

Public Abstract

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Title: Views of Women with Dissociative Identity Disorder on Intimate Partner Violence

Background/Significance

Dissociative identity disorder (DID) can result from severe and sustained abuse and neglect in childhood that begins at a very young age. DID affects over three million Americans, making it as common as schizophrenia. Although the rate of intimate partner violence (IPV) is roughly double in individuals with DID as compared with the general population, very little research has examined the intersection of DID and IPV. Specifically, no known qualitative findings currently exist relating to the process by which women with DID cope with the experience of IPV.

Aim/Question

The purpose of this qualitative investigation was to explicate the experiences of women with DID who experience IPV and describe how they cope.

Methods

A Grounded Theory approach was used to conduct this investigation. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants (N=5) for face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Verbatim transcripts were coded and categorized, and reflective memos were developed to explicate substantive categories.

Results

To manage their lives with IPV, women with DID employ coping strategies that are consistent with their diagnosis, such as switching and dissociating. These coping mechanisms reflect past self-preservation strategies that were developed in association with severe childhood maltreatment.

Conclusion

Women with DID who experience IPV seek to mitigate and safeguard themselves from current danger by using strategies they developed as maltreated children. Nurses can use these findings to better recognize and understand the motivations and behaviors of women with DID who experience IPV. Additional research is recommended to understand how women with DID cope with IPV and to enhance assessment and intervention strategies.