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Working Women Making It Work

Intimate Partner Violence, Employment, and Workplace Support

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Partner violence may have significant consequences on women's employment, yet limited information is available about how women cope on the job with perpetrators' tactics and the consequences of her coping methods on employment status. This article investigates whether there is an association between workplace disclosure of victimization and current employment status; and whether there is an association between receiving workplace support and current employment status among women who disclosed victimization circumstances to someone at work. Using a sample of partner victimized women who were employed within the past year ($N = 485$), cross-tabulation and ANOVA procedures were conducted to examine the differences between currently employed and unemployed women. Binary logistic regressions were conducted to examine whether disclosure and receiving workplace support were significantly associated with current employment. Results indicate that disclosure and workplace support are associated with employment. Implications for clinical practice, workplace policies, and future research are discussed.

Keywords: *partner violence and employment; partner violence and work; workplace violence*

A growing body of research on the associated consequences of intimate partner violence (IPV) on women's employment suggests that perpetrators interference with women's jobs can be categorized into three primary forms: work disruption, on-the-job harassment, and performance problems (for review, see Swanberg, Logan, & Macke, 2005, 2006a). Such behaviors may result in short- and/or long-term consequences on women's

employment. Short-term consequences of experiencing any of the three job interference tactics may include increased absenteeism, reduced concentration, or reduced productivity (Leone, Johnson, Cohan, & Lloyd, 2004; Raphael, 1996; Riger, Raja, & Camacho, 2002; Shepard & Pence, 1988; Tolman & Rosen, 2001). Potential long-term consequences associated with job interference behaviors include inconsistent work histories, underemployment, unemployment, or reduced actual and potential earnings (Brush, 2003; Logan, Shannon, Cole, & Swanberg, 2007; Swanberg, Macke, & Logan, 2006; Tolman & Raphael, 2000).

Although studies suggest that IPV may not prevent women from obtaining work, the above-reviewed literature suggests that IPV has significant costs for individual victims and for organizations (Brush, 2003; Logan, Shannon, et al., 2007; Swanberg et al., 2005; Swanberg, Logan, & Macke, 2006a; Swanberg, Macke, & Logan, 2006; Tolman & Raphael, 2000). At the individual level, research has estimated that, in total, victims in the United States lose $18 million in annual earnings (Greenfeld et al., 1998) and nearly $1 billion in lifetime earnings (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control [NCIPC], 2003) due to missed work, job loss, and inability to maintain consistent employment. Leaving a good paying job for safety reasons or encountering difficulties securing meaningful work further complicates the economic hardships women encounter when leaving an abusive relationship (see Logan, Walker, Jordan, & Campbell, 2004; Sullivan, Basta, Tan, & Davidson, 1992; Sullivan, Campbell, Angelique, Eby, & Davidson, 1994).

Less understood is how women cope with partner violence when it does interfere with their job in some way. Legal advocates and researchers suggest that some employed victims of IPV may remain silent at work about their victimization experiences because they fear losing their job, perceive it as a personal or private matter, or fear being further humiliated by the perpetrator if he learns she told someone at work (Busch & Wolfer, 2002; Lemon, 2001; Swanberg & Macke, 2006; Swanberg, Macke, & Logan, 2006). Other studies suggest that when victims of partner violence did inform someone at work, they found it to be helpful (Swanberg & Logan, 2005; Swanberg & Macke, 2006; Swanberg, Macke, & Logan, 2006).

As suggested in Swanberg et al. (2005; Swanberg, Logan, & Macke, 2006a), there is insufficient information to draw definitive conclusions as to why women opt to tell or not to tell someone at work about the partner

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victimization. Yet the limited available research implies that victims' decision to disclose details about their interpersonal victimization to someone at their workplace may depend on the possible prevailing personal and/or organizational attitudes about IPV, the extent to which the IPV affects their work performance and the subsequent availability of workplace support (see Swanberg, Macke, & Logan, 2006).

