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Résumé substantiel en français

Introduction

La violence sexuelle entre partenaires intimes (VSPI) est un phénomène encore largement sous-étudié, malgré sa prévalence élevée et les conséquences sévères sur la santé mentale et physique des victimes (Tarzia et al., 2018; Temple et al., 2007). Contrairement au mythe répandu associant la violence sexuelle à des agresseurs inconnus, les violences commises par des partenaires intimes sont fréquentes mais demeurent méconnues, notamment en raison de la stigmatisation sociale et des biais institutionnels (Felson & Pare, 2005; Spohn & Tellis, 2012). En France, en 2021, parmi les 321 000 femmes adultes ayant déclaré des violences conjugales, 37 % ont rapporté des violences sexuelles. 35 % d'elles n'ont engagé aucune procédure judiciaire (Mission interministérielle pour la protection des femmes contre les violences et la lutte contre la traite des êtres humains, 2024). Le manque d'études directes sur les profils des auteurs de violences sexuelles conjugales limite la compréhension et la prévention de ce phénomène.

Objectifs de l'étude

L'objectif principal de cette étude est de combler une lacune importante dans la littérature sur les violences sexuelles au sein des relations intimes en offrant une description détaillée des profils psychosociaux de ces auteurs. Contrairement à la majorité des recherches antérieures ayant utilisé des échantillons de victimes (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Russell, 1990), cette étude se concentre sur les auteurs eux-mêmes. Cette approche permet de mieux cerner les facteurs développementaux, les traits de la personnalité, les

comportements et le style de vie, ainsi que les caractéristiques de leur parcours criminel. De plus, cette étude vise à comparer les résultats à une typologie existante élaborée par Proulx et Beauregard (2014), qui distingue plusieurs profils d'auteurs de VSPI selon leur cheminement vers l'acte délictuel. Ainsi, ce travail ambitionne non seulement à élaborer un premier profil psychosocial des auteurs de VSPI en France, mais aussi d'enrichir la compréhension globale des mécanismes sous-jacents à ce type de violence sexuelle.

Méthodologie

Cette étude repose sur l'analyse approfondie des dossiers judiciaires de 16 hommes français auteurs de VSPI. La violence sexuelle dans ce contexte réfère au viol conjugal, défini par le Federal Bureau of Investigation (2013, en ligne) comme la pénétration vaginale ou anale, avec toute partie du corps ou avec un objet, ou la pénétration orale par un organe sexuel d'une autre personne, sans le consentement de la victime [traduction libre]. La collecte s'est appuyée sur des rapports d'expertise médico-légale, des évaluations psychologiques, des évaluations psychométriques, et des témoignages directs des auteurs et de l'entourage. L'outil principal utilisé pour la récolte des données était le *Sexual Offender Multidimensional Inventory* (SOMI; Hayek et al., 2021), un instrument multidimensionnel permettant de collecter et d'analyser des données sur plusieurs domaines : l'histoire développementale, les caractéristiques psychologiques, le mode de vie général et sexuel, le parcours criminel et le modus operandi. Dans le cadre du SOMI, plusieurs questionnaires validés ont été employés pour évaluer la psychopathologie des auteurs, tels que le *Psychopathy Checklist: Screening Version* (PCL:SV; Hart et al., 1995),

le *General Anxiety Disorder 7-item* (GAD-7; Spitzer et al., 2006), le *Patient Health Questionnaire* (PHQ-9; Kroenke et al., 2001), la *Standardised Assessment of Personality – Abbreviated Scale* (SAPAS; Moran et al., 2003), l'*Iowa Personality Disorder Screen* (IPDS; Langbehn et al., 1999), le *Dark Triad Dirty Dozen* (DTDD; Jonason & Webster, 2010), ainsi que le *Brief Aggression Questionnaire* (BAQ; Webster et al., 2015). Par ailleurs, une grille d'évaluation générale des troubles de la personnalité et des troubles paraphiliques selon les critères du DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) a été utilisée. Puisque le SOMI a déjà été utilisé comme outil auprès d'autres populations d'agresseurs sexuels, nos résultats peuvent servir comme données comparatives dans de futures études. Cette étude descriptive analyse neuf catégories de variables liées aux auteurs de VSPI : l'environnement familial et les difficultés vécues durant l'enfance et l'adolescence, le mode de vie à l'âge adulte, les antécédents criminels officiels et non officiels, l'historique de violence envers les partenaires intimes, les caractéristiques précrime et postcrime, le modus operandi, et les caractéristiques psychopathologiques. Une analyse univariée descriptive a été réalisée à l'aide du logiciel IBM SPSS version 29.0.

