Risk Factors and Correlates of Women's Aggression

Several factors have been identified as precursors and correlates of women's aggression in community and relational contexts. Risk factors for women's aggression include their experience of childhood trauma, a history of juvenile arrests, conduct disorder behaviors in childhood and adolescence, and poverty. Correlates of women's aggression include their own victimization as well as psychiatric symptoms, including posttraumatic stress, depression, and anxiety.

Response and Intervention

Women's aggression in community and relational contexts has been met with different responses. Response to women's aggression in community settings (typically in the context of drug marketing and robberies) has been to incarcerate them or mandate them to complete community-based anger management programs. The response to women's use of aggression in relational contexts, specifically toward intimate partners, is linked to the Law Enforcement Protection legislation of the 1980s, which allowed officers responding to domestic violence calls to arrest and charge the perceived perpetrator without the victim having the burden of doing so. Enactment of this legislation has led to increased arrests and prosecution of women for domestic violence offenses and, thus, to an increase in mandates to complete batterer intervention programs. The response to women's aggression toward children is to mandate them to complete parenting programs and/or to remove children from the home.

Overall, limited research exists focusing on response to and interventions for women's aggression. As more research focuses on women's aggression, specialized interventions can be developed that take into consideration the context in which women's aggression occurred, motivations for the use of aggression, and consequences of aggression to the victim.

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See also Domestic Violence/Family Violence Courts; Family and Domestic Violence, Theories of; Intimate Partner Violence; Offending and Victimization; Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence

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WORKPLACE, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE

Every year, an estimated 1.8 million women report severe physical assault by an intimate partner. The lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence for women is 25% to 30%. This violence includes physical and sexual assault as well as psychological victimization, and the estimates likely underestimate the actual occurrence of partner violence. Most of these victims, and the perpetrators of this violence, are members of the workforce.

Violence against women, often perpetrated by male partners or ex-partners, has been linked with injuries, homicide, and other short-term and long-term sequelae, including complications of pregnancy and adverse pregnancy outcomes, sexually transmitted diseases, chronic pain syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome, posttraumatic stress disorder, and depression. Much less is known about the effects of partner violence in the workplace, but logic would indicate that with the number of victims and the severity of the consequences, the effects are likely to be broad.

Extent of Workplace Domestic Violence

Although there is no precise estimate of how much domestic violence (DV) occurs at work, it clearly represents a daunting challenge, affecting a sizable proportion of the approximately 140 million employees in United States. Several national-level data sources shed some light on the extent of workplace DV.

The Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries conducted annually by the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that homicide is the leading cause of death for women on the job. During 1992 to 1994, 17% of the alleged perpetrators who killed women at work were current or former partners.

According to a Federal Bureau of Investigation report, each year approximately 3% of workplace homicides are known to be perpetrated by an intimate partner. Of the workplace homicides committed by an intimate, approximately 62% were committed by a husband ($n = 122$) and 37% were committed by a boyfriend ($n = 72$). Far fewer homicides, nearly 2% ($n = 3$), were committed by a wife.

The annual National Crime Victimization Survey reports more than 1.7 million workplace violent victimizations (i.e., rape, sexual assault, robbery, and simple and aggravated assault) each year, with many of these perpetrated by partners. A larger percent of female employees were victimized by an intimate rather than by their male counterparts. Five percent of the women victimized at work were attacked by a current or former spouse or boyfriend compared with 1% of the men.

These estimates, however, drastically underestimate the extent of DV in the workplace. Although existing data systems can be used to identify work-related deaths, work injuries, and violent victimizations, no existing data source was specifically designed to identify the nexus between DV and the workplace. This inability to measure workplace DV is, in part, because few sources measure both the relationship of the violent act to work and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. Furthermore, data sources are not available to capture events such as psychological abuse or stalking. Thus, the answers to many important questions about the frequency, types, and consequences of DV in the workplace are largely unknown.

Effects of Domestic Violence on Employees

Studies of DV in the workplace have begun to establish the damaging effects of the violence on every component of a work organization. DV in the workplace affects the safety and health, as well as the productivity, of the victim employee, the perpetrator employee, their co-workers, and the organization as a whole. It is estimated that almost

$900 million in lifetime earnings alone is lost because of the premature death of female victims.

