

# Distressed and drained: Consequences of intimate partner aggression and the buffering role of supervisor support<sup>☆</sup>

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Conservation of resources theory  
Intimate partner aggression  
Performance  
Supervisor support

## ABSTRACT

Guided by the conservation of resources theory, this study builds on prior spillover research by examining the relationship between intimate partner aggression (IPA) and work outcomes (i.e., task performance and organizational citizenship behaviors), and the mediating role of psychological distress. We further hypothesized that perceived supervisor support serves as a contextual resource that would buffer the negative impact of IPA. We tested the model with data obtained from 228 matched employee-supervisor dyads. Results revealed that psychological distress mediated the relationship between IPA and work outcomes. In addition, the conditional indirect effects of IPA in predicting work outcomes via psychological distress were stronger at low as opposed to high levels of perceived supervisor support. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

## 1. Introduction

Almost one-third (30%) of women globally experienced intimate partner aggression (IPA; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2013). Current lifetime prevalence rates are comparable to findings in studies from more than a decade ago (e.g., Garcia-Moreno et al., 2013; Heise et al., 1999), which suggest that women globally remain at risk, and that IPA remains a highly relevant societal problem. Despite this, other segments of society (e.g., organizations) still believe that IPA is a personal issue that does not permeate work life (O'Leary-Kelly, Lean, Reeves, & Randel, 2008). This belief is in contrast with evidence suggesting that consequences of IPA (e.g., injuries, absenteeism, and turnover) cost employers approximately \$900 million annually in the United States alone (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2003). Indeed, the idea that stressors originating at home can spillover and influence behaviors and outcomes at work has been widely supported (Ferguson, Carlson, Hunter, & Whitten, 2012; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999).

Existing research on IPA and its work-related consequences falls under two lines of research. The first line of work involves studies that examine the relationship between IPA and work outcomes (LeBlanc, Barling, & Turner, 2014; Reeves & O'Leary-Kelly, 2007; Tolentino, Garcia, Restubog, Scott, & Aquino, 2017). This line of research suggests that working women who experience IPA tend to report higher absenteeism rates, lower job productivity, and as a consequence, less likely to be promoted. They were also more distracted at work and tend to miss more work hours compared to non-victims (Reeves & O'Leary-Kelly, 2007). The second line of

<sup>☆</sup> We thank Dr. Jennifer Lajom and Ms. Anna Carmella G. Ocampo for their research assistance. An earlier version of this manuscript was presented in the 75th Annual Meeting of the US Academy of Management.

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research has primarily focused on the kind of tactics perpetrators use to interfere with the victims' ability to function at work (Raphael, 1996; Swanberg & Logan, 2005; Swanberg, Logan, & Macke, 2005). For instance, perpetrators prevent the victim from reaching work by hiding car keys, depriving victims of sleep, or refusing to care for children (Raphael, 1996; Swanberg et al., 2005). They also engage in stalking the victim at work, involving behaviors such as looking into the window of the workplace and monitoring the victim along her commuting route (Raphael, 1996; Swanberg & Logan, 2005). Clearly, these studies suggest that IPA has detrimental effects not only for the victim but also for organizations.

Despite evidence of the work-related effects of IPA, there are still important gaps that need to be addressed. First, most studies to date focus on examining the direct relationships between IPA and withdrawal behavior, and to a lesser extent, dimensions of job performance including in-role and extra-role work behaviors (LeBlanc et al., 2014; Swanberg et al., 2005). While these associations are important, the limitation of only focusing on main effects is that the underlying psychological mechanisms underpinning the relationship between IPA and work outcomes remain unclear. Furthermore, existing work on IPA have mainly focused on unemployed women in shelters (Kelloway, Barling, & Hurrell, 2006). This is the case despite evidence suggesting that working women are more than twice as likely to experience IPA compared to their unemployed counterparts (Franklin & Menaker, 2012). An understanding of how IPA spills over to the work domain can potentially guide organizations in developing more effective policies and interventions.

Second, we still know little about the organization's role in mitigating the harmful effects of IPA. Indeed, organizations remain reluctant to address IPA at work with the perception that it is a personal affair coupled with incognizance on how to address the issue (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2008). While prior work has examined how the presence of human resource practices help IPA victims at work (Swanberg, Macke, & Logan, 2007), we contend that it is also helpful to examine formal and informal support originating from organizational members (e.g., supervisors). For instance, supervisors may provide more direct and individualized forms of support given their frequent social interactions with their employees (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). Moreover, supervisors have decision-making rights and access to resources (e.g., provision of leaves; referrals to outside agencies) that are useful for employees experiencing IPA (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2008). Despite this, we lack empirical evidence on whether perceptions of supervisor support can buffer the negative impact of IPA on work outcomes.