Résultats

Les résultats de l'étude révèlent que les auteurs de VSPI dans notre échantillon présentent un profil psychosocial distinctif marqué par une dysrégulation émotionnelle, une impulsivité prononcée, ainsi que des comportements antisociaux. Contrairement à certaines recherches soulignant un lien fort entre la victimisation sexuelle durant l'enfance

et la récidive sexuelle, la majorité des individus ici n'ont pas rapporté de tels antécédents. En revanche, une exposition à un environnement familial inapproprié – caractérisé par la violence domestique, la consommation parentale d'alcool, et des conflits parentaux répétés – semble plus représentative, suggérant que ces facteurs environnementaux contribuent au développement d'un terrain psychologique vulnérable. Sur le plan comportemental, ces individus affichent souvent une histoire criminelle marquée par des délits non violents, un usage problématique de l'alcool et des difficultés d'intégration sociale, avec toutefois une réticence à s'engager dans des comportements déviants sexuels explicites. Cette tendance corrobore l'idée que la violence sexuelle dans ce contexte est principalement instrumentale, utilisée comme moyen de réaffirmer le contrôle et de gérer une détresse émotionnelle (spécifiquement, la colère), à des sentiments d'inadéquation ou de rejet, ou à des besoins relationnels non comblés. Le modus operandi des auteurs met en lumière un recours fréquent à la violence réactive, souvent sous l'influence de la colère et de l'excitation sexuelle, sans que le passage à l'acte soit prémédité. La présence de dysfonction sexuelle chez certains participants pourrait intensifier leur frustration et aggraver le recours à des comportements coercitifs. Après l'acte, un paysage émotionnel complexe apparaît, mêlant parfois satisfaction, tristesse ou colère, indiquant des conflits internes quant à la justification et à la reconnaissance de leur geste. Sur le plan psychopathologique, les résultats mettent en évidence une prédominance des traits liés aux troubles de la personnalité du cluster B, notamment le trouble de la personnalité antisociale. Des traits importants de personnalité limite et narcissique ont été relevés. Bien que cet échantillon n'atteint pas le seuil clinique sur l'échelle de psychopathie, plusieurs

traits tels que le manque d'empathie, l'impulsivité et l'irresponsabilité sont clairement présents. En revanche, les comportements sexuels déviants comme le sadisme ou les paraphilies ne sont pas prédominants, ce qui renforce l'hypothèse que la violence sexuelle est avant tout liée à des dynamiques de contrôle et de dysrégulation émotionnelle plutôt qu'à des motivations sexuelles. Enfin, les schémas cognitifs des participants révèlent des croyances traditionnelles et objectifiantes envers les femmes, justifiant souvent leur comportement coercitif et violent comme un droit ou une nécessité liée à leur position de dominance au sein de la relation intime. Ces résultats s'inscrivent en grande partie dans la typologie « *angry pathway* » proposée par Proulx et Beaugard (2014), où la violence sexuelle est déclenchée par des états émotionnels intenses, une impulsivité marquée et une volonté de rétablir le contrôle face à un sentiment d'échec personnel ou relationnel.

Conclusion

À partir de ces résultats, il est possible de brosser un premier portrait clinique des auteurs de VSPI, ouvrant ainsi la voie à l'élaboration de plans d'intervention mieux adaptés à cette population. La dysrégulation émotionnelle, l'impulsivité, les traits antisociaux et, surtout, les schémas cognitifs apparaissent comme des cibles d'intervention prioritaires. De futures recherches devraient s'appuyer sur des échantillons plus larges afin d'identifier, à l'aide d'analyses multivariées, différents profils d'auteurs de VSPI et les facteurs distinctifs propres à chacun. Une telle compréhension permettrait de mieux cibler les besoins criminogènes et d'adapter les stratégies d'intervention de manière plus nuancée et efficace.

