

# **BRINGING HOME TO WORK: INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT, AND OUTCOMES**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Intimate partner violence (IPV), defined as a pattern of assaultive behaviors inflicted on intimate partners, is recognized as a pervasive social problem affecting various life domains (e.g., family and work) of the victim. A growing number of studies suggest that IPV is not solely a personal issue but is also an organizational problem (Moe & Bell, 2004; Reeves & O’Leary-Kelly, 2009; Swanberg, Logan, & Macke, 2005). For instance, the estimated IPV-related organizational direct costs (e.g., illness, death, absenteeism, and turnover), indirect costs (e.g., reduced job satisfaction, morale, commitment, performance, and productivity), and intangible costs (e.g., negative impact on company image) exceeded \$5.8 billion each year (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2003). In addition, organizations incur extensive costs associated with premature termination and legal liability due to negligence of IPV-related workplace risks (Bowie, Fisher & Cooper, 2005).

However, despite progress devoted to understanding the antecedents and consequences of intimate partner violence, we still know relatively little about how IPV impacts on work life. This oversight is critical, as the consequences of IPV are not limited to one specific life domain. To address this gap in the literature, we draw on ecological and spillover theories (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Crouter, 1984; Grzywacz & Marks, 1999) to explicate the link between IPV and employee work attitudes and behaviors. Further, drawing on organizational support theory (Eisenberger, Hungtington, Hutchison, and Sowa, 1986), we posit and empirically test the proposition that perceived organizational support (POS) buffers the negative effects of IPV on these work outcomes. By testing these relationships, we make several contributions to the IPV literature.

At present, only a handful of research has explored the attitudinal and behavioral impediments of intimate partner violence in other life domains. Although existing literature has generally established the accompanying organizational risks and costs of IPV, the specific work

outcomes and processes involved remains unexhausted. For instance, prior research on IPV-related work consequences has generally explored proxy measures of productivity (e.g., mental concentration) while overlooking other relevant cognitive, affective, and behavioral indicators (Brush, 2000; Reeves & O’Leary-Kelly, 2007; Swanberg & Logan, 2005). To move this body of research forward, we seek to examine IPV from an individual level and understand how it impacts attitudinal and behavioral work outcomes such as job satisfaction, in-role performance, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), and organizational deviance.

Moreover, although managers are aware of the spillover effects of IPV, they are uncertain of the organization’s role in mitigating or exacerbating these outcomes (O’Leary-Kelly, Lean, Reeves, & Randel, 2008). To this end, Stamper and Johlke (2003) called for more investigations of organizational moderators to illuminate specific conditions under which spillover at work may be prevented or reduced. In response to this call, we contend that organizations play a critical role in addressing IPV because their perceived assistance and interventions may potentially minimize the risks and costs associated with it.

Finally, research on IPV has traditionally surveyed women in shelters or women seeking employment (Kelloway, Barling, & Hurrell, 2006). Few studies have surveyed working women despite evidence showing that IPV victims are likely to be employed and motivated to sustain employment in order to achieve economic empowerment (Farmer & Tiefenthaler, 2003; O’Leary-Kelly et al., 2008). In this study, we take steps to more fully understand the scope and effects of IPV in work life and to fill these gaps in the literature by obtaining data from a sample of working women across diverse organizations and occupations. In the next section, we discuss the constructs in our proposed model as well as the expected relationships among them.

## **Intimate Partner Violence and Work Outcomes**

We treat intimate partner violence as a workplace issue given that it not only restricts personal growth, but also serves as a barrier to workforce participation, productivity, and economic growth (Duffy et al., 2005). The assumption that IPV is also an organizational concern is in line with the basic tenets of Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) ecological model which elucidates the complex person-context interaction. This overarching framework supports the argument that specific home experiences such as IPV are not exclusively bounded in the family domain but its impact could also traverse to other contexts such as work. Similarly, Crouter’s (1984) spillover theory is a domain-specific theory that describes the pattern of transmission from home to work when a person both manifests and carries over similar affect and behaviors in various life domains. Women who have perceived low levels of spousal support and experienced IPV reported more spillover, which subsequently undermined their work performance (Grzywacz & Marks, 1999; O’Leary-Kelly, Lean, Reeves, & Randel, 2008). Consistent with theoretical and empirical evidence on family-work spillover, we contend that IPV would be negatively related to beneficial work outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, and in-role performance) and conversely positively associated with organizational deviance.

*Hypothesis 1a: Intimate partner violence is negatively related to job satisfaction*

*Hypothesis 1b: Intimate partner violence is negatively related to in role job performance.*

*Hypothesis 1c: Intimate partner violence is negatively related to organizational citizenship behavior.*

*Hypothesis 1d: Intimate partner violence is positively related to organizational deviance.*

## Moderating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

While the spillover effects of IPV into the workplace are likely to be associated with a variety of negative employee outcomes, we further argue that organizations are able to mitigate these deleterious effects by engendering a supportive work climate. Related research on social support suggests that the receipt of support from others or the perception that support is readily available act as protective factors that enable individuals to cope with multiple contextual stressors (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Organizations can offer aid that responds to employee needs in a variety of ways by providing either direct support (e.g., EAPs and formal policies) or indirect support through its representatives (e.g., social companionship). The actions taken by organizations and its agents indicate their degree of positive regard which in turn influences employee perceptions and work behavior. Thus, we argue that employee perceptions of organizational support (POS) moderate the relationship between IPV and employee work attitudes and behaviors.