We address the abovementioned gaps by drawing from the conservation of resources theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989) which provides a theoretical framework that explains why IPA spills over to the workplace. In this study, we operationalize IPA as physical and psychological abuse perpetrated by a former or current intimate partner towards the other. This definition includes both physical and psychological aggression, as both dimensions are highly and significantly correlated (O'Leary, 1999). Furthermore, separating psychological aggression from physical abuse is often difficult in intimate relationships given their frequent co-occurrence (Follingstad, 2007). Consistent with COR theory, we predict that the experience of IPA increases psychological distress, which then reduces women's personal resources (e.g., mood, time, and energy). This in turn interferes with their effective functioning at work. Indeed, it has been suggested that psychological distress facilitates resource loss as individuals expend personal resources to cope with it (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

Second, we examine a contextual factor that may buffer the effects of IPA on work outcomes. Research on work-family conflict has found that contextual resources, such as social support, are crucial to stress resiliency and have a positive effect on psychological well-being (Allen, 2001; Swanberg et al., 2007). Taking into consideration the proximal nature of supervisors to employees, we examine the moderating role of perceived supervisor support (PSS) on the negative impact of IPA-related resource loss. We argue that PSS provides an opportunity for abused women to gain resources, which helps them cope with felt psychological distress brought about by IPA. Support for this comes from research implicating supervisor support (e.g., flexible work arrangements or a listening ear) as a source of increased job and life satisfaction (Goh, Ilies, & Wilson, 2015; Saltzstein, Ting, & Saltzstein, 2001).

We also address methodological limitations from previous research by accounting for possible issues associated with the use of self-reports (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). To minimize common method variance, we followed best practices outlined by Podsakoff et al. (2003). Specifically, we obtained data from two sources (e.g., supervisor-subordinate dyads) and introduced a temporal time lag between the measurement of predictor and outcome variables. These strategies are particularly important in the current study given the sensitive and retrospective nature of the study constructs. In the following sections, we elaborate on our proposed model (see Fig. 1), generate predictions concerning the expected relationships among them and discuss the implications of our findings.

### 1.1. Intimate partner aggression, psychological distress, and work outcomes

COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) states that individuals strive to build, protect, and conserve valuable resources. Resources are defined as the objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies valued by individuals, or those that serve to help individuals attain the objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies which they value (Hobfoll, 1989). Examples of resources include having a job (object), optimism (personal characteristic), marital status (condition), and time (energies). As resources inherently have instrumental and/or symbolic value to individuals, stress occurs when individuals are threatened by potential resource loss, experience depletion of actual resources, or fail to gain adequate resources following the investment of resources (Hobfoll, 1989).

From a COR perspective, IPA can be conceptualized as a major stressor that significantly depletes important resources. IPA victims suffer from proximal losses in the form of physical injuries and psychological trauma (Campbell, 2002; Golding, 1999). They may also experience losses due to their partner's controlling behaviors, such as restricting their financial access and preventing them from contacting family and friends (Swanberg et al., 2005). Over time, IPA victims can also experience material and psychosocial resource losses (e.g., loss of self-esteem, loss of time with loved ones, and loss of money and possessions), and prolonged feelings of betrayal,

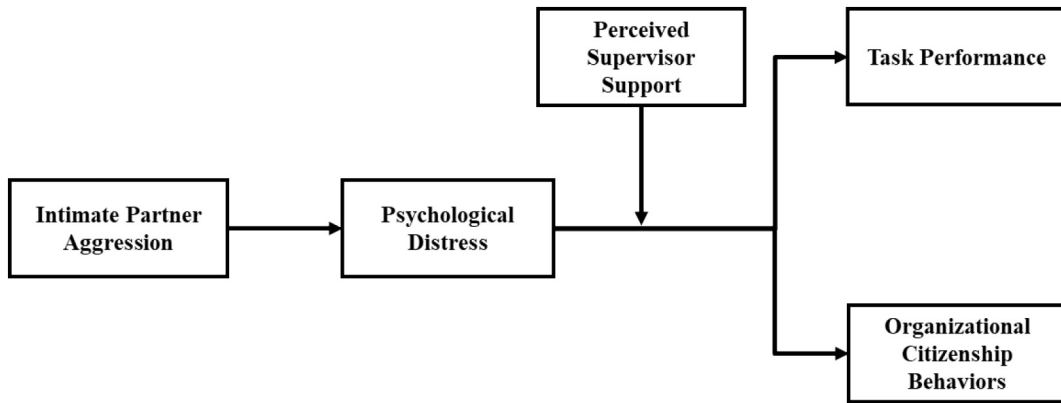


Fig. 1. The proposed theoretical model.

confusion, and intimate relationship dissatisfaction, which all undermine health and well-being (e.g., Beeble, Bybee, & Sullivan, 2010; Thompson et al., 2000).

Exposure to IPA leads to the experience of psychological distress. Repeated and continued victimization is facilitated by cohabitation as it increases the amount of time women are at risk and abuse usually occurs in private (Browne, 1993). Indeed, studies have consistently shown that IPA is positively associated with a number of indicators of psychological distress (Romito, Turan, & De Marchi, 2005; Watkins et al., 2014). For instance, compared to non-abused women, women who reported past and current IPA were 5.95 times more likely to experience feelings of powerlessness, guilt, and anger (Romito et al., 2005). Similarly, significant increases in depressive symptoms were found among those women who experienced IPA over time perpetrated by the same partner (Watkins et al., 2014).