L'article scientifique a été soumis dans le journal *Violence Against Women*.

Article scientifique

Intimate Partner Sexual Violence: A Descriptive Study of French Offenders

Intimate Partner Sexual Violence: A Descriptive Study of French Offenders

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study was to examine the psychosocial characteristics of French intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) offenders and to explore the applicability of an existing typology to this understudied offender group. Detailed data on developmental, personality, and lifestyle characteristics, as well as modus operandi, precrime and postcrime factors were drawn from forensic records ($n = 16$). The results highlight a distinctive psychosocial profile marked by emotional regulation, impulsivity, antisocial behaviors, and cognitive distortions about women. Most offenders had a history of intimate partner violence (IPV), and a notable proportion had previously perpetrated sexual violence against past intimate partners. They were primarily driven by a need to reassert control in response to internal feelings of rejection, jealousy, relational stress, or emotional upheaval, often catalyzed by alcohol use. Our findings align most closely with the *angry pathway* described by Proulx and Beauregard (2014), emphasizing reactive, emotionally charged offending rather than deviant fantasies or sexual desire alone. This study advances understanding of IPSV offending in a French sociocultural context and underscores the need for tailored prevention and intervention strategies.

Keywords: intrafamilial sexual offenders; intimate partner sexual violence; modus operandi; psychosocial profile.

Introduction

Social movements such as #MeToo and increased media coverage of sexual violence have been imperative to the rise of its awareness in the general population. Nonetheless, the societal belief that “real rapes” are perpetrated by violent strangers in dark alleyways remains widespread and has partially shaped the way researchers conceptualize and study sexual violence (Logan et al., 2015). Much of the existing literature on sexual assault perpetrators has focused on convicted stranger rapists or individuals who sexually abuse children (Greathouse et al., 2015). This focus, along with the misconception that sexual violence cannot occur within a relationship, has contributed to the relative neglect of the singularity of intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV), which is often subsumed under broader categories such as intimate partner violence (IPV) or sexual violence more generally (Jung et al., 2021). Moreover, while a limited number of studies have examined sexual offenders in the context of intimate relationships, most have relied on victim reports to assess perpetrator characteristics (Camilleri & Quinsey, 2009).

Nonetheless, it has been established that sexual violence in intimate relationships is a distinct (Basile & Hall, 2011), frequent, and alarming phenomenon. Data from the latest CDC’s National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (2016/2017) show that almost 1 in 5 American women (19.6%) have experienced some form of contact sexual violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime (Leemis et al., 2022). Specifically, 10.5% reported being raped, 13.7% experienced sexual coercion, and 8.0% reported unwanted sexual contact by a partner. In Quebec in 2022, 29.3% of sexual assault cases

reported to the authorities involved a current or former intimate partner (Conseil du statut de la femme, 2025). In France, of the 321,000 adult women who reported intimate partner violence in 2021, 37% disclosed sexual violence, and 35% did not take any legal action (Mission interministérielle pour la protection des femmes contre les violences et la lutte contre la traite des être humains, 2024). Moreover, research suggests that the mental health consequences of IPSV can be more severe than those of other types of sexual violence, including higher risks for post-traumatic stress and depressive states (Tarzia et al., 2018).

Yet, due to limited literature on IPSV, the unique issues victims face remain insufficiently explored, reinforcing public misconceptions about what constitutes a “real” sexual assault. Despite its high estimated prevalence and serious impact on victims’ psychosocial and physical health (Temple et al., 2007), sexual violence in intimate relationships is less likely to be reported. Victims often believe no action will be taken or that their accounts will not be taken seriously (Felson & Pare, 2005). Spohn and Tellis (2012) confirm these perceptions, finding that investigations were more likely if suspects were strangers rather than acquaintances or intimate partners. This disparity partly reflects the longstanding stigma surrounding domestic violence, historically regarded as a “private matter” (Spohn & Tellis, 2012), and to legal traditions – such as English common law – that framed sex within a marriage as a wife’s conjugal duty. Until 1983 in Canada, and 1993 in the US, marital rape was not recognized as a crime (Seyller et al., 2016; Tang, 1998). These cultural, legal, and institutional blind spots underscore the urgent need for more rigorous research on sexual coercion within intimate relationships.

