A study of educational sabotage
3 October 2019

Impacts included diminished academic achievement, emotional or mental health challenges, and, positively, an increased desire to overcome such obstacles.

Educational sabotage is considered a form of intimate partner violence, which is a factor in 16.5% of all homicides in the U.S., according to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The agency estimates one in four women and nearly one in 10 men have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) during their lifetime.

Pursuing higher education can a catalyst for breaking out of the isolation and cycles of dependency that often accompany IPV. According to Voth Schrag's study, "by understanding, addressing, and preventing school sabotage, scholars, institutions of higher education, and their community partners have an opportunity to make an important contribution to the well-being and safety of students."

UTA offers resources and support for students, faculty and staff experiencing IPV—including educational sabotage—who are ready to seek help. One of those resources is the Crime Victim Services program, which provides assistance, support, crisis counseling, medical accompaniment, criminal justice support and information, referrals to local social service providers and coordination with on-campus services such as the Title IX Office.

Another resource available on campus is the Relationship Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention program, which provides support, referral services, and advocates for those affected by violence, and promotes education and awareness of sexual assaults, relationship violence and stalking.

Provided by University of Texas at Arlington

Rachel Voth Schrag, assistant professor in the School of Social Work. Credit: UTA

A study published in the journal Violence Against Women by a domestic violence expert at The University of Texas at Arlington focuses on an overlooked form of psychological abuse—educational sabotage.

Educational sabotage is a form of coercive control that directly affects a survivor's efforts to obtain educational credentials, said Rachel Voth Schrag, assistant professor in the School of Social Work. Tactics include disruption of financial aid or academic efforts, physical violence and inducing guilt related to academic efforts.

Those strategies are a serious hindrance to the successful completion of educational programs and, ultimately, the economic independence and safety of survivors, she said.

"This form of violence is used by one of the partners as a means for furthering their own power and control over the other partner," Voth Schrag said. "Pursuing higher education can be perceived as a threat by the abusing party."

In the study, participants identified several ways in which educational sabotage affected their lives.