and given to partner, jealousy, dominance, communication problems, anger management, conflict, relationship distress, relationship-commitment ideals, and negative attribution.

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

- Women overrepresent the data on BPD/BPT. Minimal research exists on examination of how gender moderates behaviors of individuals with BPD/BPT. Contradicting data exists on whether men or women commit IPV at similar rates or different rates.

Purpose of the Research

- The purpose of the current study is to further explore both behavioral and attitude differences and similarities of men and women with BPT in intimate partner relationships.

Research Question

- What are behavioral and attitude differences and similarities in romantic relationships between men and women with BPT?

Hypotheses

- Men with BPT will display higher rates of physical IPV and dominance. Women with BPT will display higher rates of psychological IPV and relationship commitment ideals. Men and women will display similar rates of negotiation, conflict, communication problems, jealousy, anger management, relationship distress, and negative attribution.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although prevalence of BPD among men and women are equal (Grant et al., 2008), women overrepresent the data on BPD. This could be due to differences in symptom presentation since men with BPD have higher rates of substance abuse and anti-social behavior when under the influence of substances. Men enter the correctional system where clinical diagnosis is not received. Women are more likely to receive clinical treatment for higher rates of PTSD, eating disorders, and anxiety disorders where they have more opportunity to receive a BPD diagnosis (Sansone & Sansone, 2011).

Minimal Data Exists on Gender Comparisons and BPD/BPT

Men with BPT are more likely to exhibit externalizing behaviors while women exhibit internalizing (Reuter et al., 2015). Men with BPT are more likely to engage in novelty seeking behavior and have explosive tempers while women have been found to have more emotional dysregulation (Barnow et al., 2007).

The link between BPD/BPT and IPV is robust, but when comparing men and women, debate among the literature exists. Weinstein et al. (2012) found that women with BPT committed psychological IPV at a higher than men with BPT. Hines (2008) found that IPV was committed at similar rates. Ross (2011) found that women were more likely to be victims of IPV and perpetrate in self-defense.

METHOD

Research Design

- The current study is a secondary analysis of the data from The International Dating Violence Study (IDVS), 2001-2006.
- University students from 32 different countries completed a questionnaire for the purpose of collecting data on intimate partner relationships. The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions on background information and 266 questions on behaviors and attitudes in intimate partner relationships.
- The questionnaire had a close-ended response scale.

Data Collection Procedures

- The data collection occurred over a period of five years, between 2001-2006. Questionnaires were provided by university professors involved in the study and professors administered them to students at the beginning of their class periods.
- Participants were given informed consent which stated that their responses would be confidential and anonymous and that their completion would be voluntary.

Sampling and Sampling Method

- A sample of convenience, being university students, was used.
- Data used in the current study was taken only from participants in the United States, who tested high on BPT.
- A total sample of 2,303 participants, comprised of male and female, with an average age of 21 were used.
- Ethnicity was not verified since the original study extended to 32 different countries and likely would have been overwhelming to specify

Measures

- The Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2) measures psychological and physical attacks and conflict resolution strategies in intimate partner relationships (Straus et al., 1996). Negotiation, physical assault, and psychological aggression were measured in the current study.
- The Personal and Relationships Profile (PRP) is a multi-scale instrument with 25 scales that is generally used to identify interpersonal violence (Straus, et al., 1999). The scales used in the current study were borderline personality traits, anger management, communication problems, dominance, jealousy, relationship commitment, relationship distress, and negative attribution.

Mann-Whitney U Test

A Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine the differences and similarities between men and women with BPT who engage in intimate partner relationship behaviors and attitudes. Only behavioral differences between men and women with BPT are shown in Table 2 below.

