

The Relationship of Caregiver Intimate Partner Violence and Adolescent Mental Health

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Abstract

There exists a high prevalence rate of intimate partner violence (IPV) in the United States, with some research indicating 1 out of every 3 women will suffer contact with IPV in their lifetime (Smith et al., 2018). Although the primary victim of IPV is the adult recipient of violence, the children living in the home become secondary victims and often suffer negative outcomes. The goal of the current study was to examine the relationship between IPV in the home and internalizing mental health symptoms (somatization, anxiety, and depression) among older adolescents and emerging adults. The current study indicated a positive and statistically significant weak correlation between the frequency of extreme IPV when a child was between the ages of 10-14 and the presence of anxiety, somatization, depression, and total mental health when the child was between the ages of 15-20. Regression analyses indicated reduced anxiety, somatization, and total mental health for the Hispanic males and reduced depression for the male population. The current study supported research that indicates negative outcomes for youth exposed to IPV and illuminated the prominence of somatization as a symptom of IPV exposure in late adolescence and emerging adulthood.

Introduction

Significance of Study

- One out of every 3 women in the United States will experience IPV in their lifetime (Smith et al., 2018)
- Children and youth exposed to IPV are at significantly higher risk for developing internalizing symptoms, such as anxiety and depression, or externalizing behaviors, such as behavior disorders (Carlson et al., 2019)

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to increase knowledge about the occurrence of mental health symptoms in adolescents ages 15-20.

Research Question

What is the relationship between intimate partner violence in the home and internalizing mental health symptoms (somatization, anxiety, and depression) among older adolescents and emerging adults?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study predicts that as IPV increases in the home, older adolescents' symptoms of somatization, anxiety, and depression will also increase.

Literature Review

Outcomes of Intimate Partner Violence Exposure (IPV) in Juveniles

Research shows a strong link between IPV exposure in juveniles and the development of internalizing symptoms and externalizing behaviors (Carlson et al., 2019; Evans et al., 2008).

Risk and Protective Factors of Negative Exposure Outcomes

- Risk Factors: Frequency, proximity and severity of IPV, negative parenting practices, police involvement (Fong et al., 2019; Garrido et al, 2011; Jouriles et al., 2020)
- Protective Factors: positive peer networks, accepting parenting practices, supportive adults outside of home, afterschool programs (Sianko et al., 2019; Tajima et al., 2010)

Gaps in Research

- Lack of standard definition of "exposure" to IPV (Evans et al., 2008)
- Understudied populations: rural juveniles and specific ethnic and cultural groups (Fong et al., 2019; Sianko et al., 2019)

Research Design

The current study used secondary data analysis of selected data from the Welfare, Children, and Families Three City Study. A longitudinal survey design was used to analyze the relationship between the measure of intimate partner violence in the home when the child was between ages 10–14 (Wave 1) and the measure of mental health when the child was between ages 15-20 (Wave 3) (Angel et al., 2012).

Sampling Method

Participants in the original study included 2,400 households randomly selected from households in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio with incomes below 200% of the poverty line (Angel et al., 2012). The current study utilized 883 households from wave 1 and 3 of the original study.

Measures

- The independent variable was the caregiver's experience of IPV while their child was age 1–14. Caregivers self-reported incidents and frequency of IPV in a 13-category survey
- The dependent variable was the mental health of the children at age 15-20, measured by the Youth Brief Symptom Inventory

Results

- A positive and statistically significant association was found between the frequency of extreme domestic violence in the home at ages 10-14 and the presence of anxiety, somatization, and total mental health symptoms in adolescents at ages 15-20.
- A positive and marginally statistically significant association was found between the frequency of extreme domestic violence in the home at ages 10-14 and the presence of depression symptoms in adolescents at ages 15-20.
- Hispanic male study participants scored lower on anxiety, somatization, and total mental health than other study participants.
- Male study participants scored lower on depression symptoms than other study participants.

Regression Models for Mental Health

Predictor	BSI Anxiety <i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	BSI Somatization <i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	BSI Depression <i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	BSI Total <i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)
Constant	.858 (.330)**	1.123 (.329)***	1.077 (.361)**	1.755 (.452)***
Gender	-.167 (.056)**	-.195 (.056)***	-.231 (.061)***	-.306 (.077)***
Child's Age	-.001 (.019)	-.011 (.019)	.001 (.020)	-.002 (.026)
Ethnicity	-.124 (.056)*	-.121 (.056)*	-.088 (.061)	-.183 (.076)*
Extreme DV	.195 (.126)	.253 (.126)*	.145 (.138)	.294 (.173)†

Reference groups: Female & Non-Hispanic. ****p* < .001; ***p* < .01; **p* < .05; †*p* < .10



Conclusion

- The findings are consistent with current research, supporting a link between IPV exposure in juveniles and the development of internalizing symptoms.
- The prevalence of somatization symptoms was higher than the prevalence of anxiety and depression symptoms. This finding correlates with recent research showing a link between maternal somatization and child somatization (Glaus et al., 2021). Further research is indicated to explore this link in the adolescent population
- The correlation was not as strong as expected between IPV exposure and adolescent mental health symptoms. Further research is recommended to clarify the definition of "exposure" and to define levels of frequency, proximity and severity of IPV exposure.
- Further research is recommended to explore possible protective factors in the Hispanic population to explain lower scores on anxiety, somatization and total mental health scores.



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