People affected by substance misuse - Key Literature

Australia


There is considerable evidence of the impact of methamphetamine (often known as ‘ice’, ‘speed’, MDMA or ‘ecstasy’) use on violent behaviour. This paper presents findings from a review of existing research on the association between methamphetamine use and domestic violence. Eleven studies met the criteria for inclusion. Results of the research showed that domestic violence is common among methamphetamine users; however, methamphetamine users account for a small proportion of all domestic violence offenders. There is evidence that methamphetamine users are more likely than non-users to perpetrate domestic violence. Importantly, methamphetamine use is frequently present along with other risk factors. This means methamphetamine use probably exacerbates an existing predisposition to violence, rather than causing violent behaviour.


This research paper presents a helpful overview of the literature. It also draws on two national surveys of alcohol’s harm to others, service system data and qualitative interviews with families conducted in 2008. Twelve per cent of carers reported that their children were verbally abused, left in an unsupervised or unsafe situation, physically hurt or exposed to domestic violence because of others’ drinking (p10). The paper identifies high numbers of incidents of alcohol-related domestic violence (p12). It notes that based on analyses of victimisation data from the 2005 Australian Personal Safety Survey, it was estimated that alcohol contributed to 50 per cent of all partner violence, and 73 per cent of physical assaults by a partner (p15). This review of the literature concludes that alcohol emerges as a consistent risk factor in the perpetration of domestic violence; there is a consistent relationship between alcohol use and increased severity of partner aggression and studies show women experience a heightened risk of partner violence on days that men have been drinking (p16). It also identifies that alcohol related harm may be prevented by changing the drinking of the drinker, protecting those affected and/or insulating contact between them (p103).

Family and domestic violence is a significant health and social issue. Alcohol and drugs are two risk factors found to contribute to family and domestic violence. This project sought to investigate the relationship between alcohol and other drug use and family violence, key demographic and environmental factors, differences between cases with and without alcohol and other drug involvement, and the major trends in family violence.


This study explores the relationship between methamphetamine dependence and domestic violence among male police detainees interviewed as part of the Drug Use Monitoring in Australia program. Detainees who were dependent on methamphetamines (61%) were significantly more likely to report recent violence towards a current or former intimate partner than those who had used methamphetamines but were not dependent (37%). There was also a significant association between cannabis dependence and self-reported domestic violence. Further, detainees expressing attitudes minimising the impact of violence were also more likely to self-report domestic violence. Overall, the results show the importance of integrated responses that address the co-occurrence of substance use disorders and domestic violence, and the risk factors underpinning these harmful behaviours.


This paper reports on the findings of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS), which was conducted across Australia between December 2002 and June 2003. A total of 6,677 women aged between 18 and 69 years participated in the survey, and provided information on their experiences of physical and sexual violence including childhood violence. It identifies research that demonstrates a correlation between alcohol use and violence and research that has found that abusive males with alcohol or drug problems inflict violence against their partners more frequently, are more apt to inflict serious injuries, are more likely to be sexually assaultive, and are more likely to be violent outside the home than abusers without a history of substance abuse (p58). This paper also identifies that recent research has found that male controlling behaviours over female partners made ‘a more important statistical contribution to predictions about violence than did alcohol, age, type of relationship, or class variables’ (p58). However study results indicate that the strongest risk factors for intimate partner physical violence are associated
with the ‘male’s behaviour — his drinking habits, general levels of aggression, and his controlling behaviour.’ (p61)


Using data from the Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) program, this paper explores involvement in intimate partner violence, and provides first-time results from face-to-face interviews with a group of 1,597 police detainees. The study found that the levels of intimate partner violence are much higher among this group (49%) than is found from general population surveys. More than two-thirds of the detainees who were involved in partner violence reported being both a victim and a perpetrator in the past 12 months. Detainees who were classified as drug dependent were twice as likely as non-drug dependent detainees to be involved in intimate partner violence. None of the individual drugs was found to be significantly associated with intimate partner violence, suggesting that the level of illicit drug use (dependency), rather than the type of illicit drug, is a greater predictor of involvement in intimate partner violence. Alcohol dependency was also found to be a significant risk marker for involvement in partner violence (p5).

**Noonan, P., A. Taylor and J. Burke, Links between alcohol consumption and domestic and sexual violence against women: Key findings and future directions (ANROWS, 2017).**

This literature review found that “there is little evidence that alcohol use is a primary cause of violence against women. The paper does, however, identify that there are clear associations, and in some cases, strong correlations between alcohol use and violence against women, including, for instance, in the severity of the violence.” The relationship between alcohol and violence against women manifests in three ways:

- Alcohol use is linked with the perpetration of violence against women.
- Alcohol use is linked with women’s victimisation by violence.
- Alcohol is used as a coping strategy by women who have experienced violence.