There is substantial theoretical and empirical evidence supporting the buffering effect of POS in stressor-strain relationships (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Several lines of reasoning point to this pattern of relationship. First, social support related research shows that individuals deprived of belongingness from their intimate relationship seek more support from alternative sources such as the workplace. Similarly, organizational support theory predicts that employees with strong socio-emotional needs such as IPV victims may place more value on POS and expect their organizations to fulfill these needs and show care for their well-being. Provisions given during critical events and which are specific to an employee's needs contribute more significantly to POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). For example, high levels of POS are expected from IPV victims who are immediately provided tangible or psychological aid in the workplace. In line with this reasoning, we argue that POS is likely to attenuate the IPV- work outcomes relationships.

Second, in line with the stress buffering hypothesis which highlights the protective effect of social support, IPV victims with high POS are predicted to be more satisfied with work as opposed to those with low POS (Cohen & Wills, 1985). At the same time, IPV victims who perceive their organization as supportive are expected to perform job functions effectively and display increased volunteerism to contribute in their organization. Victims with high POS will also refrain from engaging in organizational deviant behaviors. Based on this theorizing and related evidence, we offer the following predictions:

*Hypothesis 2a: Perceived organizational support will moderate the relationship between intimate partner violence and job satisfaction such that intimate partner violence and job satisfaction will be more negatively related when the employees' perceived organizational support is low as opposed to when it is high.*

*Hypothesis 2b: Perceived organizational support will moderate the relationship between intimate partner violence and in role performance such that intimate partner violence and in role performance will be more negatively related when the employees' perceived organizational support is low as opposed to when it is high.*

*Hypothesis 2c: Perceived organizational support will moderate the relationship between intimate partner violence and organizational citizenship behavior such that intimate partner violence and organizational citizenship behavior will be more negatively related when the employees' perceived organizational support is low as opposed to when it is high.*

*Hypothesis 2d: Perceived organizational support will moderate the relationship between intimate partner violence and organizational deviance such that intimate partner violence and organizational deviance will be more positively related when the employees' perceived organizational support is low as opposed to when it is high.*

## METHOD

### Sample and Procedure

We surveyed 500 married women who were employed full-time in various positions across eight organizations in the Philippines. Of the initial pool of participants surveyed, 270 individuals returned completed surveys yielding a response rate of 54%. In addition, 236 supervisor questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 47.2%. After the deletion of surveys with a) no code identifiers, b) a huge number of missing cases, and c) without a matched supervisor questionnaire, we were left with a final sample of 229 matched supervisor-subordinate dyads.

The average age of the participants who completed the employee surveys was 35.41 years. A large proportion of the participants have university degrees (83%). The average tenure with the organization was 7.72 years and a large majority of the participants have permanent employment status (80.8%). Modal gross income was PhP 20001 to 30000 per month (equivalent to US\$445 – 670 per month). All participants were married and living with their partner/spouse. Average years of marriage were 8.66 years and average number of children was 1.22.

### Measures

Established scales using a seven-point Likert was used to assess the substantive variables (1= strongly agree; 7 = strongly disagree) were used to measure the study variables.

*Intimate Partner Violence.* IPV was measured using the psychological aggression and physical assault subscales of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2; Strauss, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996; alpha coefficient =.92).

*Perceived Organizational Support.* POS was measured using eight-items from the scale developed by Eisenberger and colleagues (2001; alpha coefficient =.97)

*Job Satisfaction.* Job satisfaction was measured using a 3-item global scale developed by Cammann and colleagues (1983; alpha coefficient =.93).

*Supervisor-rated in-role performance.* Supervisors were asked to rate the in-role performance of their employees using four items derived from the scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991; alpha coefficient =.96).

*Supervisor-rated organizational citizenship behaviors.* Supervisors were asked to rate the extent to which their employees engage in behaviors which are beneficial to both their organization and colleagues using a 20-item scale developed by Podsakoff and colleagues (2000; alpha coefficient =.90).

*Supervisor-rated organizational deviance.* Supervisors were requested to rate the extent to which their employees had engaged in workplace deviance directed to the organization using 5-items from the scale derived from Aquino, Lewis and Bradfield (1999; alpha coefficient = .92).

*Control Variables.* We controlled for neuroticism, educational attainment, tenure, employment status, age, number of children, number of years married, and employee's partner's employment status.