Theories and Predictors of Extrafamilial Sexual Violence Against Women

Several theoretical models have been developed to explain sexual violence perpetrated outside of intimate contexts. The following subsections briefly review those most relevant to the present study.

Hanson and Morton-Bourgon's (2005) Predictors for Sexual Recidivism

In their meta-analysis involving 82 recidivism studies, Hanson and Morton-Bourgon (2005) targeted important variables that may be involved in sexual recidivism. The two strongest predictors were found to be *sexual deviancy*, as defined by any deviant sexual preoccupations and preferences, and *antisocial orientation*, such as antisocial personality disorder, psychopathy, or general antisocial personality traits. Other predictors included *inadequate sexual attitudes* (i.e., tolerance of sexual crime, low sex knowledge) and *intimacy deficits* (i.e., poor social skills, conflicts in intimate relationships, loneliness), however with significant variability within the domains. For instance, while the variable *conflicts in intimate relationships* was found to be related to sexual recidivism, *loneliness* was not.

Caution is warranted when interpreting these results. While these variables may predict sexual recidivism, they do not necessarily predict initial acts of sexual aggression. Nonetheless, they remain important to consider and may help explain sexual aggression against women. For example, deviant sexual attitudes, or cognitive distortions, have been the focus of multiple studies on sexual offenders and are key targets for sexual offender

intervention programs (Ward et al., 2006). Research has examined specific beliefs that justify rape – such as the idea that “women who dress sexily want sexual relations” – as well as the deeper schemas, or implicit theories, that give rise to such beliefs. Polaschek and Ward (2002) identified five such implicit theories among sexual offenders: (1) women as sex objects, (2) women are unknowable (i.e., perceived as abusive and manipulative), (3) the uncontrollable male sex drive (i.e., men commit rape because they are sexually deprived), (4) entitlement (i.e., men’s sexual needs must be fulfilled due to perceived superiority), and (5) dangerous world (i.e., individuals are justified in punishing those who treat them unjustly).

Regarding deviant sexual preferences, research findings are mixed. Some studies provide partial support for their role in rape (Lalumière & Quinsey, 1994). However, estimates of rapists who prefer nonconsensual and/or coercive sex vary widely, ranging from 25% (Beauregard et al., 2005) to nearly 61% (Michaud & Proulx, 2009). This suggests that although deviant preferences may contribute to sexual offending in some cases, they are not relevant for the majority of perpetrators (Barbaree & Marshall, 1991).

Ward and Beech’s (2016) Integrated Theory of Sexual Offending

Ward and Beech’s Integrated Theory of Sexual Offending (ITSO) is a theoretical framework that attempts to integrate every aspect of sexual aggression and explain the onset, development, and maintenance of sexual aggression. In their revised version, the authors suggest that sexual assault occurs as a result of a continuous flow of interactions

between four distal and proximal causal factors: (1) biological factors (influenced by genetic inheritance and brain development), (2) ecological niche factors (i.e., acquired social, cultural, and personal factors), (3) personal agency (i.e., intentional mental states), and (4) neuropsychological factors (Ward & Beech, 2016). ITSO provides a coherent framework for understanding the diversity of pathways leading to sexual aggression by integrating several empirically validated theories. Although ITSO as a standalone framework is not currently empirically validated, it is an interesting model as it considers how factors at different levels of functioning interact, allowing for the identification of multiple pathways to sexual aggression.

Feminist Theory of Intimate Partner Sexual Violence

Based on the assumption that intimate partner violence stems from patriarchal social structures, feminist theory views sexual violence as a means for men to exert control over women (Bograd, 1988; Hanmer & Maynard, 1987; Yllo, 1993). From this perspective, men may feel entitled to sexual access whenever they desire and therefore view coercion as justified if a partner resists or fails to fulfill her “wifely duty” (Monson et al., 2000; Simonson & Subich, 1999). Feminist theory emphasizes the deep-seated motivations for domination, power and control over women – elements that may help explain the origins of implicit theories and cognitive distortions. However, a central limitation is that if most men are socialized under similar patriarchal norms, this perspective cannot fully account for why only some sexually coerce their partners into sexual activity (Goetz et al., 2008).