The experience of psychological distress can have negative spillover effects to the workplace. In an elaboration of COR theory, ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012) proposed that contextual demands in one domain (e.g., home) can spillover to another domain (e.g., work) due to a depletion of personal resources important in both domains. In the context of the present study, we argue that felt psychological distress from the experience of IPA interferes with work and depletes personal resources (e.g., time, energy, self-esteem) which could have been useful in the fulfillment of work tasks. Below, we further elaborate on how psychological distress negatively influences two important work behaviors: task performance and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs).

Task performance is defined as the effective performance of required activities that directly or indirectly contribute towards the achievement of organizational objectives (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993), such as effective and timely completion of assigned duties. Indeed, stressful events create conditions for cognitive fatigue (i.e., resource losses), which reduces the energy available for effective task performance (Cohen, 1980). For instance, 71% of 518 recently employed women reported poor concentration at work due to past-year partner victimization (Swanberg et al., 2007). Furthermore, due to display rules often present in organizations, employees are expected to manage or suppress felt distress (Grandey, Foo, Groth, & Goodwin, 2012). This further depletes personal resources as emotional suppression tends to increase emotional exhaustion (Grandey et al., 2012). For these reasons, we predict that:

**Hypothesis 1.** *Psychological distress mediates the relationship between intimate partner aggression and task performance.*

Similarly, we expect victims of IPA who experience psychological distress to perform fewer OCBs compared to non-victims. OCBs are “individual behaviors that are discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promote the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1988, p.4). Past studies have shown that affective variables, such as mood and stress, have important causal effects on OCBs (Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986). In particular, feelings of stress (measured as the intensity and frequency of stressful events) led to depression (i.e., resource loss), which in turn resulted in fewer OCBs (Motowidlo et al., 1986). Consistent with COR theory’s resource conservation principle, we expect IPA victims to reduce participation in OCBs to conserve remaining resources (e.g., time and energy) that could be devoted to actively coping with their felt psychological distress. Thus, we predict that:

**Hypothesis 2.** *Psychological distress mediates the relationship between intimate partner aggression and organizational citizenship behaviors.*

### 1.2. The moderating role of perceived supervisor support

One of the key tenets of COR theory is that resources are dynamic (i.e., resource reserves can change via resource gains and losses; Hobfoll, 2001). During periods of high stress, individuals are motivated to actively seek out other resources to help them recover lost resources and conserve remaining reserves (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014). Supervisors are commonly viewed as agents of the organization as they are directly responsible for managing staff, appraising performance, and communicating with senior management (Shoss, Eisenberger, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2013). Because of the power they have over managing resources valued by employees, supervisors are capable of directly providing both emotional and instrumental support to their

subordinates. For instance, supervisors are able to provide social companionship and emotional comfort, which communicate that the organization cares for the employees' well-being (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). Furthermore, supervisors are also able to offer instrumental support, such as referrals to employee assistance programs, offer flexible working arrangements, and relocation of employees' place of work, as they have formal position and authority within the organization (Sylaska & Edwards, 2014).

In this study, we argue that it is the employee's *perception* of supervisor support (PSS) that moderates the IPA-distress-work outcomes relationship. Indeed, attitudinal and work outcomes are primarily influenced by the individual's own subjective assessment of social support as opposed to simply the presence of supportive policies (Allen, 2001; Perrin, Yragui, Hanson, & Glass, 2011). This is consistent with COR theory in that resources will only lead to resource gain if the individual considers it valuable. In the context of the present study, we expect PSS to buffer the negative effect of IPA on work outcomes as it provides both emotional and instrumental resources that may help employees effectively manage psychological distress. Indeed, PSS cultivates positive affect at work, which may counteract negative emotions experienced due to IPA (Fredrickson, 2001). Based on these theoretical and empirical considerations, we predict that:

**Hypothesis 3.** *The conditional indirect effects of IPA on task performance via psychological distress would be stronger for employees with low as opposed to high levels of perceived supervisor support.*

**Hypothesis 4.** *The conditional indirect effects of IPA on organizational citizenship behaviors via psychological distress would be stronger for employees with low as opposed to high levels of perceived supervisor support.*

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants and procedure

Data were collected from female employees who were members of a local community organization in Manila, Philippines. We chose to examine male-perpetrated abuse towards employed women for two reasons. First, IPA has a higher baseline phenomenon for women (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Women who cohabit with a male intimate partner have been shown to experience significantly higher rates of partner violence, more intense and longer-lasting victimization, and report more incidences of partner aggression compared to men (Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 1998; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Women are also more likely to suffer from serious physical injuries due to gender differences in body size and physical strength (Ansara & Hindin, 2009). Second, and more importantly, women in many societies confront more career barriers and non-work demands such as glass ceiling effects and multiple role obligations, which makes the impact of IPA more detrimental to employed women than men (Chronister et al., 2009; Hoobler, Wayne, & Lemmon, 2009).