Furthermore, there is insufficient information to draw definitive conclusions about the relationship between coworkers' and employers' response to victims when they do tell someone about the victimization and job retention (see Swanberg et al., 2005, 2006a). In general, programs, policies, and practices used by organizations to assist employees in managing work and family responsibilities are sometimes referred to as "workplace support" (Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1998). As such, workplace support may take the form of informal or formal methods (Allen, 2001; Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). Supervisors or coworkers offering emotional support about a work or personal problem is an example of informal support, whereas a workplace implementing an employee security escort program to escort employees out to their cars after dark or any time they feel unsafe is a formal workplace support policy. Research within the work and family field demonstrates positive employee and organizational outcomes with the adoption and utilization of various informal and formal workplace support (Allen, 2001). Yet there has been limited attention to partner violence as a work-family concern, and as such there is limited research on the relationships between workplace support utilization and individual or organizational outcomes such as employment status or job retention, respectively.

To further understand the complex issues related to employed victims' strategies for coping with partner violence on the job and the potential impact of those coping strategies on employment status, this article examines whether disclosure was associated with continued employment, and whether receiving support at work was associated with employment. More specifically, this article studies two groups of women with protective orders against violent intimate or former-intimate partners: (a) women who had been employed in the year proceeding the interview but not at the time the interview was conducted and (b) women who were employed at the time of the interview. Using these two groups, this article has three objectives: (a) to determine if there are significant differences between employed and recently employed victims of partner violence with respect to demographic characteristics, victimization history, job tenure, job interference tactics, and disclosure; (b) to determine if there is a significant association between workplace disclosure of victimization and current employment status; and

(c) to discern whether there is a significant association between receiving workplace support and current employment status among women who disclosed victimization circumstances to someone at work.

Method

Participants

This research studies a subsample of 757 women who obtained a domestic violence order (DVO) against a male intimate partner at one of four court jurisdictions between February 2001 and November 2003. To be eligible to participate in the study, women had to have been at least age 18 years or age 17 years and emancipated. For the purposes of the current study, women employed within the past year ($n = 518$) but who may or may not have been employed at the time of the interview were included in the analysis. Employment within the past year was used as the exclusion criteria because issues associated with long-term unemployment often vary significantly from short-term unemployment. In addition, 24 women were excluded from the study because they did not identify as either White or African American. This exclusion was implemented due to the statistical concerns associated with the very small number of individuals identifying as a race other than White or African American. Among the remaining 494 participants, 63.6% were employed at the time of the interview, and 34.6% were unemployed at the time of the interview. The remaining 1.8% did not respond to the question inquiring about current employment status and were as such treated as missing data. Thus the final sample for this analysis was 485, within which two groups were formed: (a) women who were employed at the time of the interview ($n = 314$); and women who were unemployed at the time of the interview but had been employed within the past year ($n = 171$). To simplify, in the foregoing participants who were employed within the 12 months prior to the interview but not employed at the time of the interview will be referred to as "unemployed." Women employed at the time of the interview will simply be referred to as "employed."

Procedure

Representatives from four court jurisdictions (three rural and one urban) agreed to allow researchers to recruit female petitioners for the current study after they had been granted protective orders. A female member of

the research staff approached women after they had received a DVO from court to establish whether or not they were interested in participating in the current study. The average length of time between the DVO being issued and entry into the study was 39.2 days ($SD = 45.8$). Face-to-face interviews were conducted in private rooms at public facilities in the community (e.g., libraries) and lasted an average of 3½ hrs. The interviews began after women gave informed consent. Women were compensated $75 for their time and, if applicable, for their travel and child care costs. In addition, each participant was provided with a resource pamphlet tailored to the community in which she lived (see Logan, Cole, Shannon, & Walker, in press, for more details about the study procedures).

Measures

Demographic characteristics. The demographic variables included in the current study are as follows: women's living environment (rural or urban), educational level (less than high school; General Equivalency Diploma [GED], high school, or technical and/or trade school; some college; and 4-year degree or more), and age. All three of these demographic variables were included as control variables.