Effects of Domestic Violence on the Abused Employee While at Work

The effects of DV on the victim's work opportunities and performance are broad. Victims of violence may have difficulty seeking work because of the control their partners demonstrate, such as extreme isolation or blocking access to transportation. In addition, many victims are underemployed, with women who have experienced DV in their lifetime reportedly earning, on average, $12,000 less per year than their nonvictimized counterparts.

Physical and emotional harm endured by DV victims causes increased absenteeism, including tardiness and missed work days. A study of female DV victims, ages 18 to 65, found that one in four were late to work or missed days of work because of their partner's abuse. Common interference behaviors used by the perpetrator include neglecting to provide transportation or child care to the victim and physical violence that causes severe injuries resulting in the victim being unable to go to work. In addition, 75% of employed DV victims are bothered by the perpetrator while at work. Perpetrator tactics involve harassing phone calls to the victim's place of employment and showing up unexpectedly. The fears of abuse looming over the victim while in the workplace result in distraction. This distraction may be a leading source of victim lost work productivity.

Financial costs endured by the victim are staggering. More than 30,000 full-time jobs, the equivalent of 8.0 million days of paid work, are lost each year because of DV as well as approximately 5.6 million days of household productivity. It is estimated that these lost days cost victims and their employers at least $192 million annually.

Absenteeism and poor performance resulting from violence has resulted in abused women losing their jobs and earning lower wages. Jody Raphael determined that almost one third of abused working women lost or quit their jobs because of their DV situation. Victims often must quit their job in the process of ending the abusive relationship so that they can relocate away from the abusive partner and try to find safe environments while ending the relationship.

Although DV victims suffer negative consequences at their workplaces, they are just as likely to be employed as nonvictims. Some research has found that DV actually boosts labor market participation. Although this may seem conflicting to the findings previously discussed, DV victims may seek employment for increased protection. Employment may allow an abused woman to continue or reclaim her financial independence as well as provide much needed social support from supervisors and co-workers, although one in three report not telling an employer about the abuse. In addition, an abused woman's workplace may provide a safe haven from the abuse she receives at home.

The Impact of the Perpetrator-Employee on the Job

Little is known about the number of violent or abusive acts a perpetrator may commit using job-related resources. Interviews of batterer's in six Maine intervention programs found that almost 9 in 10 DV offenders used company resources to reach their partner while on the job, with the majority reporting use of the company phone and car. Perpetrators reported using work resources to check up, bully, intimidate, or express remorse/anger to the victimized partner. The majority reported using the company's car to drive to the victim's home or workplace during working hours, which could pose a threat to the victim's co-workers.

The DV abuser's ability to function on the job is also impaired. Abusers self-report that mistreating their partner has a negative effect on their job performance. Almost half of abusers (48%) admitted that thinking about their relationship, while on the job, caused them to be distracted. A smaller proportion (19%) reported a mistake or near-miss disaster brought about by their abusive actions toward a loved one. Being retained in police custody because of their perpetration of abuse work resulted in more than 15,000 hours of work time lost.

Absenteeism is not only a problem for victims but also for the perpetrators of the violence. Almost half of abusers reported they had been late to work or left early because they were committing acts of abuse against their partner.

A focus group of male DV abusers, administered by the Massachusetts-based Employers against Domestic Violence, reinforced the lack of consequences for DV perpetration while in the workplace. Supervisors of offenders showed compassion toward them, rarely enforcing consequences for work missed because of court dates or imprisonment. Substance abuse difficulties were often addressed by supervisors, but rarely did they acknowledge troubles related to DV with the abusers.

Consequences for Co-Workers

The significance of workplace victimization to co-workers of the victim and perpetrator is largely unknown. A third of DV victims have disclosed the abuse to a co-worker, and 44% of respondents to a national survey reported that their workplace was impacted because of domestic abuse to a co-worker. Little research has investigated the consequences of working with a DV victim or perpetrator on co-workers, but the potential for decreased work productivity, affects on the work environment, witnessing of harassment, stalking, and even physical assault are high. Nearly 65% of respondents also reported that they were aware of an intimate partner harassing a co-worker while at work. Co-workers are also at risk in the most extreme acts of violence, such as the potential for involvement when a perpetrator attempts to murder a victim while at work.