Employees were required to be currently or previously (not more than 12 months) in a relationship with a male partner and cohabit with him. The questionnaire was prepared in English, because it is the language of business spoken by most Filipinos (Bernardo, 2007). To reduce the effects of common method variance, we introduced a four-week temporal lag between the time we measured our predictor and outcome variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). At Time 1, employees received a survey kit containing an information sheet (stating the study's aim, assuring confidentiality and voluntariness of participation), an envelope, and a questionnaire, which contained demographic questions about the employee and their partner, and employee's self-report ratings of IPA, psychological distress, and PSS. The survey was disseminated to 380 employees, who were instructed to seal their completed questionnaire in the pre-paid reply envelope before returning it to the research team. All employees created anonymous identity codes to allow their ratings to be matched with those of his/her corresponding supervisor. A total of 304 employee surveys were received, yielding a response rate of 80%. There were 22 employee surveys that were removed because of a large number of missing responses or missing identity codes. At Time 2, four weeks after the initial survey, the participating employees were requested to pass on the supervisor survey for their immediate supervisor to complete. The supervisor only rated one focal employee. For ethical reasons, we wanted to provide employees with the control over whether or not they wish to continue participating by forwarding the survey to their supervisor. To maintain the integrity of supervisor data, supervisors were instructed to sign across the flap of the pre-paid reply envelope after sealing it and to send the envelope directly to the research team. The supervisor survey contained questions about the supervisor's demographic (i.e., age, gender, and organizational tenure) and the supervisor's rating of the focal employee's task performance and OCBs. Of the 304 supervisor surveys distributed, 246 surveys were received. After deleting those supervisor surveys with missing identity codes and those with a large number of missing responses ( $n = 18$ ), the final sample consisted of 228 matched employee-supervisor dyads.

The average age of employees was 36.77 years ( $SD = 7.13$ ). Most (69.3%) have organizational tenure of  $> 5$  years, and almost all (91.7%) reported having permanent employment status in the organization. Of those employees who participated, 82.5% completed a university or post-graduate degree as their highest educational attainment. Employees represented diverse occupational backgrounds, including general management and human resources (23.2%), customer service (16.7%), information technology (15.8%), marketing and sales (15.4%), accounting and finance (14.5%), manufacturing and production (7.9%), public relations (5.3%), and others (1.3%). On average, employees were married for 9.38 years ( $SD = 6.52$ ). All employees have children, with the average number of children being 1.75 ( $SD = 0.65$ ). On average, male partners were 39.32 years ( $SD = 7.34$ ). Majority of them (91.2%) achieved a university or post-graduate degree as their highest educational attainment, and 89.9% of them are working full-time. For supervisor participants, the average age was 45.43 years ( $SD = 6.92$ ) and majority (49.1%) were male supervisors. Most supervisors (72.0%) had organizational tenure between 6 and 15 years.

## 2.2. Measures

Established multi-item scales were used to assess the study variables. Unless otherwise specified, employees responded to all questions using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Items were coded such that a higher score indicated a greater amount of the focal construct, with the exception of reverse-coded items. Time limitations imposed by the participation organization forced the shortening of some scales.

### 2.2.1. Intimate partner aggression

At Time 1, we assessed IPA using the psychological, physical, and injury subscales of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS-2; [Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996](#)). The CTS-2 is the most widely used measure of family violence, because of its stable factor structure, moderate reliability and concurrent validity, as well as strong evidence of construct validity ([Straus, 1990](#)). Using a 7 point Likert-type scale (0 = never; 6 = more than 20 times in the past year), participants were asked to rate how frequent they experienced physical assault (12 items), injury (5 items), and psychological aggression (8 items) from their partners in the past year. Sample items included: “My partner called me fat or ugly” and “My partner punched or hit me with something that could hurt.” Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.95.

### 2.2.2. Psychological distress

At Time 1, we assessed employees' psychological distress with the 5-item version of [Derogatis' \(1993\)](#) Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI). Items were prefaced with the lead-in statement: “In the past six months, how often have you been...” and ended with statements such as: feeling fearful, feeling restless, feeling worthless, feeling in panic, and feeling nervous. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.93.

### 2.2.3. Perceived supervisor support

At Time 1, we measured employees' perceived supervisor support using a four-item scale developed by [Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli \(2001\)](#). Employees were asked to rate their perception of the level of supervisory support they receive from their immediate supervisor. A sample item is: “Help is available from my supervisor when I have a problem.” Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.95.

### 2.2.4. Supervisor-rated task performance

At Time 2, we assessed employees' task performance via supervisor reports. We used four out of the seven-item measure developed by [Williams and Anderson \(1991\)](#) due to survey length constraints imposed by the community organization. Consistent with prior work, we chose the four items with the highest factor loadings ([Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2006](#); [Shoss et al., 2013](#)). A sample item is: “This employee fulfills responsibilities specified in his/her job description.” Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.96.

### 2.2.5. Supervisor-rated OCBs

At Time 2, the four-item civic virtue subscale of OCBs developed by [Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter \(1990\)](#) was used to assess employees' OCBs. Behaviors in this dimension of OCB refer to employees taking an active role and special interest in the life of their organization as well as having strong feelings of being a part of the organization ([Hoffman, Blair, Meriac, & Woehr, 2007](#); [Organ, 1988](#)). A sample item is: “This employee keeps updated of changes in the organization.” Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.92.