Victimization. Psychological, physical, and sexual victimization questions were adapted from the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS & CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996), Tolman's Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI; Tolman, 1989, 1999) and from a study examining victimization reported on protective order petitions (Harrell, Smith, & Newmark, 1993). In addition, a few items were included based on pilot work with the target study population (Logan, Walker, Cole, Ratliff, & Leukefeld, 2003). Women were asked whether they had experienced each tactic in the last year of the relationship. Nine subscales of psychological, physical, and sexual victimization were created by the research team, keeping consistent with literature on partner violence tactics (Follingstad & DeHart, 2000; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Marshall, 1992; Straus & Gelles, 1990; Straus et al., 1996; Tolman, 1989, 1999). The nine scales include: verbal abuse (e.g., insulted, swore, or shouted), degradation (e.g., made you feel crazy, treated as inferior), jealousy and control (e.g., jealous or suspicious of friends, monitored time, denied access to money), symbolic violence, serious threats (e.g., threatened pet, destroyed property, threatened to hurt children), stalking, physical violence (e.g., pushed, shoved, bit, choked), sexual abuse (e.g. sexual insistence), and injury due to violence.

All scales were additive except for the physical violence and sexual abuse scales which were weighted. The method for weighting the physical abuse items was guided by Straus and Gelles (1990). Specifically, in the weighted severity index of the CTS, Straus and Gelles (1990) assigned varying weights to physical violence items depending on their severity. Following Staus and Gelles' example, the physical abuse items were weighted as follows: 1 for twist arm or pull hair, push or shove, grab, slap; 2 for kick, bite, punch, or hit with something, slam against the wall; 5 for beat up, burn, or scald on purpose, choke; 6 for threaten with a knife or gun, and try to run down with a car; and 8 for use a knife or fire a gun on the victim (Cole, Logan, & Shannon, in press; Straus & Gelles, 1990). The weighting of the items results in a possible response range of 0 to 49.

Similarly to the physical abuse items, the sexual abuse items also differ significantly in terms of their severity, with for instance sexual insistence being less severe than physically forcing a woman to have sex. Given these discrepancies in severity, authors determined that the sexual abuse scale should be weighted in a manner that runs parallel to the weighting of the physical abuse scale. As a result authors created a weighted composite variable to measure severity of sexual abuse, where the following weights were assigned to sexually abusive acts that occurred within the past year: 1 for sexual insistence, 2 for used threats to make you do sexual things including intercourse, 3 for used physical force to make you do sexual things including intercourse. The weighting of the sexual abuse items results in a response range of 0 to 6. This response range is considerably smaller than the response range for the physical abuse items. Authors purposely kept the response range smaller by using smaller multipliers because the differential in the severity of the least and most severe forms of sexual abuse appeared smaller than the differential between the least and most severe forms of physical abuse.

Physical violence and injury were included in the analyses as control variables since they emerged as statistically and significantly ($p < .01$) different between employed and unemployed participants. The sexual abuse variable, which also emerged as statistically different between the two groups ($p < .01$) was considered as a control variable. However, due to a large amount of missing data it was not included in the analyses.

Employment characteristics. Current employment status was assessed by one item that asked participants what their current work situation was: employed full-time, employed part-time, in school and working, not currently employed, and other. These five categories were then collapsed into two categories: employed (employed full-time, part-time, in school and

working) and unemployed (not currently working and other). As noted earlier, the unemployed subsample consists of participants who were unemployed at the time of the interview but employed within the past year. Job tenure, expressed in months at the participants' most recent job, was also included as a control variable. Authors considered controlling for hourly wage; however, extensive missing data made this impossible.