Typologies of Intimate Partner Sexual Violence

Theoretical perspectives on the causes of sexual violence provide a useful foundation for understanding the phenomenon and guiding hypothesis generation. In recent decades, researchers have also begun to identify diverse IPSV offender profiles – an important step toward developing targeted prevention and intervention strategies. The following section outlines the most prominent typologies of sexual offenders in intimate relationships.

Finkelhor and Yllo's (1985) Typology

Using a sample of 50 victims, Finkelhor and Yllo (1985) aimed to create a typology of IPSV offenders by examining both the nature of the violence and the motivation of the perpetrator. The first type (1), battering rape, involves an offender driven by a desire to punish. Sexual coercion is one aspect of broader, generalized violence, often expressed through hitting, humiliating, and sexually assaulting his partner. In the second type (2), force-only rape, the offender typically uses minimal force to obtain compliance. Motivated by a need for power and control, this offender demonstrates a strong sense of sexual entitlement. The third type (3), obsessive rape, involves sadistically sexually motivated offenders. Their violence is often ritualistic, and they may derive pleasure from tying up, mutilating, or humiliating their non-consenting partner.

Russell's (1990) Typology

Based on offender behavior and attitudes during the assault, Russell (1990) developed a typology of IPSV offenders using interviews with a sample of 87 victims. The first type

(1) consists of men who prefer nonconsensual sex over consensual sex with their female partner. Considered sexual sadists, these men derive pleasure from inflicting physical and psychological pain on their sexual partner. The second type (2) consists of men who enjoy both nonconsensual and consensual sex with their partner. These perpetrators are characterized by a strong sense of sexual entitlement – believing that a wife must satisfy her husband’s sexual needs and that he is justified in using coercion to do so. The third type (3) includes men who generally prefer consensual sex but are willing to resort to coercion when their advances are rejected. For this group, the primary motivation is sexual dissatisfaction.

Monson and Langhinrichsen-Rohling’s (1998) Integrated Typology

Encompassing multiple forms of intimate partner violence (sexual, physical, and psychological), Monson and Langhinrichsen-Rohling (1998) developed their typology based on Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart’s (1994) classification of male batterer. The original typology outlines three major subtypes of batterers. Family-only offenders (1) are the least violent; they rarely engage in sexual and psychological abuse and generally use instrumental physical coercion. These men often struggle with assertiveness in their relationships, show no marked psychopathology, and generally hold negative attitudes towards violence. They may also express and feel genuine empathy for their victims. Dysphoric/borderline offenders (2) exhibit the highest levels of psychopathology, including significant borderline and schizoid traits. They perpetrate both sexual and nonsexual violence, struggle with substance abuse, associate with deviant peers, endorse

pro-violence behaviors, and show little empathy. Finally, generally violent/antisocial offenders (3) closely resemble Robert D. Hare's (1996) conceptualization of the psychopath. They are highly violent both within and outside the family, typically have extensive criminal histories, and demonstrate impulsivity, hostility toward women, and negative worldview. In line with psychopathic tendencies, they often exhibit narcissistic traits and view violence as an appropriate response to anger.

Building on this three-part typology, Monson and Langhinrichsen-Rohling (1998) introduced a fourth category: sexually sadistic offenders (4). These men engage in sexual violence exclusively, whether within or outside intimate relationships

Proulx and Beaugard's (2014) Typology of the Offending Process

Using a sample of 43 convicted sexual offenders against a current or former intimate partner, Proulx and Beaugard (2014) developed a typology based on perpetrators' pathways to sexual offending. The variables used to define different clusters included modus operandi profiles (crime scripts), precrime factor profiles (life context), sexual lifestyle profiles, general lifestyle profiles, and personality disorder profiles. Their findings suggest that intrafamilial sexual aggression against women is shaped by both internal constraints (e.g., personality traits) and external constraints (e.g., partner attitudes and behaviors), and that the interaction between these factors determines the pathway to offending.

