Adults' Online and Offline Psychological Intimate Partner Violence Experiences

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Introduction

Psychological Intimate Partner Violence (PIPV):

Excessive controlling behaviours and verbal aggression towards a partner

Can occur **offline** and **online**

Introduction

Previous research on online and offline PIPV:

- Offline and online PIPV tend to **co-occur**;
- Inconclusive findings on **sex differences** in offline and online PIPV;
- (Online) PIPV research predominantly conducted among teenage and college samples, rarely among **adults**

Present study

This study aims to assess:

- 1) **Prevalence rates** of online and offline PIPV victimization and perpetration experiences among adults
- 2) The **co-occurrence** of adults' online and offline PIPV victimization and perpetration experiences
- 3) **Age differences** in adults' PIPV experiences
- 4) **Sex differences** in adults' PIPV experiences

Methods

Procedure:

Survey administered via face-to-face interviews among citizens of Ghent, Belgium. Citizens were randomly selected through a **representative** sampling technique.

- Open & **closed** part
- Representative sample in terms of **sex** (male/female) and **age** (18 – 65+ years)

Sample

$n = 1587$
citizens

$n = 1144$ in a
romantic relationship

587 women
(51.3%)

557 men
(48.7%)

Average age = 47.7 years

Measures

Concept	Scale	Response scale	Cronbach's Alpha
Online PIPV	Abbreviated version of Cyber Dating Abuse Questionnaire (3 items)	5-point Frequency scale from Never to Very often	$\alpha = .64$ for victimization, $\alpha = .69$ for perpetration
Offline PIPV	Abbreviated version of Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse (7 items)	5-point Frequency scale from Never to Very often	$\alpha = .81$ for victimization, $\alpha = .75$ for perpetration
Sex	Man or Woman		
Age	Age groups: 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; 65+ years

Results: Prevalence

Measures of online and offline PIPV victimization and perpetration experiences were *dichotomized* (0 = *never* versus 1 = *at least once*)

	Total sample (<i>n</i> = 1144)	Women (<i>n</i> = 587)	Men (<i>n</i> = 557)
<i>Online PIPV</i>			
Victimization	521 (45.5%)	231 (39.4%)	290 (52.1%)
Perpetration	477 (41.7%)	257 (43.8%)	220 (39.5%)
<i>Offline PIPV</i>			
Victimization	688 (60.1%)	307 (52.3%)	381 (68.4%)
Perpetration	591 (51.7%)	322 (54.9%)	269 (48.3%)

Results: Co-occurrence

We conducted Pearson and partial correlation analyses for online and offline PIPV victimization and perpetration experiences

We found:

- 1) Significant correlations **between online and offline** PIPV experiences, ranging from $r = .343$ to $r = .472$
- 2) Significant correlations **between victimization and perpetration** experiences for online ($r = .587$) and offline ($r = .604$) PIPV
- 3) Associations remained significant when we **controlled** for age and sex

Co-occurrence

Our findings suggest that:

- It is important to consider the **offline** context when examining **online** forms of partner violence
- **Bidirectionality** of PIPV should be considered in future research

Results: Age differences

Age differences in online and offline PIPV

We conducted Kruskal-Wallis H-tests and Dunn post-hoc tests and found:

- **Online** PIPV victimization: 18-24 year olds > any older group
- Online PIPV perpetration: 18-24 & 25-34 year olds > any older group
- **Offline** PIPV perpetration: 18-24 & 25-34 year olds > any older group
- Offline PIPV victimization: almost **no age differences**

Age differences

- Our findings appear to **justify a focus on younger samples** in studying online partner violence, although the conceptualization of online PIPV should be taken into consideration
- Reasons **why** online and offline PIPV appear to diminish with age and possible **outcomes** of these experiences should be considered in future research
- As victimization of offline PIPV did not diminish with age, **vulnerability of older age groups** should be further investigated

Results: Sex differences

Sex differences in online and offline PIPV

We conducted Kruskal-Wallis H-tests and found:

- **Men** reported more **victimization** of offline and online PIPV than women
- **Women** reported more **perpetration** of offline PIPV than men

Sex differences

Our findings suggest that:

- Men reported more **PIPV victimization** than women, indicating the need for prevention and intervention efforts inclusive of male victimization experiences
- Women are more often perpetrators but only in the *offline* context, indicating that despite co-occurrence, **different motivations and mechanisms may underlie online versus offline** PIPV perpetration. Future research should examine this

Study limitations

Several study limitations to consider:

- Reliance on self-report, susceptible to **biases**
- **Non-dyadic** design: cannot account for complex relationship dynamics and for reciprocity of partner violence
- Cross-sectional design: **no causal inferences**
- Representative sample was drawn from **population of one city**, cross-cultural or –national research is warranted
- No information on **gender identity or sexual orientation**

To conclude

- 1) Online and offline experiences of psychological intimate partner violence tend to co-occur, indicating the need to **consider both contexts simultaneously** in partner violence research and practice
- 2) **Vulnerability** to PIPV experiences may differ based on sex and age, but much remains unknown as to under which circumstances and why

Contact

Please contact me if you have any questions or wish to discuss our research:

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