Variables	Mean Rank	U	p
Negotiation by self to partner		637,314.00	.038
Male	1,113.10		
Female	1,173.23		
Assault by self to partner		666,593.50	.000
Male	1,077.08		
Female	1,192.88		
Psychological aggression by partner to self		665,271.00	.000
Male	1,078.71		
Female	1,191.99		
Psychological aggression by self to partner		713,219.00	.000
Male	1,019.73		
Female	1,224.17		
Anger management		543,156.50	.000
Male	1,228.91		
Female	1,110.03		
Communication problems: Avoidant/withholding		473,795.50	.000
Male	1,314.23		
Female	1,063.48		
Jealousy		695,740.00	.000
Male	1,041.23		
Female	1,212.44		
Relationship commitment ideals		491,074.50	.000
Male	1,292.97		
Female	1,075.08		

Table 1

Sample Characteristics (N = 2,303)

Characteristic	f	%
Participants	2,303	100.0
Male	813	35.3
Female	1,490	64.7
Heterosexual	2,219	96.4
Homosexual	84	3.6
Age	M = 21	SD = 4.64
Dating	1,946	84.5
Engaged	161	7.0
Married	169	7.3
Cohabiting	27	1.2

RESULTS

Women with BPT had Higher Scores of the Following:

- Using negotiation tactics towards their partners
- Receiving psychological IPV from their partners
- Perpetrating psychological IPV to their partners
- Perpetrating physical IPV to their partners
- Jealousy

Men with BPT had Higher Scores of the Following:

- Avoidant / withdrawn communication
- Relationship commitment ideals
- Use of anger management

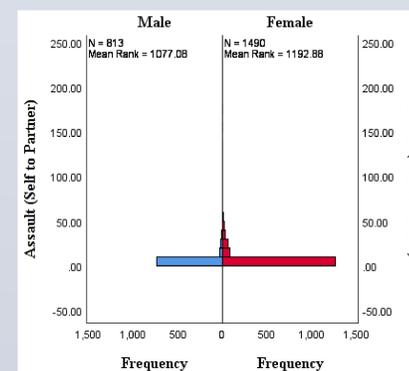


Figure 1. Mean score of physical IPV perpetration to partner

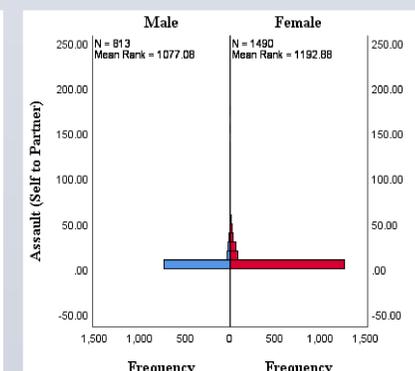


Figure 2. Mean score of jealousy related to partner

Discussion

- Past research (e.g., Marshall et al., 2011; Jackson et al., 2015; Ross, 2011) found that women who perpetrated physical IPV often did in self-defense. Additionally, Ross (2011) found that women perpetrated IPV to "dominate-punish" their partners at a higher rate than men (p.721). The current study does not assess for the circumstances surrounding the IPV which would have been insightful when comparing to existing research.
- The results of women with BPT perpetrating psychological IPV at higher rate than men with BPT were consistent with the findings of Weinstein et al. (2012).
- An explanation for these findings may be because past research has found that couple conflict is correlated with BPD, and interestingly, Marshall et al. (2011) found that couple conflict predicted the frequency for women perpetrating IPV, but it did not for men.
- Jealousy is correlated with IPV as well, so since the women with BPT had higher rates of IPV perpetration than the men with BPT, that would explain why they had higher rates of jealousy as well.
- The findings of the current study add to the debate among the existing data. Contradiction in the data may exist because often the type IPV and circumstances were not verified with past research.

Future Direction

- Important elements for future research would be to identify the type of IPV and the circumstances surrounding the IPV since research has found that women commit IPV in relation to self-defense.

Limitations

- Although a strength regarding the sample was its large size, it may not be representative of the general population due to a sample of convenience being used rather than random sampling.
- Data was derived from participant self-report which is not indicative of a BPD diagnosis received in a clinical setting.

Implications

- It is important for clinical social workers to be aware of the strong correlation between IPV and BPD, so that further assessment and intervention can occur.

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