### 2.2.6. Control variables

In line with prior research, we controlled for demographic variables that could affect the occurrence of IPA. Employees' age was controlled since older women have a lower risk of IPA victimization due to having developed better negotiation skills that help them successfully avoid potential partner aggression ([Romans, Forte, Cohen, Du Mont, & Hyman, 2007](#)). Employees' employment status was controlled because past studies found that the likelihood of victimization increases when women are financially dependent on their male partner ([Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt, & Kim, 2012](#)). Similarly, a disparity in educational attainment between the couple increases the likelihood of victimization ([Capaldi et al., 2012](#)). That is, being educated reduces perpetration of IPA as it increases female empowerment through social networks and economic independence ([Jewkes, 2002](#)). Partners' employment status was controlled because women with unemployed spouses are more likely to experience partner aggression ([Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, & Tritt, 2004](#)). Unemployment for male partners was significantly associated with increased career and life stress, which in turn increases male-perpetrated aggression ([Stith et al., 2004](#)). The age of the male partner was controlled for because rates of IPA started to decline as the age of the couple increases ([Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1982](#)). The number of children was controlled because male partners perceived having children as a contributing factor to family stress, thereby posing a risk for IPA ([Stith et al., 2004](#)).

Age was measured in years (as of last birthday). Education level was measured by asking the focal employee to encircle one of the four options (i.e., primary school, secondary school, junior college/polytechnic, and university/postgraduate). We assessed partner's employment status by asking the focal employee to encircle the appropriate option (i.e., working full-time, working part-time, or not working).



**Table 1**

Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations among the study variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Employee's age	36.76	7.12	–											
2. Employee's employment	1.11	0.42	0.01	–										
3. Employee's education	1.86	0.43	0.19**	– 0.18**	–									
4. Number of children	1.75	0.65	– 0.02	0.04	– 0.14*	–								
5. Partner's age	39.32	7.33	0.85**	– 0.01	0.26**	– 0.06	–							
6. Partner's education	1.94	0.33	0.09	– 0.11	0.28**	– 0.03	0.11	–						
7. Partner's employment	1.11	0.32	0.11	0.11	– 0.08	0.04	0.13	– 0.02	–					
8. IPA	0.76	0.97	– 0.07	0.01	– 0.14*	– 0.09	– 0.03	– 0.07	– 0.05	(0.95)				
9. Psychological distress	2.70	1.21	– 0.32**	– 0.03	– 0.17*	0.09	– 0.28**	– 0.11	– 0.13	0.19**	(0.92)			
10. PSS	5.52	1.11	0.19**	– 0.02	0.23**	– 0.11	0.16*	0.11	0.09	– 0.24***	– 0.39***	(0.95)		
11. Task performance	5.72	1.09	0.19**	– 0.12	0.16*	– 0.06	0.12	0.14*	0.02	– 0.36***	– 0.38***	0.50***	(0.96)	
12. OCBs	5.64	1.26	0.08	– 0.05	0.14*	– 0.10	0.08	0.11	0.06	– 0.23***	– 0.32***	0.41***	0.68***	(0.92)

Note.  $N = 228$ . Reliability coefficients appear in parentheses in the main diagonal. IPA = intimate partner aggression; PSS = perceived supervisor support; OCBs = organizational citizenship behaviors.

\*  $p < 0.05$ .

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Descriptive statistics and hypothesis testing

Descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, and scale reliabilities for the study variables are presented in Table 1. All correlations were in the predicted direction. We assessed the simple mediation model using the bootstrap procedure developed by Hayes (2013). This approach was used as it enabled us to test the significance of the mediation hypotheses without relying on the assumption that the total and indirect effects are normally distributed (Hayes, 2013). Hypothesis 1 predicted that psychological distress would mediate the relationship between IPA, task performance (Hypothesis 1), and OCBs (Hypothesis 2). IPA was found to have an indirect effect on supervisor-rated task performance (*Indirect effect* =  $-0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI:  $-0.11$  to  $-0.01$ ) and supervisor-rated OCBs (*Indirect effect* =  $-0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI:  $-0.13$  to  $-0.01$ ) via psychological distress. Given that the confidence intervals did not include zero, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported.

We further posited that the strength of the indirect effects of IPA on supervisor-rated task performance (Hypothesis 3) and supervisor-rated OCBs (Hypothesis 4) would be stronger for those with low as opposed to high levels of perceived supervisor support. The estimates and bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals (using 2000 bootstrap samples) for the proposed conditional indirect effects are presented in Table 2. The cross-product term between psychological distress and PSS predicting supervisor-rated task performance ( $B = 0.08$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and supervisor-rated OCBs ( $B = 0.12$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) were significant. An examination of the conditional indirect effects at specific values of PSS (i.e.,  $\pm 1$  standard deviation around the mean) revealed that the indirect effect of IPA on supervisor-rated task performance via psychological distress was significant under low levels of PSS (*Indirect effect* =  $-0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI:  $-0.10$  to  $-0.01$ ), but not under high levels of PSS (*Indirect effect* =  $-0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ , 95% CI:  $-0.05$  to  $0.01$ ). Similarly, the indirect effect of IPA on supervisor-rated OCBs via psychological distress was significant under low levels of PSS (*Indirect effect* =  $-0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI:  $-0.12$  to  $-0.02$ ), but not under high levels of PSS (*Indirect effect* =  $-0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ , 95% CI:  $-0.05$  to  $0.02$ ). Given that the confidence intervals do not include zero, Hypotheses 3 and 4 were supported.