The angry pathway (1) includes offenders who may present dependent, avoidant, schizoid, paranoid, or psychopathic traits. These men often hold negative views of themselves, are suspicious of their partners, and respond with anger when their emotional or sexual needs go unmet. They exhibit both internalized (e.g., low self-esteem, phobias) and externalized problems (e.g., alcohol abuse), and tend to use more force than necessary (i.e., expressive violence) during revenge-motivated sexual violence. The hypersexual pathway (2) describes offenders with dependent, paranoid, or psychopathic traits, often accompanied by narcissistic features. They expect their partners to admire and fulfill all their needs. When dissatisfied, they adopt a victim stance and feel entitled to retaliate. Marked by externalized problems, they are sensation-seekers who pursue continuous gratification, particularly through an intense sexual lifestyle. Finally, the lonely pathway (3) characterizes offenders who present dependent, paranoid, or obsessive-compulsive traits. Due to elevated levels of internalized problems (e.g., anxiety, depression, low self-esteem) and self-isolation, they tend to adopt conciliatory attitudes in an effort to please their partner. In return, they expect care and emotional support. These offenders typically follow non-coercive crime scripts, refrain from expressive violence, and lack deviant sexual fantasies.

Summary

Taken together, the theoretical frameworks and typologies reviewed offer complementary yet distinct perspectives on intimate partner sexual violence. Theories such as the feminist framework and ITSO provide broad conceptual foundations to better

understand IPSV, emphasizing sociocultural and psychological mechanisms. In contrast, typologies aim to categorize offenders based on patterns of behavior, psychological traits, or offence pathways. Despite these differences, they converge on themes like control, entitlement, and emotional dysregulation. However, the diverse approaches and the lack of a unified model make it difficult to draw a cohesive picture of IPSV offenders. Moreover, most existing models draw on North American samples, limiting their generalizability across cultural contexts.

Aim of Study

Although IPSV has garnered increasing attention from researchers in recent decades, important gaps remain. Theoretical models of IPSV often draw on studies of extrafamilial or child sexual offenders and must be applied with caution. Moreover, existing typologies of IPSV offenders rely mostly on victim reports rather than offender data (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Monson & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1998; Russell, 1990), and they emphasize offending pathways (Proulx & Beauregard, 2014) rather than psychological or developmental profiles. These limitations restrict the generalizability of findings and their utility for prevention and intervention.

Given the scarcity of research directly examining IPSV offender characteristics, this study explores their psychological, developmental, and behavioral profiles to produce a more integrated offender profile. To our knowledge, it is the first study to offer such a detailed examination of sexually violent partners in a French sample.

Method

Participants

While IPSV encompasses a wide range of sexually violent behaviors, this study specifically looked at a sample of 16 adult men who raped their female intimate partner in France between 1983 and 2013. While an intimate partner is defined as a person with whom the perpetrator has had at least one prior casual or romantic consensual sexual encounter, rape is defined as “penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013, online). The mean age of participants at the time of the offence is 36.0 years ($SD = 10.68$; range = 20-59). Most participants are Caucasian (81.3%), are fathers (75.0%), and were unemployed (75.0%) at the time of the offence. Additionally, 50.0% of participants were in an ongoing romantic relationship with the victim, and 62.5% had perpetrated some type of domestic violence on their intimate partner before their crime. Among the sample, 4 had committed sexual homicide. As for victims, most are Caucasian (87.5%), were unemployed (62.5%), and 37.5% of them shared housing with the perpetrator.

Instruments

The *Sexual Offender Multidimensional Inventory* (SOMI; Hayek et al., 2021) was used to collect and analyze data from 16 sexual offenders' files. The SOMI is an instrument designed to collect information on several domains: developmental, psychological, general and sexual lifestyle, criminal career, and modus operandi. Within

the SOMI, questionnaires were used to assess offenders' psychopathology based on the information gathered in each file: the *Psychopathy Checklist: Screening version* (PCL:SV; Hart et al., 1995), the *General Anxiety Disorder 7-item* (GAD-7; Spitzer et al., 2006), the *Patient Health Questionnaire* (PHQ-9; Kroenke et al., 2001), the *Standardised Assessment of Personality – Abbreviated Scale* (SAPAS; Moran et al., 2003), the *Iowa Personality Disorder Screen* (IPDS; Langbehn et al., 1999), the *Dark Triad Dirty Dozen* (DTDD; Jonason & Webster, 2010), the *Brief Aggression Questionnaire* (BAQ; Webster et al., 2015), as well as a general checklist for DSM-5 personality and paraphilic disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Within the scope of the study, questionnaires were used as a proxy for measuring offenders' psychopathology, rather than for detecting clinical disorders. Files were analyzed by a doctoral candidate in Psychology, supervised by a clinical psychologist specialized in the analysis of violent behavior.