Job interference tactics. Job interference tactics were measured using a modified version of the Work/School Abuse Scale (W/SAS; Riger, Ahrens, & Blickenstaff, 2000) and additional questions created by investigators based on a previous pilot study (see Swanberg & Logan, 2005; Swanberg & Macke, 2006). The 12-item W/SAS instrument measures the ways that partner violence interferes with women's participation in employment and school. The W/SAS instrument included items such as job harassment, in-person harassment, threaten employee at work, threaten coworkers at work, and physically restrain employee from going to work. The original 12-item W/SAS reports a coefficient alpha of .82. Based on previous pilot studies (Swanberg & Logan, 2005; Swanberg & Macke, 2006) six additional items were included to measure other forms of job interference tactics. These six items included: harass you on the phone at work; threaten you at work; threaten your coworkers at work; repeatedly follow and/or watch you while you were working; physically prevent you from looking for a job; and undermine your efforts to go to work, and/or look for work. All 18 items assess the frequency with which tactics occurred in the past year using a 4-point scale ranging from *never* to *daily*. The revised job interference scale for the current study reports a coefficient alpha of .89. To reduce the number of variables in the analyses, a factor analysis was conducted (see Swanberg, Logan, & Macke, 2006b). This factor analysis revealed four components: (a) At-work interference, (2) before-work interference, (3) transportation interference, and (4) child care interference. To create composite variables for the four types of job interference variables individual items were recoded as yes or no (yes = daily, other categories; no = never) and subsequently added together to create additive composite variables. Before-work interference is used in the analysis as a control variable because it emerged as significantly different between currently employed and currently unemployed participants ($p < .000$).

Workplace disclosure. Workplace disclosure was measured using a binary yes/no item. Specifically, participants were asked whether they told anyone at work about the violence at home.

Workplace support. The availability of a variety of workplace support was measured using 12 binary yes or no items (0 = no, 1 = yes). These items were derived from social support (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Eisenberger & Huntington, 1986; Thoits, 1986), work-family (Allen, Bybee, & Sullivan, 2004; Allen, 2001; Galinsky, 1988), and employee assistance literatures (Brownell, 1996; Glass & Estes, 1997; Gonyea, 1993). To reduce the number of variables in preparation for the logistical regression, an additive composite variable was created that combined all 12 workplace support items.

Analysis

Chi-square difference test and one-way ANOVA procedures were used to determine significant differences between employed and unemployed women, and to determine which variables to include as control variables in further analyses. Binary logistic regressions were conducted to determine whether disclosure and receiving workplace support were significantly associated with current employment. Because of the large number of comparisons made in the current study, only findings that were statistically significant at $p < .01$ were noted.

Findings

Differences Between Employed and Unemployed Women

Demographic characteristics. Overall, a larger percentage of women employed at the time of the interview were older, had higher education levels, and lived in urban communities compared to women unemployed at the time of the interview (see Table 1). Employed women had an average age of 32 years, compared to 29 for unemployed women, $F(1, 483) = 8.40$, $p < .004$. More employed women reported having a 4-year college degree or more as compared to unemployed women, $\chi^2(3) = 30.857$, $p < .000$, and a larger proportion of employed women lived in urban areas, $\chi^2(1) = 6.505$, $p < .011$. No significant differences emerged by group in terms of race. Eighty-three percent of the women self-identified as White, and the remaining participants self-identified as Black (17%). Similarly, there were no differences between employed and unemployed women in regards to their number of minor children, their relationship status with the DVO partner, or the length of their relationship with the DVO partner.

Table 1
Demographic and Employment Characteristics

	Employed (n = 314)% or M	Unemployed (n = 171)% or M	df	Test Statistic χ^2 or F
Age	31.77	29.39	484	8.40**
Education				
Less than high school	16%	36.8%	3	30.86***
General Equivalency Diploma [GED]/high school/trade	37.7%	31.6%		
Some college	31.3%	25.7%		
4-year degree or more	15%	5.8%		
Recruitment location				
Urban	63.4%	51.5%	1	6.51**
Rural	36.6%	48.8%		
Race				
White	80.9%	85.4%	1	1.54
Black	19.1%	14.6%		
Kids younger than age 18 years	1.48	1.67	484	2.52
Current relationship with domestic violence order partner				
Spouse – lived with	8.9%	9.4%	5	3.64
Spouse – divorced	7.6%	7%		
Spouse – separated	30.9%	35.1%		
Boyfriend – lived with	48.7%	42.1%		
Boyfriend – didn't live with	3.2%	5.8%		
Other	.6%	.6%		
Length of relationship with DVO partner in years	6.91	6.36	484	.713
Most recent job: tenure in months	36.06	11.57	484	31.63***
Most recent job: hourly wage	$8.79	$7.07	381	21.17***
Disclosed to someone at work	73.7%	52.9%	1	20.31***
Most recent job: usual work hours	37.65	37.59	478	.002
Most recent job: full-time-part-time				
Full-time	*75.8%*	*75.4%*	*1*	*.008*
Part-time	24.2%	24.6%		
# of jobs in the past year	1.66	1.49	484	4.06*