#### 3.2. Supplementary tests

In order to rule out alternative explanations for our findings, we conducted supplementary analyses. First, we re-ran the analysis

**Table 2**Estimates and bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals at  $\pm 1$  standard deviation of PSS.

	Supervisor-rated task performance		Supervisor-rated OCBs	
Level of PSS	IE ( $SE$ ) <sup>a</sup>	CI	IE ( $SE$ ) <sup>a</sup>	CI
– 1 SD PSS	– 0.05 (0.03)	– 0.10 to – 0.01	– 0.06 (0.03)	– 0.12 to – 0.02
+ 1 SD PSS	– 0.01 (0.02)	– 0.05 to 0.01	0.01 (0.02)	– 0.05 to 0.02

Note. IE = indirect effect;  $SE$  = standard error; CI = confidence interval; PSS = perceived supervisor support; OCBs = organizational citizenship behaviors.

<sup>a</sup> Bootstrapped estimates and the standard errors of the conditional indirect effects are presented.

without any control variables to rule out the possibility that the presence of these variables is influencing the significance of the study findings. In order to increase statistical conclusion validity, Becker (2005) noted that it is important to demonstrate that the results remain unchanged regardless of whether control variables are present in the model or not. The results remained significant without the control variables.

Second, we examined PSS as a first-stage moderator of the IPA-distress-work outcomes relationship. Results suggested that the interaction between IPA and PSS was not significant for both supervisor-rated work outcomes of task performance ( $B = -0.02$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ , *ns*) and OCBs ( $B = -0.02$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ , *ns*). The indirect effects of IPA on supervisor-rated task performance via psychological distress were not significant under low levels of PSS (*Indirect effect* =  $-0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI:  $-0.11$  to  $0.01$ ) and high levels of PSS (*Indirect effect* =  $-0.02$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI:  $-0.09$  to  $0.03$ ). Similarly, the indirect effects of IPA on supervisor-rated OCBs via psychological distress were neither significant under low levels of PSS (*Indirect effect* =  $-0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI:  $-0.11$  to  $0.01$ ), nor under high levels of PSS (*Indirect effect* =  $-0.02$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI:  $-0.09$  to  $0.03$ ). Overall, the results provide further evidence for PSS as a second-stage moderator of the IPA-distress-work outcomes relationship.

#### 4. Discussion

While research on IPA has affirmed the negative consequences for its victims both in the home and work domains, many of these studies have focused on direct effect relationships (e.g., LeBlanc et al., 2014; Reeves & O'Leary-Kelly, 2007; Swanberg et al., 2005). This study had two important aims: (a) to explicate the link between IPA and work outcomes (i.e., task performance and OCBs); and (b) to examine PSS as a buffer against resource loss stemming from IPA. Our results supported our predictions. First, we found that IPA indirectly influenced task performance and OCBs through psychological distress. That is, IPA as a stressor triggers resource losses, the accumulation of which manifests itself as psychological distress. Due to felt psychological distress, abused women have fewer resources available to fulfill work duties and to engage in extra-role behaviors. This is consistent with the assumptions of COR theory which state that the spillover from home to the work domain occurs due to lost personal resources (e.g., psychological distress; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

Second, we also found support for the moderating role of PSS. That is, the conditional indirect relationship between IPA, psychological distress, and work outcomes were stronger for individuals with low as opposed to high levels of PSS. Supervisor support provides IPA victims with an alternative supply of resources in the form of instrumental (e.g., employee assistance programs) and emotional (e.g., a listening ear) support. For instance, women who were offered flexible schedules and workloads had greater chances of maintaining longer-term employment as they were able to better manage their time (Perrin et al., 2011; Swanberg et al., 2007). Furthermore, PSS signals to the employee that the organization cares for her well-being, which counteracts the damaging effects of IPA on women's self-worth (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). This is also in line with COR theory's resource investment principle, which states that individuals can draw from their environment to replace lost resources or gain additional ones in the event of resource loss (Hobfoll, 2001). It is also important to note that the results remained significant even after controlling for relevant employee and spouse demographic variables, which further lends support to the proposed relationships.

