

Abuse Characteristics and Coping Resources as Predictors of Problem-Focused Coping Strategies Among Battered Women

Chiara Sabina
University of New Hampshire
R. Scott Tindale
Loyola University Chicago

The current study examines the predictors of three types of problem-focused coping strategies (i.e., amount of help seeking, pursuing an order of protection, and staying away from the abuser) among battered women. Predictor variables are categorized as abuse characteristics and three types of coping resources (i.e., personal, material, and social coping resources). Data from the Chicago Women's Health Risk Study ($N = 478$) are used. Results show that enactment of problem-focused coping strategies is associated with amount of abuse, severity, harassment, and power and control tactics. Coping resources such as general health, employment, and social support influence enactment of coping strategies.

Keywords: *battered women; coping; resources*

Battered women respond to abuse in ways ranging from passive and active self-defense to formal help-seeking strategies (M. A. Dutton, 1992). The stress and coping literature proposes that coping responses are influenced by the specific person-environment interaction, including ontogenetic factors, social resources, and life stressors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Moos, 1995). The current study examined three specific problem-focused coping strategies battered women may employ: help seeking, pursuing an order of protection, and staying away from abuser. Abuse characteristics and coping resources were used to predict enactment of the specific problem-focused coping strategies. The study addresses which coping resources are associated with specific problem-focused coping strategies. Investigation of these issues allows for a better contextual understanding of the responses of battered women and identification of avenues for intervention.

Authors' Note: This article is based on the first author's master's thesis. We would like to acknowledge Emil Posavac, John Edwards, Murray Straus, and other researchers at the Family Research Laboratory and Crimes Against Children Research Center for insightful comments on earlier drafts. Rose Medeiros kindly provided statistical expertise.