## RESULTS

A series of hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesized relationships. The results of these analyses provided empirical support for Hypotheses 1a to 1d. Specifically, intimate partner violence was found to be negatively related to self-reported job satisfaction ( $\beta = -.17, p < .01$ ), supervisor-rated in-role performance ( $\beta = -.28, p < .001$ ), supervisor-rated organizational citizenship behaviors ( $\beta = -.26, p < .001$ ), and positively related to supervisor-rated organizational deviance ( $\beta = .28, p < .001$ ).

Furthermore, entry of the two-way interaction term (intimate partner violence x perceived organizational support) suggests that at low levels of perceived organizational support, there was a stronger negative relationship between women's experience of intimate partner violence and job satisfaction,  $t(217) = -3.40, p < .001$ ; in-role performance,  $t(217) = -6.30, p < .001$ ; and OCBs,  $t(217) = -5.09, p < .001$ . However, at high levels of perceived organizational support the relationship between intimate partner violence and job satisfaction,  $t(217) = 1.82, ns$ ; in-role performance,  $t(217) = 1.88, ns$ ; and OCBs,  $t(217) = -.07, ns$ , was non-significant. In addition, at low levels of perceived organizational support there was a stronger positive relationship between intimate partner violence and organizational deviance,  $t(217) = 4.79, p < .001$ . In contrast, at high levels of perceived organizational support the positive association between intimate partner violence and organizational deviance was non-significant  $t(217) = .77, ns$ . Overall, Hypotheses 2a to 2d were supported.

## DISCUSSION

The alarming pervasiveness of IPV brought about an increased awareness of, as well as interest in examining its potential impact and associated risks and costs across life domains. Although evidence shows that IPV victims are likely to be employed, few studies surveyed women who are working (Farmer & Tiefenthaler, 2003; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2008). A handful of those preliminary investigations tested the employee-level consequences of IPV using limited proxy measures of work productivity (Brush, 2000; Reeves & O'Leary-Kelly, 2007; Swanberg & Logan, 2005). Despite these initial attempts, we still know relatively little about the mechanisms involved in the relationship between IPV and work outcomes. Further empirical evidence that will elucidate the multi-contextual influence of partner abuse and the specific conditions under which it could be mitigated are necessary to prevent its worsening impact on organizational life. But unlike much of the preliminary research that examined limited domain-specific proximal consequences (Plichta, 2004; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a), our study constitutes an attempt to further investigate the family-work link by testing the relationship between IPV and multiple work-related outcomes and moderators.

The main effect results reveal the pattern of IPV-work interaction which is indicative of a spillover of home-life related IPV issues onto employee attitudes and behaviors at work (Grzywacz & Marks, 1999). Our findings confirm the increasing permeability of the boundaries between family and work life which likewise show that employees do bring along personal problems to work. The family-work spillover theory lends strong support to these inferences (Crouter, 1984). As hypothesized, employees who experienced IPV reported low job satisfaction. They similarly obtained low supervisor ratings of in-role performance and organizational citizenship behavior and oppositely high ratings of organizational deviance. These findings are robust in light of the control variables that were used in this study. Our results demonstrate that attitudinal and performance-based work outcomes are susceptible to distress caused by partner abuse. As evidenced by prior research, IPV-related concerns emanating from home are expected to infiltrate and eventually influence organizational life even if the perpetration occurs outside of work (Reeves & O'Leary-Kelly, 2007; Swanberg et al., 2006).

It is apparent from the main effect findings that IPV spillover is associated with multiple negative work outcomes detrimental to both employee and organizational well-being. Given this pressing organizational concern, we sought to determine how specific work conditions might mitigate or exacerbate family-work spillover. One of the unique contributions of this study is its attempt to explore not only the outcomes of IPV spillover but also to determine conditions that underscore the active role of the organization in mitigating the resulting outcomes of IPV. As hypothesized, POS buffered the relationship between IPV and work outcomes. Employed IPV victims who felt supported by their organization reported higher job satisfaction. They likewise obtained high supervisor ratings of in-role performance and organizational citizenship behavior and oppositely low ratings of organizational deviance. As explained through our hypothesized arguments based on organizational support theory and stress-buffering hypothesis, POS attenuates the negative relationship between IPV and beneficial work outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, OCBs, and in-role performance). In the same way, POS mitigates the positive association of IPV with organizational deviance. Thus, it is possible that POS may not only lessen the impact of spillover when employees are confronted with multi-contextual stressors but also potentially contribute to successful coping critical to job maintenance. Ability to sustain employment facilitates economic independence and self-reliance which are important predictors of recovery and abusive relationship termination (Jewkes, 2002; Raghavan, Swan, Snow, & Mazure, 2005).

## **CONCLUSION**

In sum, we extended the management literature on family-work spillover by examining the relationship between IPV and multiple work outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, OCBs, in-role performance, and organizational deviance). These findings has undoubtedly established the interrelatedness of the family and work domains. In response to existing research gaps, the study also provided empirical evidence for the moderating effects of POS. We have demonstrated that high level of POS attenuates the negative impact of IPV on work life. More importantly, we have highlighted the critical role of the organization as a viable and significant source of support for IPV victims.

## **REFERENCES AVAILABLE FROM THE AUTHORS**