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Adding Insult to Injury: The Effects of Intimate Partner Violence Spillover on the Victim's Reputation

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Abstract

This article examined indirect consequences for the victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) in terms of ostracism and reputational threats. Through an experimental vignette survey, we compared bystanders' reactions to either an intimate partner violence episode or a generic violence episode. A victim of IPV (vs. generic violence) received a more negative moral evaluation and was considered as more responsible for the violence perpetrated on her. This made participants not only anticipate a less positive reputation attributed to the victim but also report less willingness to approach and defend the victim and include her in relevant ingroups 1 year after the episode.

Keywords

intimate partner violence, moral evaluations, attribution of responsibility, reputation, re-victimization

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a widespread phenomenon and a leading worldwide public health issue (Pagliaro et al., 2020). Indeed, more than 30% of women report being victimized by an intimate partner at some stage in their lives (Mouzos & Makkai,

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2004; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000; World Health Organization [WHO], 2013). It may be considered a form of physical, psychological, and sexual violence perpetrated by a victim's partner or former partner which has a wide range of negative consequences for the victims. As such, this phenomenon has been extensively investigated in the literature, and many adverse physical and mental health outcomes for victims have been reported (see, for instance, Baldry & Winkel, 2008; Beydoun et al., 2012; Campbell, 2002; Coker et al., 2002; Plichta, 2004). These include, among others, physical injuries (e.g., bruises and welts; lacerations and abrasions; abdominal or thoracic injuries), psychological consequences (e.g., depression, post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], addictive behaviors), adverse consequences for sexual and reproductive health (e.g., unwanted pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted infections), and in the worst case, the victim's death.

However, although IPV is a widespread phenomenon, what emerges consistently in the literature is that most cases remain unnoticed or are not reported to authorities (e.g., Gracia et al., 2009; WHO, 2013). Researchers have so far highlighted several factors that may prevent a victim of violence from reporting the incident to authorities, such as fear of retaliation, economic dependency, post hoc rationalizations of the incident, or cultural beliefs related to masculine honor and traditional gender roles (Baldry et al., 2013; Baldry & Winkel, 2008; Fenton & Mott, 2017; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Phipps & Young, 2015). A recent line of investigation has demonstrated that stigma experienced by victims of IPV (e.g., Crowe et al., 2019; Crowe & Murray, 2015; Meyer, 2016; Murray et al., 2018; Overstreet & Quinn, 2013) is a critical factor inhibiting help-seeking. The internalization of the stigma linked to violence, therefore, may represent a barrier to the search for help and support from the victims. Consequently, it is important to consider other potential sources of support, such as those associated with the bystander (Banyard, 2008, 2015; Latané & Darley, 1970) and understand the conditions under which these support sources will facilitate or inhibit bystander intervention (Pagliaro et al., 2020). In the present article, a central goal is to connect these two strands of research—that is, stigma related to IPV and the bystander approach—to investigate the mechanisms that may potentially contribute to perpetuating the stigma associated with the victim. To this end, we conducted an experimental study that explored whether two main underlying mechanisms that drive bystander reactions to IPV—moral evaluation of the victim and victim-blaming (Pagliaro et al., 2019, 2021)—will also facilitate the perpetuation of stigma associated with IPV and further threaten the victim's reputation.

Stigma Experienced by the Victims of IPV

The concept of stigma—and the relative process of stigmatization—originates from the seminal labeling theory (e.g., Goffman, 1963; Scheff, 1966) and its main assumption is that negative labels can be internalized and influence an individual's sense of self (as well as their behavior). This idea, which is rooted in symbolic interactionism, is well represented by Mead's classical theorization that "we are more or less unconsciously seeing ourselves as others see us" (Mead, 1934, p. 68). Since the seminal

work by Goffman (1963), the concept of stigma—literally, "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" and that reduces the bearer "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (Goffman, 1963, p. 3)—has been widely investigated in psychology and social science (for a review, see Major & O'Brien, 2005). Social psychological literature, in particular, has given substantial empirical consideration to how individuals develop negative attitudes and stereotypes toward certain social groups (Han et al., 2014; Pittman, 2020; Tyler, 2018). Moreover, based on these pejorative attitudes and beliefs, it is important to note that these *stigmatized* groups usually "receive disproportionately poor interpersonal or economic outcomes relative to members of the society at large because of discrimination against members of the social category" (Crocker & Major, 1989, p. 609).