Note: DVO = domestic violence order.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Employment characteristics. The job tenure for women employed in the past year were significantly longer for women who were employed at the time of the interview. Employed women reported a mean of 36 months at their current job, compared to 11.5 months at the most recent job of women who were unemployed at the time of the interview, $F(1, 483) = 31.63$, $p <$ .000). Likewise, hourly wages appeared to be higher for employed women.

Table 2
Victimization Scales

	Employed (n = 314) M	Unemployed (n =171) M	df	Test Statistic F
Verbal abuse (range 0-3)	2.34	2.35	484	.02
Degradation (range 0-6)	3.59	3.80	484	1.48
Jealousy and control (range 0-10)	5.38	5.70	482	1.46
Symbolic violence (range 0-7)	3.04	3.14	483	.41
Serious threats (range 0-4)	1.55	1.81	484	5.13*
Stalking (range 0-1)	.54	.49	483	.97
Injury (range 0-5)	1.58	1.88	483	7.62**
Physical violence (weighted scale) (range 0-49)	12.35	16.44	464	20.09***
Sexual abuse (weighted scale) (range 0-6)	2.05	2.88	242	11.17***

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

The mean hourly wage for employed women was $8.79 per hour, compared to $7.07 at the most recent job of unemployed women, $F(1, 380) = 22.17$, $p < .000$). Finally, a larger proportion of employed women disclosed their victimization to someone at work as compared to unemployed women (74% vs 53%), $\chi^2(1) = 20.314$, $p < .000$. There were no statistically significant differences between employed and unemployed women in terms of their usual work hours or number of jobs held within the past year. The majority of women (76%) worked full-time at their most recent job, working an average of 37.6 hours weekly. Both groups of women held an average of 1.6 jobs in the past year.

Victimization history. Findings suggest that employed and unemployed women did not differ significantly in terms of the number of psychological abuse tactics experienced within the last year (Table 2). However, group differences did emerge with respect to physical violence and sexual abuse. Specifically, unemployed women experienced significantly greater severity of physical violence, $F(1, 464) = 20.09$, $p < .001$, and sexual abuse, $F(1, 242) = 11.17$, $p < .001$. Also, unemployed women experienced significantly more injuries in the past year as compared to employed women, $F(1, 483) = 7.62$, $p < .01$.

Job interference tactics. Perpetrators used a variety of interference tactics to compromise women's employability (see Table 3). Differences

Table 3
Interference Tactics Experience in Previous 12 Months

	Employed ($n = 311$)	Unemployed ($n = 162$)	*df*	Test Statistic χ^2 or *F*
At-work inference tactics	2.54	2.78	464	.94
Harass on the phone in past year	61.4%	53.1%	1	3.05
Harass in person on the job	39.2%	41.4%	1	.201
Bother coworkers	23.5%	23.5%	1	.000
Lie to coworkers	28.9%	32.9%	1	.796
Threaten to hurt you to make you leave work	28%	38.3%	1	5.23*
Threaten you while at work	30%	40%	1	4.76*
Threaten coworkers	3.9%	8.1%	1	3.69
Stalk while at work and/or school	35.2%	34.6%	1	.016
Physically force you to leave school and/or work	5.8%	13%	1	7.25**
Before-work interference tactics	1.09	1.70	471	18.14***
Refuse to take respondent to work and/or school	21.5%	29%	1	3.25
Physically restrain you from going to work and/or school	17.7%	23.5%	1	2.25
Threaten to prevent you from going to school and/or work	25.4%	36.6%	1	6.48**
Physically prevent you from looking for a job	8.7%	28.4%	1	31.72***
Undermine your efforts to go to work and/or school	35.7%	53.7%	1	14.20***
Transportation interference tactics	.62	.70	472	1.10
Sabotage the car	22.2%	29.6%	1	3.17
Steal car keys or transportation money	39.9%	40.1%	1	.003
Child care interference tactics	.42	.42	472	.001
Lie about children's health and/or safety to get you to leave work	15.8%	16%	1	.007
Not show up to care for children	26%	25.9%	1	.001