However, interactions with co-workers can be critical for victims. Victims of DV have reported that support given by co-workers and others at work has helped them keep their job, and 80% have said it helped them cope with the violence. With the high proportion of DV victims engaged in the workforce, the positive interactions with co-workers indicate that the workplace can play a critical role in interventions.

Costs to Businesses

Business executives and managers are increasingly knowledgeable about the effects of DV on their corporate operations. In 2002, more than 50% of employers were aware of employees who had experienced DV, a 16% increase since 1994. Whether this represents increasing workplace DV or increased awareness is unknown, but these findings are likely a combination of both. Although employers are more aware, only 5% of companies have policies specific to DV.

A study supported by Liz Claiborne reported that almost all (91%) senior executives and managers of Fortune 1000 companies believed that DV affects both the private and working lives of their employees. More than half (60%) reported concerns that DV impacted their employees' psychological well-being, physical safety (52%), productivity (48%), and attendance (42%). A series of focus groups with 25 health benefit managers throughout the country have corroborated these findings. The managers stated that DV victims have increased absenteeism, an inability to focus, poor self-esteem, low productivity, and low morale.

The direct financial costs, including medical expenses and lost productivity, of DV on businesses is astounding. Half of the respondents to a Liz Claiborne survey recognized that DV had a negative effect on their company's insurance and medical costs. A single DV victim can incur greater than $2,000 more per year in medical expenses than a nonvictim with a staggering total of almost $24 million per year in medical costs to businesses. In addition to medical costs, an estimated $100 million is spent on lost wages, paid sick leave, and absenteeism to DV victims. Executives and managers recognize how these additional costs affect their company's bottom line and that DV deserves more of their attention.

Legal liability has a price tag, too. Employers can face a range of liabilities for failing to address DV threats, including failure to secure the workplace from known threats and indirect liability for not intervening on known dangers. Although these liabilities have not been tried extensively in courts, findings increasingly favor victims. Employers can also be liable under torts for negligent hiring, retention, supervision, and termination should an employer fail to screen or remove dangerous employees or situations.

Legal Rights and Employment Protections for Domestic Violence Victims

As the scope and toll of DV are better understood, legal protections for victims are increasing, and many of these include work protections. Many new policies that protect DV victims against employment discrimination are being implemented, such as policies in many states that prohibit any employment discrimination against DV victims.

Many states are also implementing policies that prohibit employers from penalizing employees for taking time off to seek protection orders, seek medical care, or other activities related to being a victim of DV.

Other policies require employers to protect workers from the potential effects of DV. The OSHA General Duty clause states that employers have an obligation to maintain a safe workplace. Some states have identified violence as a general hazard, and some have identified DV in the workplace as an aspect of the violence hazard.

How Domestic Violence Is Being Addressed in the Workplace

Especially in large workplaces, many different departments are important in the identification of and response to domestic violence. Workplace leadership needs to recognize the problem and to implement policies and procedures that support the identification and active response for both victims and perpetrators. Supervisors need to be trained in the existing policies and procedures, as well as taught appropriate skills to engage in a successful response. Human resource personnel are critical in developing and implementing protocols and procedures once domestic violence has been identified. Risk management and security need to protect the physical environment from domestic violence hazards, such as maintaining secure buildings and circulating information about potential perpetrators who should not have access to the workplace. Occupational medicine and other health care providers to the workforce can be helpful by screening for abuse. It is much more difficult in smaller businesses to identify appropriate resources and responsibilities to respond to domestic violence. However, general workplace acknowledgment and communication about the potential influence of domestic violence is critical for all types of workplaces.

There has been little systematic research to identify how many employers are addressing the issue of DV in their workplaces, what these employers are doing, and how successful they have been. Bonnie Fisher and Corinne Peek-Asa conducted a content analysis of publicly available documents and found that few programs provided comprehensive strategies for addressing the problem, and no program

had been adequately evaluated. Three resources were found to be particularly helpful for employers:

- Information about "best practices" addressing workplace partner violence is available through the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence (CAEPV), a national nonprofit organization whose mission is "reducing the costs and consequences of partner violence at work—and eliminating it altogether" through a variety of means, including education, policies and programs, legal issues, and legislation.
- A Sample Policy of Domestic Violence, developed by the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, which provides information for developing a comprehensive DV workplace policy.
- A resource guide for employers, unions, and advocates, developed by the Family Violence Prevention Fund.