It should be noted though that we obtained a small effect size for the moderating role of PSS and this warrants some discussion. First, the small interaction effect might have been due to the fact that we have not considered family-specific forms of social support that potentially could have a stronger influence on IPA and work outcomes. Possible support for this proposition comes from a meta-analysis that found family-specific support to have relatively stronger negative associations with work-family conflict (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011). It might be fruitful for future work to explore the additive and relative effects of different types of support on the IPA-work outcomes relationship, which may vary in terms of specificity (family friendly organizational policies vs. perceived organizational support) and domain (spousal support vs. supervisor support). Furthermore, the relationships proposed in our study represent cross-domain effects (Michel, Kotrba, Mitchelson, Clark, & Baltes, 2011). That is, IPA is a stressor that originates from the family domain, while PSS comes from the work domain. Employees who receive low levels of PSS are not able to conserve personal resources at work leaving them with fewer resources they can use to cope with demands in the family domain (e.g., IPA). Indeed, prior work that has examined the cross-domain effects of social support on work-family conflict have found similar small effect sizes (Casper, Martin, Buffardi, & Erdwins, 2002; Selvarajan, Cloninger, & Singh, 2013).

##### 4.1. Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to the IPA and work-family interface literatures in several important ways. First, we provided a theoretical framework under COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) to explain why and how IPA would result in lower levels of task performance and fewer OCBs. In doing so, this study was able to clarify the underlying psychological mechanism involved in the spillover IPA into the workplace. Second, extant research on the broader area of work-family interface has primarily focused on the concept of work-family conflict (Chen, Powell, & Cui, 2014; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Goh et al., 2015), particularly examining how individuals juggle between work and family demands (e.g., time and role conflict). The current research extended this line of work by focusing on relationship conflict (e.g., IPA) as opposed to traditional time and family demand variables (e.g., dual career earners, caring for dependents). Our study responded to renewed calls to examine the spillover effect of family conflict on workplace outcomes, especially for women (Ferguson et al., 2012). Measures of work-family conflict indicate that dual roles are incompatible in some respects, but they do not reveal which factors in the family domain make work functioning more difficult (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). That is, studies have tended to focus on macro level factors and how family to work interference develops over time. However, less research has been devoted to factors that "link" the family and home systems together. Our study

addressed this gap by focusing on micro-level factors such as IPA and psychological distress and using COR theory as a theoretical lens.

Lastly, we demonstrated that supervisors have an important role to play in reducing the personal and organizational costs of IPA as they can provide emotional and instrumental support to help employees regain lost resources and cope with their work demands. By focusing on PSS as a more proximal measure of organizational support, this study acknowledged the dynamic nature of stress, whereby losses and gains in resources could alter the level of stress faced by women who experience IPA.

#### 4.2. Limitations and future research directions

While this study has made important contributions to prior work, it does have some limitations that can be addressed in future research. First, the study used a cross-sectional research design, which restricts the ability to ascertain causality. Cross-sectional studies do not capture the extent to which IPA persists over time and the potential impact it has on long-term employment. However, our propositions about the temporal ordering of the study variables were based on established theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and prior work on the relationship between partner aggression and work outcomes (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2008; Tolentino et al., 2017). It is recommended that future research utilize a longitudinal design to further explore the long-term effects of IPA on work-related outcomes.

Second, the use of a general measure of PSS, instead of a measure of PSS specific to work-family conflict also warrants some discussion. Our four-item measure of PSS assessed a more general perception of perceived support at work and as such does not capture specific support for work-family conflict (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Yet prior research has noted that more specific supervisor work-family support, which is directed at facilitating the employee's ability to manage both work and family demands, is related to helping behaviors (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hanson, 2009). Examples of supervisor work-family support include expressing care and empathy over employee's work-family well-being, and providing more access to information on the organization's work-family policies. Indeed, a validation study found work-family-specific supervisor support to be significantly related to reduced work-family conflict compared to a general measure of supervisor support (Hammer et al., 2009). However, an important consideration in using specific measures of PSS is that it may not necessarily capture the domain of what is valued by a given employee since what is perceived as valuable may vary depending on the employment context (Hobfoll, 2001). Given the exploratory nature of our study, we believe it was appropriate to use a more general measure of PSS that would capture broader perceptions of supervisor support.

Third, we focused on civic virtue behaviors as our measure of OCBs. Thus, the results of our study only apply to withdrawing behaviors that indicate an active participation in organizational life. However, our theorizing about the relationship between IPA, psychological, distress, and OCBs is applicable regardless of the OCB dimension used. Civic virtue is a relevant dimension to focus on especially within the context of IPA among working women. Compared to other forms of OCBs (e.g., altruism and courtesy), withdrawing civic virtue could have less impact on the quality of social relationships at work as it is mostly directed towards the organization (Robinson & Morrison, 1995). Furthermore, withdrawing from other forms may have greater negative implications for longer-term employment like taking longer breaks (opposite of conscientiousness) or always complaining about trivial matters (opposite of sportsmanship). Withdrawing from the more obvious forms of OCBs may attract attention, which women suffering from IPA try to avoid given the stigma associated with it (Kwesiga, Bell, Pattie, & Moe, 2007). Women suffering from IPA are also motivated to maintain continued employment as they consider workplaces as a “safe haven” providing them with financial and social benefits (Rothman, Hathaway, Stidsen, & de Vries, 2007). This makes the more discrete and covert behaviors associated with civic virtue a particularly attractive means of conserving resources. Indeed, studies have shown that performing civic virtue behaviors are expected to a lesser extent from women compared to men due to gender roles and stereotyping (Chiaburu, Sawyer, Smith, Brown, & Harris, 2014; Kidder, 2002).

