

The role of social support in intimate partner violence and economic hardship

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The term intimate partner violence (IPV) is used to describe situations where a current or former partner or spouse causes harm to their significant other via physical, sexual and psychological violence. The

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates one in four women and nearly one in 10 men have experienced IPV during their lifetime.

Rachel Voth Schrag, a domestic violence scholar and assistant professor in The University of Texas at Arlington's School of Social Work, and UTA doctoral students Kristen E. Ravi and Sarah R. Robinson have published research focusing on the role of social support in the link between economic abuse—a distinct type of IPV—and economic hardship.

Economic abuse (EA) is defined as controlling batterer behaviors aimed at sabotaging economic efforts and maintaining [economic power](#) and control over someone. Due to its unique consequences and specific patterns of behavior, some scholars have called for EA to be considered as a separate form of abuse deserving specific attention to its dynamics, patterns and impacts.

The study's authors sought to explore the dynamics of economic hardship within the context of IPV by measuring the association between EA with IPV and economic hardship. They also examined the impact of social support on survivors' experiences of hardship.

"Economic abuse is not just about someone taking your cash," said Voth Schrag. "It may also involve the withholding of things that make someone feel economically secure. That can include preventing or limiting work or school hours, stealing income or cash gifts, harassing someone at work or school, damaging credit history and dominating family finances by demanding receipts, preventing access to money or making unilateral decisions."

The study found that behaviors related to EA are linked to employment and housing instability, increased use of public assistance, greater material hardship and increased economic dependence on abusive

partners for financial stability.

"Economic abuse has been shown to impact the physical and mental health of victims of IPV," Voth Schrag added. "In addition, data indicates that historical experiences of EA can reverberate through survivors' lives, creating economic hardship for years due to ongoing issues with debt, credit, employment and economic self-sufficiency.

"The clear association the current study observed between experiencing abusive tactics and women's extent of economic hardship is particularly concerning because long-lasting consequences of EA not only include poverty, homelessness and hunger, but also additional vulnerability to being caught in abusive relationships, increasing their dependence on their partners," she continued.

The researchers determined that developing effective strategies for addressing the economic consequences of [abuse](#) is central to disrupting cycles of victimization.

"Future work should recognize that social support may be necessary but not sufficient to buffer the impacts of violence on survivors' economic experiences, and work to build strategies for supplementing survivors' social networks and access to tangible resources in order to disrupt experiences of [economic hardship](#)," the study concluded.

More information: Rachel J. Voth Schrag et al. The Role of Social Support in the Link Between Economic Abuse and Economic Hardship, *Journal of Family Violence* (2018). [DOI: 10.1007/s10896-018-0019-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-018-0019-8)

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