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Introduction

- Psychological intimate partner violence (IPV) occurs in approximately 60% to 90% of couples¹. Acts of psychological IPV such as insulting, threatening, belittling, scaring or intimidating one's partner may lead to even greater impairment than physical violence³. Yet, psychological aggression is the type of IPV that receives the least attention^{2,3}.
- Identifying reasons, explanations or causal attributes for aggressive behaviours is an essential step in **preventing escalation** of conflicts into emotional violence⁴.
- Some of the most frequently reported reasons for perpetrating psychological IPV by men and women are: anger, control, self-defence, retaliation, and a desire to get attention⁵.
- Little is known on the risk factors and predictors associated to these underlying reasons for engaging in aggressive behaviour.
- There has been extensive work on identifying individual risk factors for IPV perpetration. Some factors on which IPV perpetrators differ include **gender, an insecure attachment style, dominance, and depression**^{6,7,8,9}.
- In order to create effective prevention and treatment programs specific to psychological IPV, it is essential to consider the influence of such known risk factors on the causal attributions that precede the perpetration of IPV.

Objective

The current study aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining the relationship between known individual risk factors for IPV perpetration (gender, attachment, depression, and dominance) and self-reported attributions for perpetrating psychological IPV.

Methods

Participants and Procedure.

1949 university students from UQAM ($M_{age} = 25.17$, $SD_{age} = 6.37$) were recruited for the purpose of a larger-scale project via email and classroom posters. All participants completed online questionnaires.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Inclusion Criteria	N
Having perpetrated psychological IPV at least once in the past year.	1338