A fourth limitation is that the mean levels of IPA are low. However, this finding is somewhat expected given that the participants in our sample are working women as opposed to women in shelters or those seeking employment (Kelloway et al., 2006). An examination of the frequency distribution of the means of IPA suggest that the participants reported a wide-range of responses in which some participants reported moderate to high mean levels of IPA. While the experience of IPA may have low incidence or low visibility because participants are less likely to report them, its impact has profound implications for women's well-being and safety and thus requires continued scholarly attention.

Finally, the data were collected in the Philippines, which has a collectivist orientation where people are largely concerned with preserving “face” of the family unit and keeping personal information within the family (Restubog & Bordia, 2006). Thus, participants may be reluctant to disclose partner aggression to third parties such as researchers and organizations because they may perceive it as shameful (Sanchez-Hucles & Dutton, 1999). As such, the sensitive nature of the survey is likely to result in under-reporting. However, the observed frequency of IPA in our study is comparable to patterns found in other non-western studies (e.g., Babu & Kar, 2009; Hassan et al., 2004). Future research with participants from non-western collectivist cultures could include an initial rapport-building session to discuss related issues in a non-threatening environment to facilitate trust between the participants and researchers. As Yick and Berthold (2005) suggested, fostering trust and credibility with participants is a strategy that could potentially improve disclosure rates among participants.

#### 4.3. Practical implications

Our results offer several implications for management practice. As our results suggest, organizations can provide appropriate and



desired support at the interpersonal level via supervisors. They are the first point of contact when employees require direction, advice, and support relating to their work. Thus, it would be helpful for supervisors to initiate open discussions (e.g., via informal conversations) about the type of support employees need if and when IPA becomes a concern. Indeed, prior work has found that the type of support desired by women experiencing IPA varies depending on the stage of change in an abusive relationship (Perrin et al., 2011). For instance, women who are uncertain about leaving an abusive relationship prefer limited and highly confidential support (e.g., emotional support and information about company policies against domestic violence) as opposed to more instrumental forms such as legal or financial assistance. Concurrently, organizations can develop workplace policies, such as zero-tolerance and mandatory reporting of IPA, as it shows employees that the organization is supportive and willing to take an active stance towards tackling IPA. Seeking external consultation from reputable employee assistance programs during the development of appropriate organizational policies and programs can be potentially useful in helping organizations navigate this traditionally domestic issue (Lindquist et al., 2010).

The findings of this study also highlight the need and importance to raise supervisors' awareness of their potential to stigmatize IPA and its effects on victims' work performance and citizenship behavior. Supervisors' willingness to provide support to IPA victims, especially in the longer-term, may depend on their stigma of IPA. In a large number of cultures and work environments, the stigma of being an IPA victim makes this issue a particularly difficult topic to discuss (Menjívar & Salcido, 2002). Without sufficient awareness and understanding, some supervisors may perceive that poor task performance, reduced citizenship behavior, and potential risks to workplace safety (i.e., abusers turning up at work), are far too great and too difficult to manage in the longer-term and thus find it easier to terminate abused women as opposed to helping them. Indeed, a qualitative study of victims of domestic violence (Swanberg & Logan, 2005) showed disclosure of victimization to supervisors led to some short-term support, but that fear and safety issues mitigated longer-term retention. Of those victims interviewed, 41% reported that their supervisor terminated their employment and asked them to leave within the previous 2-year period. They also reported that their supervisor's reasons for termination included poor attendance, excessive phone calls, poor job performance, and abusers showing up to work. This underscores the importance of training supervisors to be more cognizant of their bias against IPA and to be more pragmatic in terms of managing risks to third parties including co-workers' actual and felt safety. Lastly, organizations must raise awareness among their employees regarding the negative spillover effects of IPA to the work domain. Awareness can also be raised through internal communication, such as monthly newsletters and posters. Indeed, Heijnders and Van Der Meij (2006) found that these intervention strategies are effective in modifying the environment around the stigmatized individual.

## 5. Conclusion

Despite our understanding of the detrimental effects of intimate partner aggression, it remains to be a prevalent societal issue. Individuals spend a significant amount of time at work, which means organizations are *permeable* to personal issues like IPA. Our study not only provides empirical support to this notion, it also provided a theoretical basis for why this spillover occurs. More importantly, we have shown that organizations (through supervisors) can help victims cope with IPA by providing them a safe haven where they can replenish lost resources. We wish to note that there are certainly limits to what organizations could do to help IPA victims. As what O'Leary-Kelly et al. (2008, p. 71) have noted, it is an "intransigent social problem with complex causes and multifaceted solutions". However, as our results have shown, simply providing assistance and support can make a difference. Indeed, considering work and family issues in creating workplace policies is beneficial for both organizations and employees (Galinsky & Bond, 1998). It is our hope that this study stimulates further research on intimate partner aggression at work.

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