

Men and the Ability to Identify as Victims of Intimate Partner Violence

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Introduction

- Intimate partner violence (IPV) - a pattern of violent or coercive physical (punches, slaps), psychological (threats), or sexual (sexual coercion) behaviour used by one partner over the other in a romantic relationship (Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention, 2018).
- The prevalence of male victims of IPV is substantial (Bates, 2020) and often involves a bidirectional relationship of violence and aggression (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012). Research has shown that women are equally or more likely than men to perpetrate IPV (Stets & Straus, 1989; Straus, 2004).
- Men are frequently harmed during instances of IPV, and IPV can have long-lasting negative impacts on physical and mental health (Hines & Douglas, 2010, 2016). Despite this, research shows that male-perpetrated IPV is viewed as more severe than female-perpetrated IPV (Allen & Bradley, 2018).
- Social role theory posits that certain genders are associated with certain roles in society (Eagly & Wood, 2016). Since IPV has been conceptualized as involving female victims and male perpetrators, male victims of IPV may be perceived as occupying a “female” gender role and may experience gender role strain (Migliaccio, 2001). Avoidance of gender role strain may help to explain men’s reluctance to identify as victims of abuse (Machado et al., 2016).
- Hypothesis:** Male victims of IPV who do not identify as victims of abuse will have more traditional gender role beliefs, be more likely to believe that masculinity is fragile, and be more accepting of female-perpetrated dating violence.

Methods

Participants:

- Participants: recruited via the KPU Psychology research pool and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Reddit, WhatsApp).
- Sample: 34 heterosexual males between 18 and 55 ($M = 31.79$; $SD = 11.26$) who have been in a romantic relationship with a female partner.
- Ethnicity: primarily Caucasian (73.5%), followed by south Asian (14.7%).
- Education: most (85.3%) participants had completed some post-secondary education.
- Relationship status: single (29.4%), non-married committed relationship (29.4%), married/civil union (32.4%).

Materials:

- Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2):** 12-item physical assault scale and 6-item injury scale that measure the frequency of injurious and physically abusive behaviours received from a partner (Straus et al., 1996), $\alpha = .92$.
- Attitudes Toward Dating Violence:** 12-item scale that measures attitudes about female physical violence toward a male dating partner (Price et al., 1999), $\alpha = .86$.
- Gender Role Belief Scale:** 10-item scale that measures how traditional versus liberal an individual's gender role beliefs are (Brown & Gladstone, 2012), $\alpha = .65$.
- Precarious Manhood Beliefs Scale:** 7-item scale that assesses beliefs about the fragility of masculinity (Vandello et al., 2008), $\alpha = .75$.

Procedure:

- Participants completed the survey anonymously and online in Qualtrics.

Results

- A hierarchical binary logistic regression was conducted to determine the influence of gender role beliefs, attitudes toward dating violence, and precarious manhood beliefs on male IPV victim’s self-identification with abuse, controlling for the variety of abusive behaviours experienced.
- Table 1 provides a summary of the correlational matrix, means and standard deviations for all variables. Self-categorization of the DV was exactly even, with 50% of male victims of IPV identifying as victims of abuse.
- Although the overall regression model was not statistically significant at stage 1, ($p = .088$), the amount of variance explained by the variety of abusive behaviours experienced was medium-sized ($r^2 = .11$).
- Introducing the predictors of gender role beliefs, attitudes toward dating violence, and precarious manhood beliefs at stage two, resulted in a statistically significant model ($p < .001$). Additionally, these predictors significantly improved the regression model beyond stage one ($p < .001$). These predictors explained an additional 49% of the variation in abuse identification.
- As seen in Table 2, attitudes towards dating violence was the only statistically significant predictor in this model, indicating that men who held more supportive attitudes towards dating violence were less likely to identify with abuse. The predictor of physical violence behaviours nearly reached statistical significance, with individuals who have experienced a greater variety of abusive behaviours being more likely to identify as having been abused.
- Gender role beliefs and precarious manhood beliefs were not statistically significant predictors.

Table 1

Correlational Matrix, Means, and Standard Deviations

Predictor	1	2	3	4	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. VPV	-	-.01	.11	.07	4.74	3.28
2. GRB		-	-.13	-.24	51.38	7.14
3. PMB			-	.42*	22.88	8.21
4. ATDV				-	24.65	9.02

Note. VPV = variety of physical violence; GRB = gender role beliefs; PMB = precarious manhood beliefs; ATDV = attitudes toward dating violence.

* $p < .05$

Table 2

Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting Identification with Abuse

Predictor	β	SE	OR	95% CI	Wald	<i>p</i>
VPV	0.39	0.21	1.47	[0.97, 2.22]	3.33	.068
GRB	-0.03	0.07	0.97	[0.84, 1.12]	0.15	.698
PMB	0.12	0.08	1.13	[0.97, 1.31]	2.39	.123
ATDV	-0.28	0.10	0.75	[0.62, 0.91]	8.25	.004

Note. VPV = variety of physical violence; GRB = gender role beliefs; PMB = precarious manhood beliefs; ATDV = attitudes toward dating violence; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval.

Discussion

- The hypothesis was partially supported. Attitudes toward dating violence predicted victim identification among heterosexual males, independently of the variety of abusive behaviours experienced. This is important because male victims of IPV who do not identify as victims of abuse are unlikely to report it or seek help from law enforcement or other social service agencies (Machado et al., 2016). Being able to predict identification with abuse allows us to identify an at-risk group of men who are unstudied and would be unlikely to seek help if they were experiencing IPV.
- It was surprising that gender role beliefs was not significant given previous literature. An explanation for this inconsistency may be that this sample had fairly non-traditional gender role beliefs. Alternatively, it is possible that gender role beliefs do not significantly impact identification with abuse as was hypothesized. This would indicate that social role theory may not be a good explanation for the differences we see in self-identification with abuse (Eagly & Wood, 2016).
- Strengths:** Past research used sampling methods which may have skewed the sample, with men who do not identify as victims of abuse being unlikely to be sampled. This study aimed to avoid this by leaving the inclusion criteria intentionally broad, only limiting it to males who had been in a relationship with a woman rather than abuse victims. Males who had never experienced any form of abuse were removed from the study. This allowed us to sample male victims of IPV who did and did not self-identify as victims of abuse.
- Limitations:** A limitation of this study was the small sample size. Additionally, this sample consisted primarily of people with post-secondary education. This may have resulted in a sample of men who hold primarily egalitarian gender role beliefs.

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