An extensive corpus of research on IPV considered concepts that are similar to stigma in an attempt to explain why the victim and the observers of the violent episode decide not to report it to authorities, such as victim-blaming or rape-myths (e.g., Bryant & Spencer, 2003; Eigenberg & Policastro, 2016; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2004; Lerner, 1970; Pavlou & Knowles, 2001; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001). Nevertheless, the concept of stigma has only recently been directly connected to IPV. In particular, the concept of stigma has been considered to describe the experience of victims of IPV (Meyer, 2016) and how this influences their help-seeking intentions (Murray et al., 2018). Interestingly, recent research conceptualized a multidimensional model concerning the stigma that victims of IPV may experience.

According to the IPV Stigmatization Model (Overstreet & Quinn, 2013), victims may experience one of three forms of stigma: (a) *cultural stigma*, which reflects negative shared beliefs about those who are abused; (b) *internalized stigma*, which occurs when the victim feels somewhat responsible for what happened; and (c) *anticipated stigma*, which involves the expectancy of negative reactions in case of disclosure. Crowe, Murray, and colleagues (Crowe & Murray, 2015; Murray et al., 2015) further elaborated on this model and proposed a five-components model of stigma associated with IPV, which considers *blame, discrimination, loss of status, isolation*, and *shame*. In an attempt to synthetise these research efforts, Murray et al. (2018) recently provided an Integrated IPV Stigmatization Model, which considers the sources as well as the components of stigma faced by survivors of IPV, resulting in 30 possible categories of stigma that victims of IPV may face.

Whatever the classification, what is clear in this research approach is that victim-blaming is a negative experience that most victims of IPV may have to deal with, and this may prevent them from seeking help from both informal and formal support sources, as perceptions of the validity of victim narratives (i.e., their recollection of the relevant events) may also be influenced by such blame (Meyer, 2016). Importantly for the current examination, those victims whose behaviors are seen as morally questionable are often not considered to be an "ideal victim" (i.e., those who suffer crimes who are readily and consistently labeled as victims) and are also sometimes perceived as being partly responsible for what happened (Carpenter, 2005; Strobl, 2004). This experience of being blamed consistently emerges in reviews of victims' narratives (i.e., their recollection of the event) and might prevent the victim from seeking help

and support. Consequently, in the broad area of IPV research, it seems important to consider the role that potential bystanders may play in disrupting (or, in the worst-case scenario, reinforcing) such negative and biased experiences of IPV victims.

Moral Evaluations and Bystander Reactions to IPV

Social psychologists have often focused attention on bystanders as a source of prevention and support to victims of violence since the classical model by Latané and Darley (1970). According to Banyard (2011), bystanders are those individuals who are not directly involved in the emergency situation but

> by their very presence, have the potential to do nothing, to step in and diffuse a high-risk situation, to help and make it better, or to make the situation worse by condoning a perpetrator's behavior [. . .] or being unsupportive in responding to a victim [. . .] (p. 216).

This is why researchers have been investigating factors that might increase the likelihood that a bystander might interpret the situation unequivocally as an emergency and accept responsibility for intervention. On the other hand, it is also important to determine what factors might lead them to think the victim does not deserve their support. In fact, unsupportive bystanders may worsen the situation by perpetuating the social norm of condoning the violence (Banyard, 2008, 2015; Banyard et al., 2019; McMahon & Banyard, 2012; Pagliaro et al., 2020). Moreover, in the most recent conceptualization of the bystander intervention, Banyard's Action Coils model, bystander intervention acts as a feedback loop that might influence perceived efficacy and subsequent intention to help.

Pagliaro and colleagues (2019, 2020, 2021) have recently reasoned that bystanders' reactions to what they witness relates to the perception and causal attribution of an incident (Heider, 1958), in particular, in terms of attribution of responsibility (for a recent review, see Penone & Spaccatini, 2019). This means that bystanders should be less willing to help an IPV victim to the extent that they consider her responsible for what happened. In order to deepen our understanding of the process by which internal causal attributions for IPV victims are formed (Stewart et al., 2012), a number of researchers have considered the centrality of the moral evaluative dimension in impression formation toward (and behavioral reactions to) unknown targets (Brambilla & Leach, 2014; Ellemers et al., 2013; Pagliaro et al., 2013). Moral judgments are likely to foster internal attribution more than other kinds of judgment (e.g., competence or sociability) because individuals tend to consider morality-based evaluations to be more stable over time and better predictors of future behavior as they reveal the true nature of a person (Pagliaro et al., 2016). Building on these assumptions, Pagliaro and colleagues (2021) proposed and found that bystanders' reactions to IPV are guided by moral evaluations; in particular, when a victim admitted infidelity, bystanders evaluated her as less moral, and this triggered an internal attribution for what happened to her. This, in turn, reduced intention to help and support the victim (Pagliaro et al.,

