

SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

Implications of intimate partner physical violence and substance misuse for parenting

K. Daniel O'Leary

Psychology Department, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York, USA

Correspondence

K. Daniel O'Leary, Psychology Department,
Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New
York, USA.

Email: daniel.oleary@stonybrook.edu

Abstract

Approximately 35%–45% of young married adults engage in intimate partner violence (IPV), and it is possible to reliably distinguish between general IPV and clinically significant IPV in a manner accepted both by DSM-V & ICD-11. IPV and alcohol misuse have been associated in many research designs, and experts now argue that alcohol misuse causes IPV. While less research exists on other substances like marijuana, there is clearly a moderate association between marijuana use and IPV, and that association appears to be dose-dependent. Both IPV and substance use disorders (SUD), especially alcohol misuse, have been associated with a host of both internalizing and externalizing problems of children and adolescents. Research on the co-morbid effects of IPV and substance misuse is relatively new but there are documented cumulative effects of IPV, problematic alcohol use, problematic drug use, and depressive symptoms on aggressive and neglectful parental disciplinary practices. Fortunately, research on the effects of both alcohol misuse and IPV shows that while both can have deleterious effects on children, the majority of children exposed to either IPV or alcohol misuse do not grow up to have diagnoses of emotional or behavioral problems. Support from one parent, a teacher, or extended family members, as well as the ability

Editors of Issue: Robin Deutsch, Leslie Drozd, & Michael Saini.

Special thanks go to Shenade Charles and Susan O'Leary for careful and insightful editing.

© 2023 Association of Family and Conciliation Courts.

to maintain family rituals, serve as protective factors for children. Recommendations are made regarding reviews of assessment of IPV and substance misuse as well as a guide for conceptualizing and completing forensic evaluations involving IPV and substance misuse.

KEYWORDS

child abuse, dysfunctional parenting, intimate partner violence (IPV), protective factors, substance use disorder

Key points for the family court community

- Prevalence rates of physical intimate partner violence (IPV) are around 35%–40% in the general population of parents of young children and clinically significant partner aggression (CS-IPV which engenders fear or physical harm occurs in about 35% of such parents or in about 10% of all IPV cases).
- Extensive reviews of the alcohol-IPV link based on cross-sectional, longitudinal, experimental, and ecological momentary data studies, led to the conclusion alcohol use can cause IPV.
- Alcohol misuse has long been associated with numerous family and childhood problems, but not even a majority of children from alcoholic parents are inevitably doomed to a childhood of psychological disorders, and there are important protective factors like emotional support from the non-alcohol abusing parent, and emotional and financial support from extended family members.
- Based on studies of women in shelters, about 35%–65% of children of mothers in the shelters are physically abused, but the concordance rates of IPV of parents in randomly recruited samples are less than 20%, and one cannot generalize from one sample to another.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



K. Daniel O'Leary is a Distinguished Professor of Psychology at Stony Brook University. He was chairman of the Psychology Department and Director of Clinical Training at Stony Brook, President of the Association of Behavior and Cognitive Therapy, and President of the NY Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. He has conducted forensic custody and mental health evaluations for numerous judges in Supreme and Family Courts of Suffolk County, NY for 30 years, and he is a divorce/family dispute mediator with attorney, Dawn Murphy, in Smithtown, NY. His research has focused on the impact of alcohol abuse, anger, and personality disorders on intimate partner violence and multivariate risk models of intimate partner violence in national samples in the United States and Ukraine.