



# Social Resources and Intimate Partner Violence: Examining Stigma Perceived by Women and their Social Networks



Mackenzie Weaver and Pooja Ichplani, M.S

## Background Information

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is defined as any physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional harm done to a person by an intimate partner.

Social support is the process by which individuals are supported by others in their communities. Three ways of investigating it have been identified: embedded social support, perceived social support, and enacted social support.

Stigma (Disability stigma, relationship based stigma, identity abuse) is a way individuals and groups are othered, ostracized and stereotyped, reducing the amount of social support offered to them.

Social Connections: The relationships an individual has to others.

Education: Studies have found higher levels of education to be a significant protective factor for IPV victimizing women.

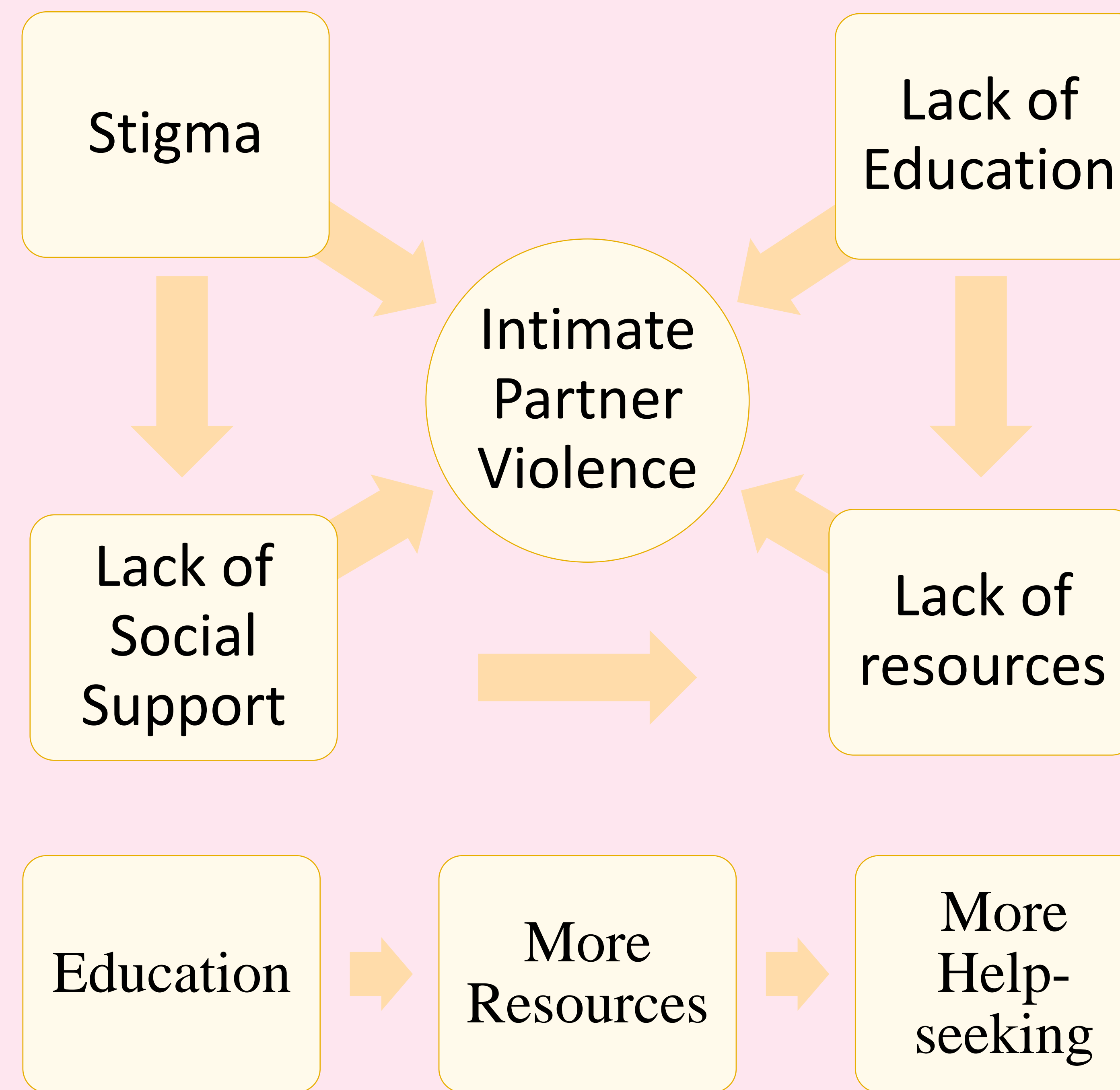
## Methods

- Literature search was conducted in the NIH Pubmed database with a publishing date between 2015-2023 used as a criteria.
- Commonly used keywords include: Intimate Partner Violence/IPV, Help-Seeking, Social Support, Stigma, relationship-based stigma, identity abuse, education, and social connections.
- All journal articles were extracted from the database and reviewed by my research mentor to ascertain the accuracy and quality of the sources.
- Key takeaways from each article, along with study information, were recorded on an excel spreadsheet and word document.

## Results

Social support was found to be a contributor to IPV help seeking<sup>1</sup> and a protective factor for IPV<sup>11</sup>. Perpetrators often try to isolate victims, causing help-seeking to minimize due to the victim's decreased social connections<sup>7</sup>. Groups and individuals experiencing stigma already have less social connections, meaning victims in these groups may find it more difficult to seek support<sup>13</sup>. This societal isolation and resulting stressors (such as minority stress) also puts them at greater risk of IPV<sup>4</sup>. Women experiencing stigma may receive less support because their community or social network are unwilling to offer help due to fear of being stigmatized through association<sup>12</sup>.

Social networks with lower education levels and lower SES were found to have greater IPV acceptance<sup>12</sup> and trouble with help-seeking<sup>2</sup>. A number of factors are thought to contribute, such as a lack of available resources on IPV and sources of help<sup>12</sup>, or in the case of IPV-positive communities, reduced exposure to ideas from outside their community preventing IPV-positive attitudes from being challenged<sup>3</sup>.



## Conclusions

Stigma contributes to a lack of social support, which can make it harder for individuals to seek help for IPV. However, IPV itself can contribute to stigma, resulting in a sort of feedback loop. This is intensified if an individual and their social network are less educated, as they have less access to help-seeking resources and are less likely to challenge IPV-positive attitudes.

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