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

emerged between employed and unemployed women with regard to before-work interference tactics. Unemployed women experienced a significantly greater number of before-work interference tactics at their last job, compared to employed women, $F(1, 470) = 18.14$, $p < .000$). Significantly more unemployed women experienced the following before-work interference tactics: threatened them from going to work ($p < .01$), physically prevented them from looking for a job ($p < .001$), and undermined efforts to go to work ($p < .001$). No statistically significant differences emerged between

Table 4
Binary Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Associated With Employment Status (n = 494)

Variable	β	*SE*	Odds Ratio
Area (Reference category = urban)	–.350	.229	.705
Age	–.005	.014	.995
Less than high school (Reference category)			
High school/General Equivalency Degree [GED]/Tech school (1)	.920	.288	2.510***
Some college (2)	.838	.301	2.313**
4-year degree or more (3)	1.254	.472	3.505**
Before-work harassment	–.182	.076	.834*
Job tenure	.019	.005	1.019***
Severity of physical violence	–.029	.015	.972*
Severity of injury	–.059	.125	.943
Disclosure	.777	.236	2.175***
Constant	.196	.504	1.217

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

employed and unemployed participants in terms of their experiences with at-work, transportation, and child care interference tactics.

Disclosure and Employment Status

A binary logistic regression analysis indicated that workplace disclosure was significantly associated with current employment after controlling for a number of relevant variables. Control variables included: age, education, rural or urban residence, job tenure, physical and sexual abuse, experience of injury due to abuse, and before-work tactics. Regression results are presented in Table 4.

Workplace Support and Current Employment Status

As illustrated in Table 5, among women who told someone at work about their victimization experiences, 227 were employed (73%) and 83 were unemployed (27%) at the time of the interview. Among these disclosing women, employed participants received a significantly larger number of workplace support as compared to unemployed women, $F(1, 309) = 13.903$, $p < .000$). Specifically, employed women were significantly more likely than unemployed women when they were on job to have received the following

Table 5
Workplace Support for Disclosing Women

	Employed (n = 227) %	Unemployed (n = 83) %	df	Test Statistic χ^2 or F
Workplace support (composite variable)	5.58	4.13	309	13.903***
General information about where to go for help	34.4%	26.5%	1	1.72
Referral to a counselor and/or professional	17.6%	8.4%	1	3.99*
Information brochure describing domestic violence services in the community	10.1%	6%	1	1.25
Schedule flexibility	78%	60.2%	1	9.75**
Workload flexibility from supervisor	50.7%	43.4%	1	1.29
Assistance with at work security plan	48.5%	32.5%	1	6.25**
Screen calls from partner	52.9%	30.1%	1	12.63***
Escort to car at end of work shift	28.6%	21.7%	1	1.50
Listening ear about the situation	93%	81.9%	1	8.21**
Coworker spend break time w/you	67.4%	48.2%	1	9.54**
Coworker come up w/a safety plan for a specific night	38.3%	24.1%	1	5.45*
Coworker help out with out-of-work responsibilities	38.8%	30.1%	1	1.96

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

workplace support: schedule flexibility, assistance with developing an at-work security plan, screening phone calls from the violent partner, coworker lending a listening ear, and coworker spending break time with victim.