2019, 2021). The role of moral evaluations as a trigger of bystander interpretation of, and reaction to, IPV also emerged in other research that examined different contextual antecedents (e.g., sexualisation, Pacilli et al., 2017; see also Gramazio et al., 2018).

Thus, moral evaluations seem to be a crucial driver of bystanders' reaction to IPV, at least in terms of intention to support the victim. In this article, we explore whether such evaluations might have a further indirect consequence[1] for the victim in terms of damaging her reputation through stigmatization.

The Present Research

To summarize the literature review previously presented, there is much empirical evidence indicating that victims of IPV experience stigmatization related to the violence in many forms, including exclusion and isolation. Moreover, victims of IPV are consistently blamed and held responsible for the violent incident, depending on both observers' beliefs (e.g., RWA, gender-role beliefs, honor culture) and contextual extralegal factors (e.g., admission of infidelity, the way the victim was dressed). In a more "fine-grained" analysis, Pagliaro and colleagues (2019, 2020, 2021) recently reported that such attributions of responsibility are driven by the moral evaluation of the victim. That is, individual and contextual variables may reduce the perception of the victim's morality, and this, in turn, is likely to determine attribution of responsibility and a lower willingness to help the victim herself.

One of the central goals of the present article is to examine whether the (im)moral evaluation-attribution of responsibility typically associated with IPV victimhood may cause "spillover" to negatively influence the life of the IPV victim in various ways. That is, we hypothesized that a victim of IPV might experience revictimisation in several ways related to her "perceived" compromised morality, for instance, in terms of (deterioration of) reputation, avoidance tendencies, and social exclusion. We further anticipated that these negative indirect consequences would be more likely to occur with IPV relative to an instance of general violence.

To test our reasoning, we exposed participants to two different male-to-female violence scenarios: a classic IPV episode and a generic violent episode (i.e., a violence episode following a condominium dispute). Following our rationale and previous literature, we hypothesized that a victim of an IPV incident (as opposed to a generic violence episode) would be perceived as less moral (H1) and more responsible for what happened (H2). Moreover, we anticipated a victim of IPV would be perceived as more likely to suffer long-term reputational damage; that is, we expected participants to anticipate a less positive reputation attributed to the victim a year after the episode (H3a). In addition, participants were expected to be less willing to approach and defend the IPV victim (H3b) and more reluctant to include her in relevant ingroups (H3c). Anticipated reputation, willingness to approach and defend the victim, and willingness to include her in relevant ingroups were considered to be proxies of secondary victimization. We further hypothesized that moral evaluations and attribution of responsibility mediate the influence of type of violence (i.e., IPV episode, general violence episode) on secondary victimization reactions (H4).

Method

Participants and design. We recruited 110 Italian participants (80 females, 29 males, 1 missing; *mean age* = 34.07; *SD* = 12.97) by disseminating an online survey via Qualtrics through Social Networking Sites (i.e., SNS). Specifically, the study was advertised on Facebook and Twitter through the personal accounts of the authors of this article, and through the account of the Group Processes and Morality Lab, directed by the first author of this article. Participants took part in the survey on a voluntary basis. The data were collected for 3 weeks (in January and February 2020). Seven participants were discarded from the analyses because they failed the manipulation check (see below for details; retained sample $n = 103$). Participants' gender was not considered in the main analyses because this variable was unbalanced in our sample. Adding gender as a covariate in the analyses reported below did not alter the pattern of results.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions resulting from a two-level single-factor (IPV vs. generic violence) between participant design.

