Introduction

• College students with disabilities are at higher risk for intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual violence (SV)\(^1,2\)
• Though the literature on disability continues to grow, less research currently exists on experiences and perceptions of IPV among this population

Background

• Nearly 37% of all college students in the United States are affected by IPV\(^3\)
• College students with disabilities are more likely to experience IPV compared to non-disabled counterparts, and are more likely to report each type of IPV\(^1,2\)
• College students with disabilities report multiple experiences of IPV during their college career.\(^4\)

Research Question: Examine experiences of IPV among college students with disabilities

Sub-research question: Examine how narratives of IPV are impacted by, or intersect with, their ability status

Methods

• Data: Data was collected within the context of a larger parent study examining IPV and SV interventions in campus health centers
• Interviews (n=41): Life-course perspective interviews covering disability status, alcohol and substance use, IPV, and SV
• Thesis inclusion criteria: Participant reported at least one disability and at least one experience of intimate partner violence
• Theory: Power and Control Wheel for People With Disabilities in Partner Relationships
• Analysis: Thematic analysis using Dedoose Qualitative Analysis Software

Results

Disability Categories
- 75.6% of participants reported a psychiatric or mental health condition
- 46.3% reported a neuropsychiatric or learning condition
- 21.9% reported a physical or sensory condition

Theme One: Participants experienced multiple forms of violence, both disability-related and non-disability-related

Dimension One: Episodes of disability-related IPV were siloed within singular abusive typologies
Dimension Two: Episodes of non-disability-related IPV were multifaceted, including many co-occurring abusive typologies

“We said that since I had mental issues, that I gave him anxiety. I’m like, you can’t be given—that doesn’t happen through touch and I don’t really understand.”

Theme Two: Participants experienced worsening and/or additional disabilities following IPV

Dimension One: Participants experienced worsening symptoms following IPV
Dimension Two: Participants experienced additional disability onset following IPV

“Prior to her, I felt I didn’t have depression, and everything like that. Sometimes I do feel I may have it due to the situation I was in…. Sometimes she even asked at one point. She’s like, ‘Do you think you have depression because of me?’”

Emerging Patterns/Negative Cases
• Participants who did not experience disability-related IPV did not disclose their disability to their partner, or their partner also had a health condition/ disability

Discussion

• College students with disabilities experienced multiple forms of violence, some of which may never be experienced by their abled peers; these multiple forms of unique violence may lead to worsening and/or additional disability
• Disability-related blame was a novel finding from this study
• Present-day siloed approaches to disability, health, and violence services may not be the most helpful and efficient approach
• Integrated service models may be needed to support those with multi-dimensional and nuanced experiences of IPV

Conclusion

• Insights from this study can be used to guide revisions to campus policies and services.
• Advocacy and support in streamlining connections to resources and healthcare for these students is imperative.
• These findings suggest that college and universities may be able to improve support for students with disabilities who experience IPV through recognition of unique violence and actions to change campus service models

References


Disclosure

The presenting author has no conflicts of interest to disclose.