To further understand the relationship between employment status and workplace support among women (employed and unemployed at the time of the interview) who disclosed their victimization to someone at work, a binary logistic regression analysis was conducted. Controlling for living environment, age, education, before-work harassment, job tenure, severity of physical abuse, and injury sustained due to abuse, the analysis examined whether workplace supports were significantly associated with employment among a sample of disclosing women (n = 310).[1] Regression results, which are depicted in Table 6, indicate that workplace support are significantly associated with being employed at the time of the interview. In other words, women who received workplace support such as schedule flexibility, screening phone calls, and employer assistance with a work-related security plan were significantly more likely to be employed as compared to those women who did not receive workplace support.

Table 6
Binary Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Associated With Current Employment Status (n = 315)

Variable	β	*SE*	Odds Ratio
Area (Reference category = Urban)	–.381	.308	.683
Age	.008	.018	1.008
Less than high school (Reference category)			
High school/General Equivalency Diploma [GED]/Tech school(1)	1.452	.396	4.27***
Some college(2)	1.385	.411	3.994***
4-year degree or more(3)	1.648	.607	5.197**
Before work harassment	–.165	.104	.848
Job tenure	.016	.007	1.016*
Severity of physical violence	–.041	.019	.960*
Injury	–.092	.170	.912
Workplace support	.180	.052	1.197***
Constant	–.413	.766	.662

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Discussion and Implications

In the current study, women who were employed at the time of the interview were more likely to be older, more educated, and from urban areas as compared to women who had worked in the past year but were unemployed at the time of the interview. They were also more likely to have longer job tenures and higher earnings. In addition, employed women had less severe partner victimization histories. As noted in the findings, employed and unemployed women were equally likely to experience similar job-interference tactics, except employed women were less likely than unemployed women to experience before-work interference tactics.

Controlling for pertinent demographic characteristics, victimization severity, job tenure, and living area, the current research study is one of the first to indicate that telling someone at work about partner victimization may be associated with employment status. Results indicate that telling someone at work is significantly and statistically associated with current employment. Although this finding is noteworthy, it should be interpreted with caution, as investigators are unable to consider the organizational and situational contexts that may have led to employees' disclosure. For instance, informing a supervisor who is sympathetic of the associated consequences of partner

violence may contribute to employed victims' extended job tenures. Yet in other circumstances disclosure could be harmful to the employed victim. As an example, in a small community where there are limited employment opportunities, a supervisor may be friendly with friends of the perpetrator. Thus, encouraging employed victims to inform an immediate supervisor about the victimization without considering the situational context could put the woman in grave danger.

The next regression analysis examined whether receiving workplace support was associated with employment among women who disclosed partner victimization to someone at work. Results indicate that the receipt of workplace support is associated with current employment. This finding suggests that, among women who disclosed their victimization to someone at work, receiving workplace support may assist women with the negative work-related consequences associated with partner violence. As such, workplace support may actually help women to remain employed.

Findings from the current study have implications for workplaces and social service agencies. For workplaces, the current study emphasizes earlier recommendations (Swanberg & Logan, 2005; Swanberg et al., 2005; Swanberg, Logan, & Macke, 2006a; Swanberg & Macke, 2006; Swanberg, Macke, & Logan, 2006) for educating workplaces about the signs, symptoms, and consequences of IPV when it crosses over into the workplace. Although larger firms such as Verizon Wireless and Liz Claiborne (Friedman, Brown Tucker, Neville, & Imperial, 1996) have set policies for educating employees on all levels about partner violence and its workplace consequences and for handling partner violence when it enters the workplace, small- and medium-size firms may not have the same infrastructure to strategically address this issue. This should not be a barrier to informing employees about partner violence as a form of workplace violence, as the majority of jobs in the United States are located in small- and medium-size workplaces. Instead, this is an opportunity for community social service agencies to partner with community employer groups to create education and training opportunities for employers of all sizes. The goals of such educational programs are to decrease the stigmatization that surrounds partner violence, improve the response to potential disclosures of partner violence, and ultimately increase disclosure rates. As the current study suggests that disclosure is associated with current employment, it can be inferred that increasing disclosure rates within a company will result in lower turnover rates, and subsequent economic benefit for the employer and the victimized employee.