Procedure. We adapted a procedure successfully used in previous literature (Baldry et al., 2015; Pacilli et al., 2017; Pagliaro et al., 2019, 2021; Paolini et al., 2020). According to the ethical standards of the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki, before taking part in the study we informed participants about any relevant aspect of the study. Importantly, they were informed of the right to refuse to participate in the study or to withdraw consent to participate at any time without reprisal. They then confirmed that they understood the instructions correctly, accepted the invitation to participate, and began filling out the questionnaire.

Participants were asked to read a fictitious article from a national newspaper. In the *IPV Condition*, they read a fictitious article in which a classic case of IPV, inspired by an actual case, was described. In particular, they read that a former partner, not agreeing that she wanted to break up after the partner accused her of betrayal, had beaten her in a bar. In the *Generic Violence Condition*, participants read an article in which a woman, due to a condominium dispute where she was in the right, had been confronted in a bar and beaten by the man she had the dispute with. The description of what happened in the bar and the consequences of the violence were identical in both conditions. The two fictitious articles are fully reported in Appendix A (translated to English from the original Italian). For a manipulation check, we then asked participants to recall whether the episode involved an IPV case or a condominium dispute on a multiple-choice question. Seven participants failed this manipulation check.

After reading about the violent episode, participants evaluated the victim on three dimensions of social judgment—morality, competence, and sociability (Leach et al., 2007)—to determine whether their reactions were affected by moral rather than more general positive/negative evaluations. In line with previous research (Pagliaro et al., 2021), they rated the victim ("*to what extent do you consider the woman/man described in the paper as. . .*"; on a scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 9 = *a lot*) on *Morality* (trustworthy, honest, sincere, moral; alpha = .95), *Competence* (competent, intelligent; alpha = .78), and *Sociability* (sociable, friendly; alpha = .89).

Then, participants completed a two-item measure of *attribution of responsibility* to the victims for the IPV ("Anna G. is responsible for what had happened" and "The fault of what happened lies with Anna G."; from 1 = *completely disagree* to 9 = *completely agree;* alpha = .89). After reversing, when necessary, higher scores indicated a greater attribution of responsibility.

Then we assessed anticipated reputation, willingness to approach and defend the victim, and willingness to include her in relevant ingroups as proxies of revictimization. The items assessing these constructs were formulated specifically for the present study. Importantly, we asked participants to imagine what would happen a year after the episode of violence described in the article. In order to assess *anticipated reputation*, we asked participants to complete 10 items regarding behaviors and judgments toward the victim. We asked them: "*Now try to imagine the situation a year after the event described in the article. How much do you think Anna G., the woman attacked*": (e.g., "She is respected by the other inhabitants of her town"; "She has a dubious reputation"; "She is criticized by the other inhabitants of her city"; alpha = .90; "; from 1 = *completely disagree* to 9 = *completely agree*). With some items reverse-scored, higher scores indicated a more positive anticipated reputation.

We assessed the willingness to approach and defend the victim by asking participants to indicate the extent to which they would engage, 1 year after the violent episode, in each of nine behaviors (e.g., "Rent her home"; "Talk about her well in a chat with friends"; "Give her a ride in the car"; alpha = .97; from 1 = *not at all* to 9 = *absolutely*).

Inclusion in relevant ingroups was assessed by asking participants how much they would have liked to have known the victim personally in four different social contexts (e.g., being a coworker; hanging out with the same friends; alpha = .97; from 1 = *not at all* to 9 = *absolutely*).

Completing the entire questionnaire required approximately 15 min, after which participants were thanked, informed about the goal of the study, and invited to contact the principal investigator of the study for any further information.

Analytical Strategy

We carried out a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to test the effect of type of violence (IPV vs. generic violence) on the main dependent variables. This allowed us to dismiss the possibility of a Type I error. Mediation analysis was performed using PROCESS, the Macro for SPSS developed by Hayes (2013) for estimating indirect effects. Differences in the degrees of freedom are due to instances of missing data.

Results

The MANOVA showed a significant multivariate effect, $F(7, 101) = 6.32$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .31$. The univariate effects for each dependent variable are described below.

Morality, competence, and sociability of victim. The effect of the type of violence on the evaluation of the victim's morality was significant, $F(1, 107) = 18.25$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .15$. Participants evaluated the victim as less moral in the IPV condition ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 2.05$) than in the generic violence condition ($M = 6.91$, $SD = 1.57$).