Procedure

Confidential access to participant records was authorized by the French Ministries of the Interior and Justice (*Ministères de l'Intérieur et de la Justice de France*). Data was collected and analyzed between 2020 and 2023. These records consisted of indictment orders; participant interrogations; psychiatric, psychological, and medical assessments; personality inquiries (i.e., an in-depth investigation ordered by the examining magistrate aiming to trace the individual's life trajectory, establish their personality, as well as their familial, professional, and social situation by gathering testimonies from persons ranging from acquaintances to close relatives); educational, professional, military, criminal, and

carceral records; judicial findings relating to the sexual assault (photographs of crime scenes, forensic and criminalistic reports); the participant's criminal history, as well as witness and victim statements. Data regarding participants' criminal histories were obtained through the Central Criminal Intelligence Service (*Service central de renseignement criminel*). In cases where the truth of information differed between the two sources (e.g., participant statements and judicial findings), information from the official source was considered more reliable and was retained.

Data was gathered from different sources of the offenders' files: (1) criminal and judicial investigations, (2) statements made by the SO, and (3) statements made by the SO's entourage (e.g., victim, ex-intimate partners and spouses, immediate and extended family, children, neighbors, friends, coworkers, and employers). As the original information was collected from multiple sources on multiple occasions, the validity of the information was enhanced. Finally, a variety of professionals (e.g., police officers, judges, social investigators, psychologists and psychiatrists) participated in gathering the statements by the sexual offender and his entourage, which limited the risk of bias specific to the context of the interviews and the personal characteristics of the professionals.

Variables and Analytical Strategy

This descriptive study includes 9 categories of variables: (1) adversities during offender childhood and adolescence (victimization, exposure to an inappropriate family environment, and parental disciplinary styles), (2) difficulties during offender childhood

and adolescence (internalizing problems and school environment), (3) lifestyle during adulthood (general and sexual lifestyle), (4) official and unofficial history of criminal behaviors prior to sexual assault (prior conviction and incarceration, and prior criminal offences such as nonsexual violence and drug use), (5) official and unofficial history of intimate partner violence prior to sexual assault (intimate partner violence in past relationship and history of intimate partner violence on current victim), (6) precrime characteristics (offender emotional state, alcohol consumption, feelings of humiliation, and triggering events a year and 48 hours prior to the crime), (7) modus operandi (offender emotional state, offender conversation and behaviors, reaction to victim resistance and offender sexual dysfunction), (8) postcrime characteristics (offender emotional state, offender conversation, sexual assault denial and justifications), and (9) psychopathological characteristics (anxiety, depression, aggression, personality disorders, psychopathy, sexual sadism, paraphilic disorders, and cognitive distortions about women). A descriptive univariate analysis was chosen for this study, and IBM SPSS Software version 29.0 was used to carry out analyses.

Results

Adversities During Offender Childhood and Adolescence

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of adversities during IPSV offenders' childhood and adolescence and is divided into four sections: parental neglect, exposure to an inappropriate family environment, victimization, and parental disciplinary style. With regard to exposure, two thirds of offenders have had at least one exposure of inappropriate

family environment (66.6%). Just over half had witnessed alcohol abuse (53.3%) and a third had been exposed to physical and/or psychological domestic violence (33.3%).

