The Healing Journey: Intimate Partner Violence & Mental Health Issues

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Status of Women Canada
TransCanada Pipelines

Statistics Canada 2009
In 2009, about the same proportion of men as women reported being targets of violent acts from intimate partners in the past 5 years (6% women, 6% men)
But abuse against women is more repetitive & life-threatening.
42% of women were injured (18% men).
13% vs. 2% sought medical help (AuCoin, 2005).
Women more likely to report multiple victimizations (57% vs. 40%)

Women 3 times more likely than men (34% versus 10%) to report having been sexually assaulted, beaten, choked or threatened with a gun or a knife.
Women fear their partners’ violence to a greater extent: 34% of women compared to 10% of men were afraid for their lives (AuCoin, 2005).

Aboriginal Women & DV
Aboriginal women are three times at higher risk of IPV (21%) than non-Aboriginal women (7%) (Brownridge, 2008).
Vulnerabilities also related to
- colonization,
- residential schools (trauma, sexual abuse; loss of parental role models)
- poverty.

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Visible Minority Women & IPV


- No differences in self-reported rates of physical or sexual violence in the last 5 years compared to the majority.
- No differences in disclosures to friends, family or police.
- Given population differences, it would be useful to compare racial background groups.

Mental Health & IPV

- Women abused by partners often diagnosed with depression and anxiety (Couling Evans & Shapiro, 2011; Hegarty, Quinn, Chondros, & Small, 2004; Houry, Kaslow & Thompson, 2000).
- PTSD associated with both childhood abuse (especially child sexual abuse) (Germans, Walsh, DiLillo & Messman-Moore, 2007) and intimate partner violence.
- Current study focuses on how women abused by intimate partners are doing and whether racial background is linked to mental health.

The Healing Journey Project

- 659 women from 3 Canadian provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan & Manitoba) who had experienced IPV
- Recruited through shelters and other service providers
- Longitudinal study (2005-2009)
- 7 waves of data collected about 6 months apart
- Current data from the first two waves.
- Demographic characteristics and IPV from Wave 1
- Mental health measures collected six-months later in Wave 2
- Data collected in one-on-one in-person interviews.

Measures

- Composite Abuse Scale (Hegarty, Bush, & Sheehan, 2005).
- Symptom Checklist-10: global assessment of psychological distress (Nguyen, Åsdmsson, & Stegner, 1983)
  - Clinical cut-off of 4.5 to identify those with a greater likelihood of a mood or anxiety disorder (Craw, 2001)
- Centre for Epidemiological Studies – Depression (CES-D-10) (Radloff, 1977)
  - Clinical cut-off of 15 (Björgvinsson et al., 2013)
- PTSD Checklist (Blanchard, Jones-Alexander, Buckley, & Fomers, 1996)
  - Clinical cut-off of 44 (Blanchard et al.)

Overall Demographics

- N = 595 (Attrition of 70 from wave one to two)
- 37% had never stayed in a VAW shelter
- Diverse racial backgrounds:
  - 263 Caucasian (44.6%)
  - 292 (49.7%) Aboriginal (First Nations = 218, Métis = 73, Inuit = 1)
  - Racial minority (32 or 5.5%): most from African roots (N= 13), South Asia (N = 7) and Latin America (N = 8).

Overall sample

- Average age: 36.7 years.
- 87% no longer with abusive partners
- Total family income (all sources in last year): $22,504
- 90.3% have children, 70% of whom are 18 years and younger (average age 9.2). The adult children were an average of 27.8 years.
- 40% had not completed highschool but 38% had some post secondary (tech or university)
- 60% not currently working
Abuse & Disabilities

- Child abuse history:
  - only 20.5% had no child abuse
  - Any sexual abuse: 54.4%
  - Other child abuse: 25.1%
- Disability/illness: 63.3%
- Do women link the disability/condition to abuse?
  - Childhood abuse: 9.6% (n = 24)
  - Partner abuse: 43.4% (n = 109)
  - Both childhood & partner abuse: 47% (n = 118)

Disability/illness: 63.3%

Do women link the disability/condition to abuse?

Childhood abuse: 9.6% (n = 24)

Partner abuse: 43.4% (n = 109)

Both childhood & partner abuse: 47% (n = 118)

Child abuse history:

Caucasian women older: 38.4 years

Aboriginal women were more likely to still be with partner (17%), not have completed highschool (52.7%), less likely to be working full-time (14.4%), less likely to not have been abused as children (14.1%).

Women from visible minorities more likely to have resided in a shelter (81% versus 64% Aboriginal and 59% Caucasian) ($\chi^2 = 6.4$, $p = .04$, Cramer's V = .10)

Measures by Racial Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Aboriginal</th>
<th>Rac. Minority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAS Severe Comb</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS Emotional</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>26.4*</td>
<td>33.3**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSA Physical</td>
<td>10.9*</td>
<td>12.6*</td>
<td>12.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAS</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCL-10 Total</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD Checklist</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>27.4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Intercorrelations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>SCL-10</th>
<th>CES-D</th>
<th>PTSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAS Severe Comb</td>
<td>.225***</td>
<td>.161***</td>
<td>.294***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS Emotional</td>
<td>.135***</td>
<td>.085*</td>
<td>.216***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSA Physical</td>
<td>.162***</td>
<td>.122***</td>
<td>.215***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS Total Score</td>
<td>.109**</td>
<td>.08*</td>
<td>.173***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS-Total Score</td>
<td>.187***</td>
<td>.131***</td>
<td>.211***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measures significantly correlated with IPV such that higher CAS scores related to higher mental health symptoms

Child Abuse (Plus IPV) & Measures

- Women with IPV and a child sex abuse history scored more highly on CAS, depression and PTSD (though average not in clinical ranges).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAS</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>$p = .77$</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCL-10</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>$p = .79$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CES</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>$p = .77$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>$p = .77$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implications

These women lead complicated lives: considerable childhood abuse, disabilities/illnesses, low incomes, IPV post separation.

- On average, the women were not in the clinical ranges on depression or PTSD scales.
- SCL-10 (psychological distress) in clinical range but scale best as screening tool (Muller et al., 2010) and the women coping with many difficulties.
Important not to stereotype women whose partners have abused them as having long-standing mental health problems.

Many women improve MH symptoms substantially in a short time (i.e., YWCA shelter study (Tutty, 2016) & You’re Not Alone study (Tutty, Babins-Wagner & Rothery, 2015).

Counsellors must take a holistic view of these women’s lives and be prepared to assist them with both their basic and emotional needs.

References


http://www.ywcacanada.ca/data/publications/00000013.pdf


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