In contrast, type of violence did not affect evaluation of the victim's competence, $F(1, 107) = 2.33$, $p = .13$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$ (IPV: $M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.54$; generic violence: $M = 6.17$, $SD = 1.63$). Similarly, type of violence did not affect evaluation of the victim's sociability $F(1,107) = 0.62$, $p = .43$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$ (IPV: $M = 5.79$, $SD = 1.61$; generic violence: $M = 5.55$, $SD = 1.67$).

These results supported H1 and are in line with previous research highlighting that IPV impacts the moral evaluation of the victim, rather than the evaluation of her competence or sociability.

Attribution of responsibility for the violence to the victim. In line with H2, we found a significant univariate effect of the type of violence on victim's responsibility, $F(1, 107) = 5.61$, $p < .02$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$, indicating lower attribution of responsibility to the victim in the generic violence condition ($M = 1.39$, $SD = 0.89$) than in the IPV condition ($M = 2.18$, $SD = 2.24$).

Revictimisation. In line with H3a, participants anticipated the victim would have a worse reputation a year after the episode of violence described in the article in the IPV condition ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.62$) compared to the generic violence condition ($M = 6.11$, $SD = 1.36$), $F(1, 107) = 7.02$, $p = .009$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$.

The type of violence did not directly affect participants' willingness to approach and defend the victim, $F(1, 107) = 0.22$, $p = .64$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$ (IPV: $M = 6.93$, $SD = 2.03$; generic violence: $M = 7.10$, $SD = 1.72$). Similarly, the type of violence did not directly affect participants' willingness to include the victim in relevant ingroups, $F(1, 107) = 0.13$, $p = .72$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$ (IPV: $M = 6.23$, $SD = 2.20$; generic violence: $M = 6.37$, $SD = 1.88$). Thus, H3b and H3c were not confirmed. Even though the direct effect of the type of violence on participants' willingness to approach and defend the victim and on their willingness to include the victim in relevant ingroups was not reliable, we tested whether it had an indirect effect on these variables through the moral evaluation of the victim and by the attribution of responsibility to her (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

Mediation analyses. We then conducted three mediation analyses to test whether the effect of type of violence (coded as 0 = *generic violence*; 1 = *IPV*) on our proxies of revictimization was mediated by the moral evaluation of the victim and by the attribution of responsibility to her. A similar pattern has been recently shown to occur in the examination of bystanders' supportive behavior toward an IPV victim (Pagliaro et al., 2020, 2021). We followed the procedure described by Hayes (2013) for estimating indirect effects. According to the literature and the rationale previously described, the moral evaluation of the victim and the attribution of responsibility for IPV were modeled as sequential mediators (PROCESS model number 6), assuming that IPV (vs.

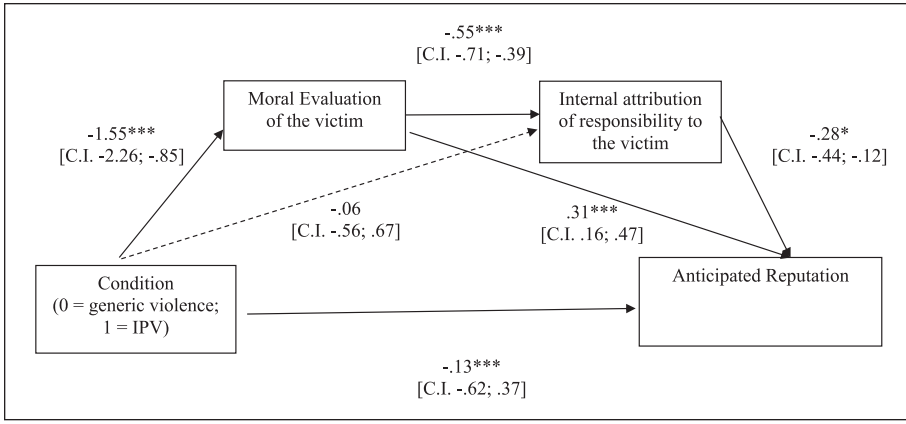

Figure 1. Mediation model in which the effects of kind of violence on anticipated victim's reputation are mediated by the moral evaluation of the victim and attribution of responsibility to her.
Note. IPV = Intimate partner violence.
*$p < .05$. ***$p < .001$.

generic violence) would have elicited a negative moral evaluation of the victim, and this, in turn, would have prompted an attribution of responsibility for the violent episode. This attribution of responsibility would have then spilled over to our proxies of revictimization: Anticipated reputation, willingness to approach and defend the victim, and willingness to include her in relevant ingroups. This order also reflects the order in which we assessed the two constructs in the questionnaire.

