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Exploring new paths to improve effectiveness and evaluation of Batterer Intervention Programs

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Abstract:

Since the late 1970s, Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs) have become a key component in the prevention efforts of violence against women in partner relationship. Currently, batterer programs are becoming part of the criminal justice system (i.e. a court-ordered intervention) in many countries. Therefore, one of the most important issue BIPs have to face is whether they work or not, if they are effective in reducing men's violence towards women. To date, both individual studies, and meta-analyses evaluating batterer intervention program effectiveness provide mixed results. Some of them have concluded that batterer programs as currently configured have modest but positive effects on violence prevention, whereas others conclude that the size effects of these interventions are too small, raising doubts about the effectiveness of court-mandated BIPs. As evidence is inconclusive we cannot discard yet the capacity for violence prevention of batterer intervention programs. Given the importance that the knowledge about batterer program effectiveness has for practitioners, policy makers, courts, as well as victims of violence, it becomes evident the need to explore new theoretical and methodological paths to improve efficacy and evaluation of BIPs. The aim of this paper is to explore the potential of new theoretical and methodological approaches to improve program effectiveness as well as to facilitate BIPs effectiveness evaluations. First, we propose an ecological model as a promising theoretical model to organize the structure and content of BIPs, as this approach ensures inclusion in the program of theoretically relevant variables that otherwise tend to be excluded in traditional approaches to program design. Second, for effectiveness evaluation purposes, we propose the use of a Latent Growth Modeling analytical strategy to explore patterns of change in the main variables of the ecological model. With this approach, for each participant a growth curve in all the variables can be calculated. Also this facilitates the exploration of interrelations among patterns of growth of several variables. This strategy also allows exploring dynamic relationships among variables to better analyze the efficacy of the programs as well as potential flaws that could be occurring during its implementation.