Graph 1. Gender Characteristics

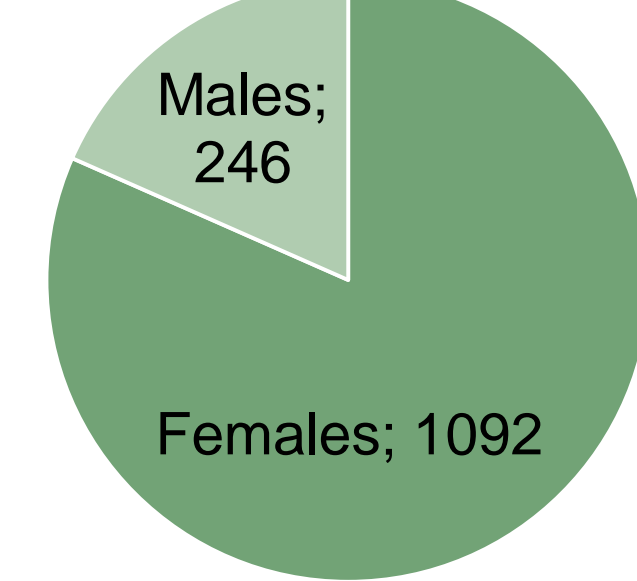


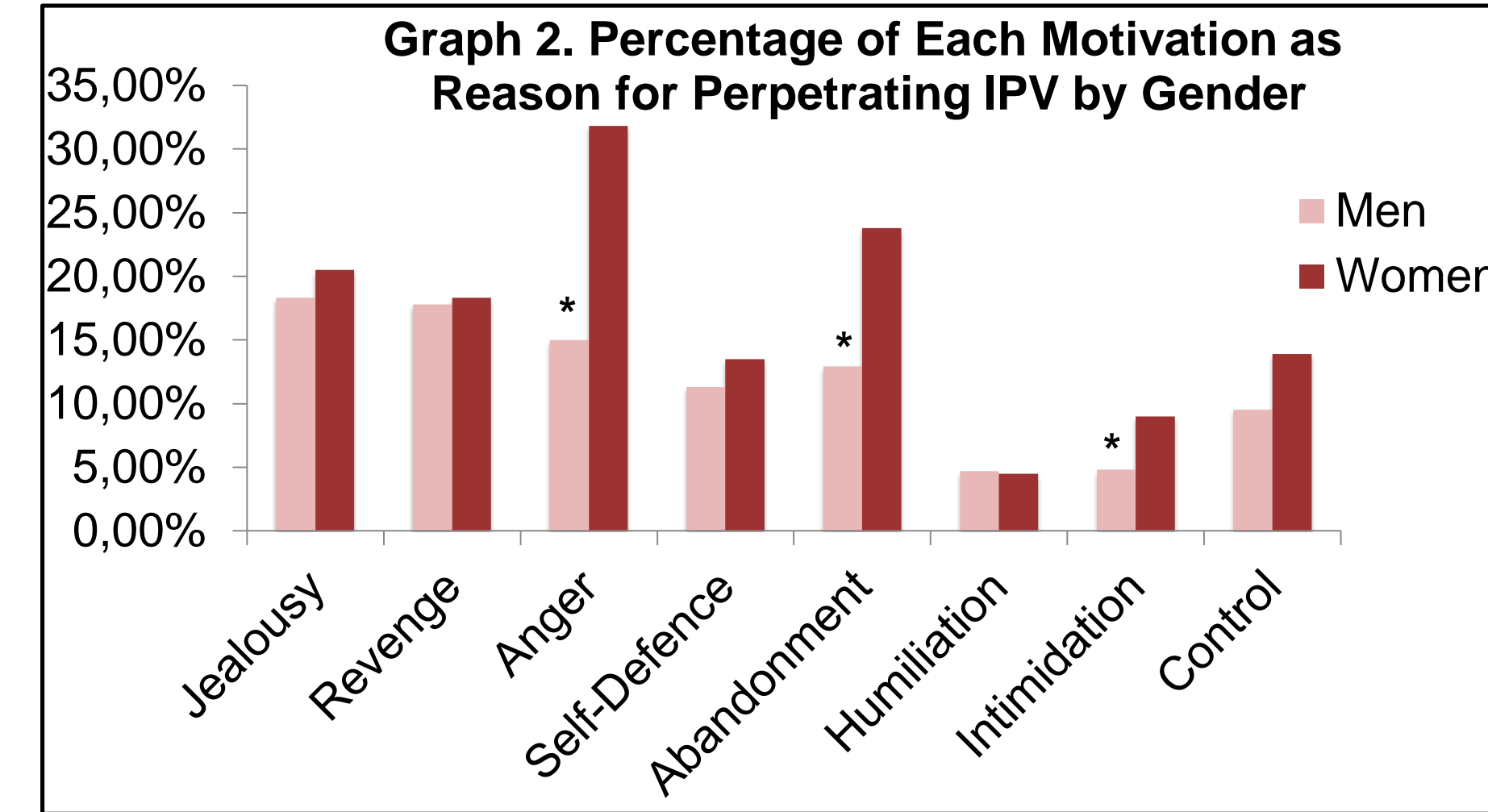
Table 2. Information on Measures

Measure	# of items	Subscales & psychometric properties
The Revised Conflict Tactic Scale, adapted fr. version (CTS-II; Straus et al., 1996)	8	Perpetrating of psychological violence = 0.76
Experience in Close Relationships fr. version (Lafontaine & Lussier, 2003).	36	Anxious attachment: $\alpha = 0.90$ Avoidant attachment: $\alpha = 0.91$
Beck Depression Inventory – II (BDI; Beck et al., 1996)	21	$\alpha = 0.90$
Inventory of Interpersonal Problems (IIP-Couples adapted by Paradis & Boucher (2007))	8	Dominant: $\alpha = 0.76$
Measure on motivations for perpetrating psychological IPV (Boucher & Paradis, 2006)	72	9 motivations** (according to a factorial analysis with the same sample, 2017) ¹⁰ : Jealousy: $\alpha = 0.876$; Anger: $\alpha = 0.899$; Revenge: $\alpha = 0.781$; Self-defence: $\alpha = 0.798$; Humiliation: $\alpha = 0.846$; Intimidation: $\alpha = 0.866$; Control: $\alpha = 0.798$; Abandonment: $\alpha = 0.866$. Provocation was excluded.

Analyses

SPSS ver. 24 was used to run hierarchical logistical regressions in order to examine how the 5 IVs (step 1: gender (1 = male), step 2: dominance, avoidant attachment, anxious attachment and depression) were associated to the motivations. Due to violation of normality and linearity, the motivations were transformed into dichotomous scores (endorsement of the motivation (1) or no (0)). The scoring was based on 1 SD greater than the mean. After further assumption testing, *Provocation* was excluded from the analyses.