Anticipated reputation. Figure 1 depicts the sequential model. The overall equation was significant, $R^2 = .44$, $F(3, 99) = 26.37$, $p < .001$. As the figure shows, a victim of IPV elicited a more negative moral evaluation than a victim of generic violence, and this, in turn, led to participants' higher attribution of responsibility to the victim. This internal attribution of responsibility for IPV, then, made participants anticipate a less positive reputation attributed to the victim one year after the episode. A bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples showed a significant indirect effect of the kind of violence on the anticipated reputation of the victim *through* the hypothesized causal chain ($b = -.24$, confidence interval [CI]: LL = −0.543; UL = −0.044).

Willingness to approach and defend the victim. Figure 2 depicts the sequential model. The overall equation was significant, $R^2 = .52$, $F(3, 99) = 35.19$, $p < .001$. As the figure shows, a victim of IPV elicited a more negative moral evaluation than a victim of generic violence, and this, in turn, led to participants being more likely to attribute responsibility to the victim for what happened. This internal attribution of responsibility for IPV, then, made participants less willing to approach and defend the victim one year after the episode. A bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples showed

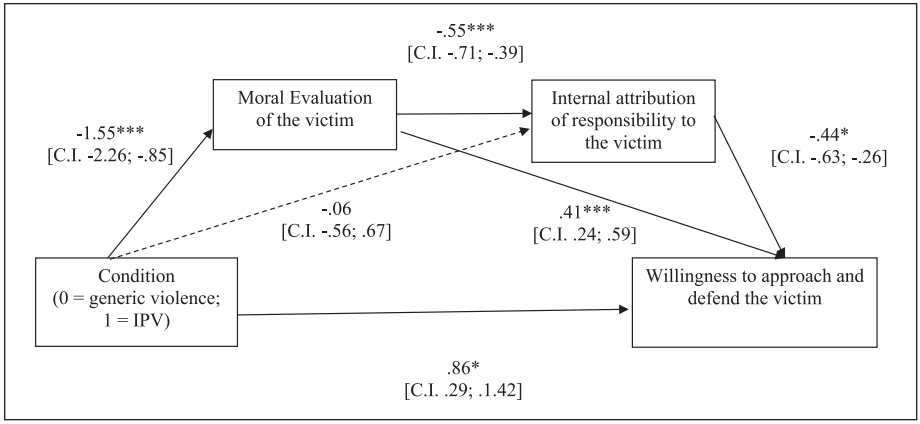

Figure 2. Mediation model in which the effects of kind of violence on willingness to approach and defend the victim are mediated by the moral evaluation of the victim and attribution of responsibility to her.
Note. IPV = Intimate partner violence.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

that the indirect effect of the kind of violence on willingness to approach and defend the victim *through* the hypothesized causal chain was significant ($b = -.38$, CI: LL = −0.842; UL = −0.101).

Inclusion in relevant ingroups. Figure 3 depicts the sequential model. The overall equation was significant, $R^2 = .36$, $F(3, 98) = 18.33$, $p < .001$. As the figure shows, a victim of IPV elicited a more negative moral evaluation than a victim of generic violence, and this, in turn, made participants more likely to attribute responsibility to the victim. This internal attribution of responsibility for IPV, then, made participants less willing to include the victim in relevant ingroups 1 year after the episode. A bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples showed that the indirect effect of the kind of violence on inclusion of the victim in relevant ingroups *through* the hypothesized causal chain was significant ($b = -.33$, CI: LL = −0.729; UL = −0.076).

Thus, the overall results of the mediation analyses confirm H4 and further show that the negative moral evaluation and blaming attribution toward a victim of IPV further affect the victim's reputation, producing a strong secondary victimization.

