



Adverse Childhood Experiences and Intimate Partner Violence

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WHAT DID WE DO & WHY?

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) include experiencing verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, witnessing intimate partner violence (IPV), separation from parents, and parents having a mental illness, substance use, or criminal record. Having these experiences in childhood increases the risk of serious physical, mental health, and neurobiological problems in adulthood. Men who assault their partners are more likely than non-abusive men to report having been abused as children, but it is not known whether IPV offenders have experienced more ACEs than other offenders. We studied ACEs documented in the medical records of forensic patients, who are admitted to hospital because of their involvement with the criminal justice system. We compared 99 patients with a history of IPV offences, with 233 violent offenders without a history of IPV, and 103 patients with no violent offenses.

OUR FINDINGS WHAT'S NEXT?

Patients with a history of IPV offenses had extensive ACEs documented in their medical record. However, IPV offenders were not different from patients with other kinds of violent offenses. In general, having more ACEs was related to having a more extensive criminal history. It was also related to a higher risk of violent re-offending.

We showed that IPV offenders had many ACEs but they did not differ from other violent offenders. Therefore, this study did not support the notion that these events disrupt intimate relationships specifically. Future studies of ACEs with community-based IPV offenders should compare them with other violent offenders.

KEY MESSAGES

- Adverse childhood experiences were common in forensic patients with a history of violence
- Men who committed intimate partner violence did not differ from other violent offenders in their exposure to adverse childhood experiences
- This finding does not support the notion that adverse childhood experiences disrupt intimate relationships