Results



* $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.05$

Table 3. Perpetrating IPV due to Jealousy

Variables	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	Wald
1 Gender (1)	-.053	.235	.949	.050
2 Avoidant	.152	.106	1.164	2.034
Anxious	1.160	.108	3.189*	114.343
Dominance	.028	.017	1.028	2.543
Depression	.008	.012	1.008	.414

* $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.05$

Table 5. Perpetrating IPV in Anger

Variables	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	Wald
1 Gender (1)	-1.145	.236	.318***	23.599
2 Avoidant	-.096	.090	.908	1.135
Anxious	.181	.076	1.199*	5.666
Dominance	.099	.015	1.104***	41.525
Depression	.023	.010	1.023*	4.757

* $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.05$

Table 7. Perpetrating IPV Out of Fear of Abandonment

Variables	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	Wald
1 Gender (1)	-.901	.260	.406*	12.037
2 Avoidant	.243	.100	1.275***	5.917
Anxious	.801	.095	2.229*	71.141
Dominance	.054	.017	1.055*	10.276
Depression	.022	.011	1.022***	3.907

* $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.05$

Table 9. Perpetrating IPV in Order to Intimidate

Variables	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	Wald
1 Gender (1)	-.680	.369	.507	3.387
2 Avoidant	.456	.127	1.578***	12.967
Anxious	.426	.124	1.531***	11.711
Dominance	.056	.022	1.057*	6.457
Depression	.039	.014	1.039**	7.711

* $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.05$

Table 4. Perpetrating IPV due to Revenge

Variables	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	Wald
1 Gender (1)	-.028	.221	.973	.016
2 Avoidant	.216	.097	1.242***	4.999
Anxious	.306	.088	1.359*	12.231
Dominance	.076	.016	1.079*	21.947
Depression	.017	.011	1.017	2.377

* $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.05$

Table 6. Perpetrating IPV in Self-Defence

Variables	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	Wald
1 Gender (1)	-.218	.265	.804	.676
2 Avoidant	.364	.108	1.439***	11.381
Anxious	.393	.101	1.482***	15.021
Dominance	.041	.018	1.042*	4.968
Depression	.035	.012	1.036**	8.629

* $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.05$

Table 8. Perpetrating IPV in Order to Humiliate

Variables	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	Wald
1 Gender (1)	-.036	.400	.964	.008
2 Avoidant	.529	.158	1.698***	11.187
Anxious	.259	.156	1.296	2.758
Dominance	.117	.027	1.125***	18.250
Depression	.017	.018	1.017	.961

* $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.05$

Table 10. Perpetrating IPV to Control

Variables	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	Wald
1 Gender (1)	-.429	.285	.651	2.273
2 Avoidant	-.101	.115	.904	.773
Anxious	.221	.100	1.248***	4.860
Dominance	.154	.019	1.166*	64.105
Depression	.011	.013	1.011	.812

* $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.05$

Conclusions

- Consistent with the literature, the most common reason for perpetrating psychological IPV was **anger**¹¹.
- Gender differences emerged, such that women endorsed significantly more anger, fear of abandonment, and intimidation as reasons for perpetrating IPV.
- An **insecure attachment style** was associated to the endorsement of all motivations. Specifically, **anxious attachment** was related to all motivations, except to humiliate the partner, and was related the strongest to jealousy, revenge, control, and self-defence.
- In accordance with the literature, dominance was associated to control and to humiliation¹². The present study adds to these findings by suggesting that these two motivations are influenced differently by one's degree of anxious or avoidant attachment:
 - Avoidant** attachment was associated to **humiliating**, which can be explained by the fact that avoidant attached individuals seek distance and humiliating the partner is a form of rejection¹³.
 - On the contrary, **anxiously** attached individuals seek proximity, and **control** is a way to maintain this closeness.
- While generating the weakest associations, **depression** was related to anger, self-defence, fear of abandonment and intimidating the partner, although was generally **the weakest predictor**

Limitations and Future Directions

- An important limitation of this study is its correlational design. This impedes on the ability to draw conclusions on how the individual risk factors predict the endorsement of the motivations.
- Other limitations include the sample and the use of self-reported questionnaires.
- Future studies should incorporate longitudinal measurements in order to better understand how these individual risk factors influence perpetrators' causal attributions of their behaviour.
- Finally, a dyadic perspective in which both partners' characteristics and behaviour are considered is necessary in order to determine whether partners' influence each other.

Implications

- This study sheds light on **individual risk factors** and their associations to several **motivations** for perpetrating psychological IPV. Its theoretical and practical implications are noteworthy.
- Studying **individuals' self-reported attributions for their violent behaviour**, rather than examining correlates of perpetration provides a more comprehensive view on the predictors of IPV perpetration⁴.
- Treatment and prevention programs should include motivations, as well as individual characteristics that influence motivations in order to make perpetrators more aware how **their perception of the reasons for aggression affect their behaviour**¹⁶.

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