Discussion

IPV is widespread and has a strong negative impact on the victims in terms of physical and psychological health. The experience of violence has consequences that continue over time. Victims, in fact, experience revictimization whenever they are subject to stigma and blaming, which take the form of attribution of responsibility for the violent incident. All this, which is evident in the narratives of the victims themselves,

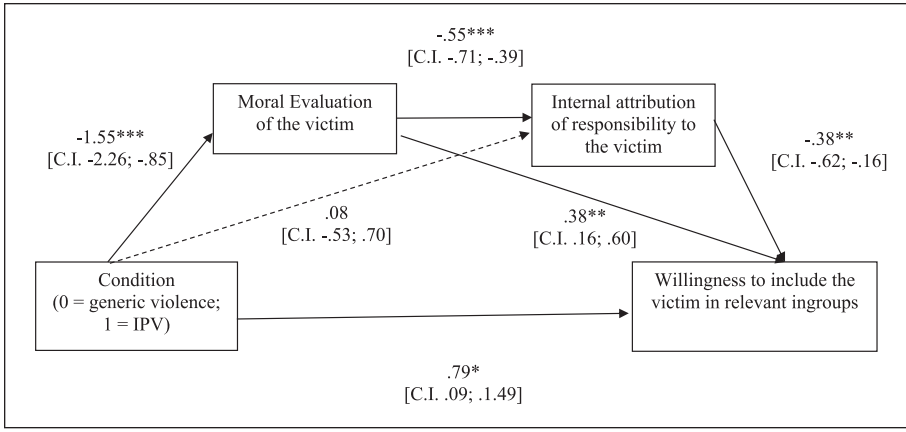

Figure 3. Mediation model in which the effects of kind of violence on willingness to include the victim in relevant ingroups are mediated by the moral evaluation of the victim and attribution of responsibility to her.
Note. IPV = Intimate partner violence.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

determines social isolation and reputational attacks that, in many cases, lead victims to not report the incident. Reputational threats are particularly relevant in this context; reputation, in fact—meant as a "combination of information, beliefs, evaluations, and attitudes that a community shares about one of its members" (Cavazza et al., 2014, p. 355)—is a fundamental resource in social life. Thus, the reputation damage as a consequence of violence might be considered as a revictimization that adds insult to injury. In fact, researchers have shown that a bad reputation often has a number of negative consequences, for instance, in terms of accessibility of resources or opportunities as well as in terms of reciprocal social influence (Reinstein & Riener, 2012; Semmann et al., 2005).

In the present article, we focused on the bystander perspective to understand whether a biased perception of the victim in terms of immorality and attribution of responsibility (Pagliaro et al., 2021) might have further spillover effects and elicit negative indirect consequences for the victims in terms of reputational threats and ostracism (for a review, see Paolini, 2019), as often emerges in victims' narratives. Building on past evidence on the role of moral evaluations in driving bystander reactions, we showed that a woman victim of IPV further suffers a revictimization in terms of ostracism and reputation damage. Interestingly, we disentangled that this effect is peculiar to the stigma associated with IPV, and not to violence per se. In fact, in line with our hypotheses, a victim of IPV compared to a victim of generic violence was perceived as less moral and more responsible for what had happened. Furthermore, this evaluation of (im)morality and the subsequent attribution of responsibility led participants in the IPV condition (vs. generic violence condition) to anticipate a less

positive reputation attributed to the victim but also report less willingness to approach and defend the victim and include her in relevant ingroups 1 year after the episode.

This finding extends what we know about the crucial role of moral evaluations in biasing bystanders' reactions, showing that they not only impact upon their willingness to help the victim in the moment of the aggression but that they may have an indirect role in condoning the violence by means of damaging the victim's reputation as well. Once again, a victim suffers not only the violence but also an enduring stigma that might prevent help-seeking and threaten the rest of her social life. This research contributes then to understanding the dynamic of IPV, which is likely to influence the victim's wellbeing over and beyond the violent episode per se. This study calls into question not only the necessity of considering such a potentially biased perception in the eyes of observers, but also the potential damage to victims in reestablishing their image as persons deserving of moral treatment both in the eyes of others and in their own self-views.

In terms of theoretical contributions, our findings extend research involving the role of moral evaluations in interpretations of, and reactions to, IPV. Previous research has demonstrated that an *immoral evaluation-attribution of responsibility* causal chain leads bystanders to reduce their effort to support the victim (Pagliaro et al., 2020, 2021; Paolini et al., 2020): The present findings suggest that similar mechanisms may facilitate a number of indirect consequences of IPV, such as secondary victimization in terms of reputational damage. Typically, such reputational damage is constructed through the process of labeling, which tends to lead a victim to be stigmatized through attributions of her responsibility for the IPV episode.