A range of topics are included in these guides, including guidelines for supervising victims of DV, pointers on how to talk with an employee who is a perpetrator of abuse, designing personal and workplace safety plans, securing the work area, as well as identifying and treating DV, legal issues, and union responses to DV.

Despite these and numerous other guidelines, employers have few resources for proven programs to address DV in their workplaces. They have even fewer resources about how these programs can be implemented in various work settings. A growing interest in this topic, which will be fueled by growing awareness and recognition of its toll and consequences, will hopefully lead to more informative state-of-the-art models.

The Future

The workplace provides an ideal setting for efforts to prevent DV and support its victims. Workplaces are relatively controlled environments in which protection strategies can be tested and implemented. Employers should be motivated to test these programs because they will likely positively impact worker morale and productivity, and they could prevent potential events for which they could be held liable. As this field of work moves forward, it is hoped that employers become increasingly proactive in assisting victims and in creating an intolerant atmosphere for DV perpetrators.

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See also Domestic Violence; Domestic Violence and Arrest Policy; Family Violence; Intimate Partner Violence, Theories of; Workplace Violence, Prevention and Security

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Web Sites

Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence: http://www .caepv.org

WORKPLACE BULLYING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL AGGRESSION

Research on workplace bullying and psychological aggression has grown considerably during the past decade, and it now cuts across several academic disciplines. Joel Neuman and Robert Baron note that workplace aggression is a comprehensive term that refers to any acts that are intended to harm workers in settings or situations related to their work, which can be physical or nonphysical in nature. In the literature, workplace aggression is considered an umbrella term for a variety of more specific types of behavior, including bullying, mobbing, incivility, emotional abuse, petty tyranny, abusive supervision, and generalized or status-blind harassment. Psychological aggression at work typically refers only to those acts or behaviors that are nonphysical in form and are intended to cause psychological distress or harm to the target. Workplace bullying, on the other hand, incorporates both physical and psychological forms of aggression and has been defined more specifically with regard to persistence, frequency, and duration of negative work behaviors directed at one or more individuals in the workplace. A pattern of behaviors is considered bullying only if it is persistent, occurring repeatedly during a given period of time rather than as isolated incidents that happen only occasionally.

Types of Behaviors

Generally speaking, workplace bullying and psychological aggression involve a wide range of behaviors that threaten, intimidate, humiliate, or undermine an individual's work reputation or performance. The types of behaviors include harassing, offending, social exclusion, derogatory remarks, insults, sabotage, withholding information, noninclusion, and physical acts that are perceived as intimidating or threatening. Acts of workplace psychological aggression and bullying most commonly involve nonphysical forms of aggression (either verbal or nonverbal) and are more likely to be passive in nature rather than active. These behaviors may be directed at one or more individuals in the workplace by one or more co-workers, supervisors, or customers/clients/patients.

Prevalence

Estimates of the prevalence of workplace bullying and psychological aggression vary depending on the sample used, how the terms are defined, how the time frame is used, and how the researcher asks the questions about the experiences and behaviors. Studies indicate that roughly 10% to 14% of workers report being victims of bullying, and this figure increases to 40% to 50% if those who are witnesses to bullying are included. Estimates of psychological aggression range from 27% and upward of 59% and even higher, depending on the study. Both men and women in the workplace may be targets of psychological aggression and bullying, as well as aggressors, and bullying and psychological aggression may be experienced at all levels of the organization, including management. Workplace bullying and psychological aggression tend to be more prevalent in the health care and service delivery sectors.

Risk Factors

Several workplace factors have been shown to be related to workplace bullying and psychological aggression. Job characteristics such as increased workload and lack of job control and organizational features, including structure, politics, role ambiguity, and role conflict, have all been associated with workplace bullying and psychological aggression, as well as issues surrounding organizational change such as job insecurity and social change. Leadership style, interpersonal conflicts, poor organizational climate and culture, low levels