Likewise, findings from the current study underscore the importance of workplace support in maintaining current employment. This suggests that

specific workplace support have the potential to lower turnover rates, while increasing the economic well-being of women and their families. It is also important to note that the simple presence of workplace support may increase victims' decision to disclose. In summary, the current study encourages workplaces to educate employees about partner violence, reduce the stigma surrounding partner violence, offer workplace support, and create a work environment that is responsive to victims who opt to tell someone at work about their situation.

For social service agencies, the current study echoes previous research findings (see Logan, Shannon, et al., in press; Swanberg et al., 2005; Swanberg, Logan, & Macke, 2006a) demonstrating that perpetrators will try to sabotage women's employment in a variety of ways. As such, victims of partner violence need to be proactive in their safety planning. Safety planning should extend beyond the home to include the workplace and the commute to and from work. Social service professionals assisting victims of partner violence have an important role in educating victims about the need for extended safety plans. Moreover, social service professionals may assist victims with exploring the advantages and disadvantages of workplace disclosure, as well as determining the optimal way to inform an employer about the partner violence circumstances and the supports needed to stay focused on the job.

Although the current study is one of the first studies to investigate the relationship between disclosure of partner violence to someone at work, workplace support, and employment status, it has its limitations. First, the current study used a self-report approach to data collection. Thus, this may contribute to biased reporting of certain behaviors. However, a self-report approach to data collection is a widely used and generally accepted research practice (Howard, 1994; Spector, 1994). Second, measuring the factors associated with the intersection of partner violence, women's employment, and workplaces is fairly new. As such, there may be limitations to the measures used to assess job interference tactics and its consequences; that is, there may be violent partner behaviors and associated job-related consequences that are not captured by the current study's instruments. However, based on previous pilot research (see Swanberg & Logan, 2005), the first author developed additional questions to augment Riger et al.'s (2002) W/SAS and to determine the job-related consequences associated with the partner violence. Nonetheless, additional research is warranted to further understand this complex social issue. Third, to the best of authors' knowledge, this is one of the first studies to examine the circumstances surrounding women's disclosure of victimization to someone at

work and its associated consequences. As such, items used to study these issues are still in development. For instance, as currently measured disclosure assumes a very neat process of informing someone at work about the victimization in a contained manner. In contrast, employers may learn about employees' partner violence circumstances through more complicated avenues, such as a supervisor asking an employee about physical signs of abuse, or when a perpetrator shows up at work and refuses to leave. Thus, further measurement development is needed to more accurately capture the circumstances surrounding disclosure. Nonetheless, the current study provides an important starting point for the assessment of these issues.

A last limitation pertains to the findings surrounding workplace support. As noted earlier, the current study did not collect information on organizational or other situational factors associated with receiving various types of workplace support, the frequency with which supports were rendered, by whom certain types of support were rendered, and finally which supports were most helpful to victims. More detailed information must be collected in future studies to fully understand the nuances associated with receiving social support from coworkers, supervisors, or other employer personnel.

In conclusion, the current study provides new information about the relationships between workplace disclosure of partner victimization, receiving workplace support, and employment status. Until recently, the employee and workplace consequences associated with IPV have been neglected at the cost of women's physical and economic security. Now, however, more studies are beginning to examine the complexities surrounding these issues, including the topic examined in this article. Whether women freely disclose the victimization at work or are essentially forced to do so because of violent partners' actions, garnering support from people at work who understand the issues appears to be a positive coping strategy with promising results. However, the full spectrum of the risks and consequences associated with partner violence traversing the boundaries of work can not be addressed, including how to manage disclosure at work, without additional knowledge about how this social issue affects working women and the organizations that employ them.

Note

1. Due to a large amount of missing data severity of sexual violence was not included as a control variable.

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