Practical Implications

The present findings have important practical implications as well. In fact, we highlight once again that moral evaluations are crucial extra-legal factors that, even though they have nothing to do with the crime committed (Baldry & Winkel, 2008), might drive individuals' responses to IPV. For instance, they might be used by laypeople as well as by professionals to formulate a judgment or for acting in favor and support of victims. As such, this evidence might inform researchers and practitioners in developing intervention programs and awareness campaigns focused on disentangling bystanders' biased beliefs. A potentially effective strategy in this vein could be promoting bystanders' adoption of the victim's perspective. This perspective taking could help potential bystanders to experience how distorted perceptions end up producing a secondary victimization through which the victim, in addition to suffering violence, is also held in some way responsible for the incident (see also, Pagliaro et al., 2020).

At the same time, intervention programs could support IPV victims in re-establishing their image as persons worthy of moral treatment, both in the eyes of others and in their own self-views. Such supporting networks may encourage the former victim to break the silence in the case of experienced secondary victimization and to overcome the social exclusion they might suffer.

Limitations and Future Directions

This research, of course, has some limitations that are worth considering. The most obvious regards the fact that our procedure relied on simulations that evoke bystanders' imagined reactions, and our main dependent variables are behavioral intentions rather than actual behaviors. Although we are aware that real-life situations are more complex than the one represented in our study, such an experimental procedure has been widely and successfully adopted in the literature (for a review, Pagliaro et al., 2020) as it allows researchers to disentangle the causal relations between the main variable involved by minimizing the possible confounds by means of controlled procedures. Even though we did not assess true behaviors, behavioral intentions are nevertheless considered to be the most proximal antecedent of the real course of action (Ajzen, 1991; Sheeran, 2002). Such limitations should be considered in future ad hoc research, in which true behavior should be assessed (e.g., signing a petition in favor of the victim; donating money to support an intervention program; volunteering in support programs). Another possible limitation is that we could not consider gender effects because our sample was unbalanced on this variable. Still, as reported above, controlling for gender produced an almost identical pattern of results. Although the sample size might represent a potential limitation, too, the consistency of the main results with previous literature on the topic reassured us in terms of the strength of our conclusions.

Despite these limitations, we are inclined to consider the present research as a further step in understanding IPV dynamics. They confirm that the crime of IPV should not be considered a private issue and that bystander reactions may be crucial both in terms of prevention and, in contrast, in terms of condoning violence and producing revictimization.

Appendix A

The fictitious newspaper articles presented to participants (translated to English from the original Italian)

Generic violence condition

Another case of aggression for a condominium dispute. Luciano F., a 41-year-old man from Noceto, Parma, ended up under house arrest pending trial for repeatedly slapping and kicking a 35-year-old woman, Anna G. The victim, who lived in the same building as the man, had had a quarrel with him a few days earlier due to the illegal occupation of the parking lots in the courtyard. In particular, the aggressor had repeatedly occupied the place reserved for the victim, without responding to the latter's requests to restore the correctness of the situation. At the time of the attack, the woman was in a bar in Fidenza, a town in the province of Parma, when the 41-year-old entered and, after having labeled her with offensive words, hit her repeatedly. The woman was assisted by the 118 (i.e., the 911) operators who transported her to the Maggiore hospital in Parma.

IPV condition

Another case of aggression for jealousy. Luciano F., a 41-year-old man from Noceto, Parma, ended up under house arrest pending trial for repeatedly slapping and kicking a 35-year-old woman, Anna G. The victim, who had had an affair with the man in the past, had decided to break it due to the man's excessive jealousy. In particular, the attacker had repeatedly accused the victim of having betrayed him. Despite this, he did not want to give up on her, and kept approaching her against her will. At the time of the attack, the woman was in a bar in Fidenza, a town in the province of Parma, when the 41-year-old entered and, after having labeled her with offensive words, hit her repeatedly. The woman was assisted by the 118 (i.e., the 911) operators who transported her to the Maggiore hospital in Parma.

Authors' Note

All the authors equally contributed to develop the present research and to write the article. Stefano Pagliaro and Manuel Teresi collected and analyzed the data.

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Note

1. In the present article we refer to "indirect consequences" of IPV as consequences to the victim herself that are not directly inherent in the act of violence.

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