**Qadara, Antonia, Mary Stathopoulos and Rebecca Jenkinson, ‘Establishing the Connection [Between Alcohol and Other Drug Use and Sexual Victimisation]’ (State of Knowledge Paper 6, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety Landscapes, July 2015).**

This literature review draws upon Australian national surveys to consider the prevalence of sexual abuse and its association with substance abuse (p9). For example in one ABS study it was reported that among women who reported one type of gender-based violence, over 23% of victims also reported experiencing a substance use disorder. Where women had experienced more than three types of gender-based violence, 47% of them had also experienced a substance use disorder over their lifetime (p9).
International


This review of the literature identifies that substance abuse and intimate partner violence often have many causes and their apparent correlation applies to only a sub-group of batterers and victims. For some men who batter, substance abuse increases the frequency or severity of their violence. For other men, substance abuse and intimate partner violence are separate issues whose apparently high rate of co-occurrence may stem from shared pre-conditions such as antisocial personality or from a belief that when they get drunk or high, they are going to be violent. Finally, for some men, both substance abuse and intimate partner violence may be manifestations of an underlying need for power and control related to gender-based distortions and insecurities.


The authors reviewed qualitative studies between 1995 and 2016 to determine how substance use features in survivors’ and perpetrators’ accounts of intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetration. Results showed the emergence of six core themes, five of which related to the complex nexus between substance use and IPV perpetration in the context of intoxication, withdrawal and addiction, impact on relationship, and broader dynamics of power and control and psychological vulnerabilities. The other theme related to survivors’ agency and resistance to IPV perpetration.

Although survivors were more likely to see intoxication and withdrawal as part of a pattern of abusive behaviour, perpetrators described a causal link between intoxication and discrete incidents of IPV perpetration. The likelihood of violence was increased by feelings of frustration caused by withdrawals from alcohol or illicit drugs, and/or a failure or partner refusal to procure money for drugs. Survivors were more likely than perpetrators to identify abuse in relation to the impact of substance use on their relationship and dynamics of power and control. The authors recommend the need for tailored integrated interventions that address the complex intersection between substance use and IPV perpetration, in the context of social, psychological and environmental factors. Interventions should also focus on how perpetrators describe their own and, where relevant, their partner’s substance use.


The relationship between substance abuse and partner violence is complex, with various interpretations provided for the alcohol-violence association, including: disinhibition, disavowal, or interaction. Considers the ‘power theory’: that alcohol abuse and wife assault are manifestations of an underlying need for power
and control related to gender-based distortions and insecurities. Alcohol treatment and wife assault programs often conflict in terms of assumptions and approaches. Power theory implies that alcohol abuse and wife assault be treated conjointly as weapons of power assertion and control, and, in the process, treatment effectiveness will be enhanced.


This paper looks at substance abuse in the context of both survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence. In relation to victims the link with substance abuse suggests: a way to cope with the violence and trauma; substance use increasing the likelihood of victimisation (e.g. partners rationalise violence on the basis of ‘they deserve to be hit’ because they are seen more negatively); and greater likelihood of partners who also use substances. In relation to abusers the link with substance abuse potentially includes: high rates of substance abuse correlates with domestic violence, with some studies showing increased severity of abuse depending on the regularity/combination of substances used – however, most studies do not establish substance use as a cause of domestic violence.


Frequently cited, ‘this study focuses on the subgroup of 7,707 women who were in an intact marriage or common-law relationship at the time of the interview. Fifteen percent of these women, a total of 1,167, reported at least one incident of violence by their current male partner; 333 (4.3%) reported violence within the 12-month period prior to the survey. The objective of this study is to identify the factors and their relation to alcohol abuse that help predict the occurrence of violence’ (p58).

> See especially ‘The Alcohol-Violence Link’ (from p55) discussing the literature on the complex link between wife assault and alcohol abuse. It discusses various posited explanations for the correlation between alcohol abuse and wife assault perpetration, such as alcohol's disinhibiting effects, mood-altering effects, alcohol as an excuse for behaviour, and alcohol consumption as part of masculine peer-group cultures that coexist with negative attitudes towards women.

> Pp63-64 report the findings which establish ‘Not only are alcohol abusers found to have higher rates of assaults on wives, they are also more likely to inflict severe violence’. However, the study also finds that ‘Male attitudes and beliefs in the rightness of control over female partners made a more important statistical contribution to predictions about violence than did alcohol, age, type of relationships, or class variables’ (p68).

‘This paper reviews evidence regarding alcohol and domestic violence, including cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys, experimental studies of aggression and marital conflict, event-based research, and intervention studies with alcoholics. Based on this review, it is concluded that alcohol is a contributing cause in domestic violence, but neither a necessary nor sufficient cause. In addition, the evidence suggests that intoxication in the perpetrator of violence does not appear to excuse his aggression, but that intoxication in the victim is often viewed as an excuse for the perpetrator's behavior. … For more severe populations, alcohol interventions might have a beneficial impact, but they must be included as additional requirements in the overall criminal justice response, not as an alternative for other requirements. Finally, it is critical that research regarding alcohol and domestic violence move beyond simple studies of association and begin to frame these questions with an eye toward policy implications.’

This paper provides a thorough, detailed overview of the various understandings of the link between alcohol use and domestic violence, concluding that mandatory alcohol assessment and treatment should be provided in addition to criminal justice responses (p241).

National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health, Understanding Research on Intimate Partner Violence and Substance Use (2008).

This research highlights key findings on the relationship between intimate partner violence (IPV) and substance misuse. These findings are:

1. ‘IPV survivors are more likely to use or become dependent on substances, compared to people who have not experienced IPV’.
2. ‘There are high rates of IPV among people receiving substance use disorder treatment services’.
3. ‘Mental health conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression, may mediate the relationship between IPV and substance use’.

The fact sheet concludes that this research does not provide sufficient information on factors that may help explain why IPV and substance use co-exist (p.5).

Abstract: ‘Research on risk factors for men’s perpetration of intimate partner violence (IPV) has shown a high correlation with problem alcohol use. Additional studies, however, indicate that the alcohol–IPV link is neither simple nor necessarily direct and that a range of factors may moderate this relationship. Using a national, community-based sample of 255 men, the present study examined the moderating effects of ambivalent sexism (i.e., hostile and benevolent sexism) on the relationship between alcohol use and IPV perpetration. The findings show that both greater alcohol consumption and high hostile sexism are positively associated with IPV perpetration, and that hostile sexism moderates the alcohol–IPV relationship for perpetration of physical IPV, but not for psychological IPV. Moreover, high levels of alcohol consumption have a greater impact on physical IPV perpetration for men low in hostile sexism than for men high in hostile sexism, lending support to the multiple threshold model of the alcohol–IPV link. Implications of the findings for prevention, intervention, and future research are discussed.’

> The introduction includes a comprehensive literature review of the most recent studies’ findings on the correlation between alcohol use and domestic intimate partner violence, including: ‘Bennett and Bland (2008) caution, however, that the relationship between alcohol use and IPV is neither simple nor necessarily direct. As they point out, most heavy drinkers do not perpetrate IPV, which suggests that IPV perpetration is influenced by additional factors that may interact with alcohol use’ (p3). See especially ‘The Alcohol-IPV Link’ (pp3-6) which provides a great discussion of the various explanations and complex understandings of the relationship between alcohol-use and intimate partner violence perpetration.

> ‘Our findings, in fact, showed that the men in our sample who consumed alcohol more frequently and in higher quantities as measured by three items from the NIAAA COGA Study reported more psychological and physical IPV perpetration. These results are consistent with the findings of previous studies that have investigated the relationship between level of alcohol consumption and IPV perpetration’ (p18)

> ‘As Foran and O’Leary (2008a) have pointed out, for individuals who are already at high risk of IPV perpetration without consuming alcohol—that is, in this case, men who are high in hostile sexism—heavy drinking and intoxication may contribute relatively little additional risk. However, heavy alcohol use may facilitate physical IPV perpetration among men who score low in hostile sexism by serving as a disinhibitor to the open expression of hostility toward women (Swim et al., 1995) as well as by contributing to cognitive distortions of their partner’s behavior and motives’ (p20)


This applied research paper provides an overview of recent studies on the relationship between substance use and experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV), including the prevalence of co-existing substance use...
and IPV. While there is some evidence suggesting a relationship between experiencing IPV and substance use, solely focusing on IPV and substance use may be misleading in its simplicity. Given that, this paper describes factors that may mediate the relationship between substance use and IPV, as well as caveats and cautions for interpreting this body of research.