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics. Adversities During Offender Childhood and Adolescence*

	Percentage	Frequency
Parental neglect or deprivation	6.7	1/15
Exposure to an inappropriate family environment		
Recurrent parental conflict	26.7	4/15
Domestic violence (physical and/or psychological)	33.3	5/15
Abuse of siblings	13.3	2/15
Alcohol abuse	53.3	8/15
Mental health disorders	20.0	3/15
Economic difficulties	13.3	2/15
Criminality	13.3	2/15
At least one exposure	66.6	10/15
Total exposure ^a	1.7 (0-7)	
Victimization		
Physical abuse	26.7	4/15
Psychological abuse	20.0	3/15
Sexual abuse	6.7	1/15
At least one victimization	40.0	6/15
Total victimization ^a	0.7 (0-3)	
Parental disciplinary style		
At least one parent is violent, absent or authoritarian	60.0	9/15
Mother		
Positive, attentive	80.0	12/15
Violent	6.7	1/15
Authoritarian, severe	6.7	1/15
Absent	6.7	1/15
Father		
Positive, attentive	40.0	6/15
Violent	20.0	3/15
Authoritarian, severe	33.3	5/15
Absent	26.7	4/15

Note. ^a Mean (range).

Furthermore, 40.0% of the sample have had at least one victimization and when compared to exposure, offenders were less likely to be victimized during childhood and adolescence ($M = 1.7$ vs $M = 0.7$). Surprisingly, only one had been sexually abused (6.7%). Regarding parental disciplinary style during offenders' upbringing, 60.0% had at least one parent that was severe, violent, or absent. Generally, parental disciplinary style consisted of a positive and attentive maternal figure (80.0%), and of a negative father figure as they were generally either absent (26.7%), authoritarian (33.3%), or violent (20.0%).

Difficulties During Offender Childhood and Adolescence

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of difficulties encountered during offenders' childhood and adolescence and is divided into three sections: internalizing problems, externalizing problems, and school environment. Notable internalizing problems included social isolation (46.2%), low self-esteem (38.5%), and feelings of rejection (38.5%). The vast majority of offenders had at least one internalizing problem (61.2%, $M = 2.0$). In regard to school environment, an important proportion of offenders engaged in physical altercations during their time at school (38.5%). Furthermore, over half of them had learning difficulties (62.5%), repeated a grade (56.3%) after failing, and 37.5% of offenders reported a high rate of school absenteeism.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics. Difficulties During Offender Childhood and Adolescence*

	Percentage	Frequency
Internalizing problems		
Low self-esteem	38.5	5/13
Feeling of loneliness	30.8	4/13
Feeling of rejection	38.5	5/13
Perception of being a victim	30.8	4/13
Social isolation	46.2	6/13
Suicidal thoughts	15.4	2/13
At least one internalizing problem	61.2	8/13
Total internalizing problems ^a	2.0 (0-6)	
Externalizing problems		
Anger outbursts	30.8	4/13
Brawler	38.5	5/13
At least one externalizing problem	53.8	7/13
Total externalizing problems ^a	0.7 (0-2)	
School environment		
Learning difficulties, low performance	62.5	10/16
Grade repetition	56.3	9/16
Absenteeism	37.5	6/16
Suspension, expulsion	6.3	1/16
Behavioral problems in class	12.5	2/16
Victimization (verbally bullied)	12.5	2/16
Victimization (physically bullied)	18.8	3/16
Physical violence toward other children	18.8	3/16
Verbal violence toward other children	6.3	1/16

Note. ^a Mean (range).

Lifestyle During Adulthood

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the general and sexual lifestyle of offenders during their adulthood. Most of them were described as impulsive (75.0%), alcoholics (68.8%), having a low tolerance to frustration (68.8%), and violent or aggressive (68.8%). More than half were described as jealous (62.5%) and experienced job instability (62.5%) during their adult life. Moreover, half of participants tended to blame others or society to justify their personal difficulties (50.0%). Over a third of them were considered socially isolated and reserved (43.8%), experienced financial difficulties (43.8%), and had a history of unstable romantic relationships (37.5%). A quarter of the sample have reported having experienced suicidal thoughts or have threatened suicide at least once (25.0%). With regards to sexual lifestyle, a vast majority of them have reported that sexuality occupied an important part of their life (81.3%), and only two have experienced deviant sexual fantasies during their adulthood (12.5%).

Table 3*Descriptive Statistics. Lifestyle During Offender Adulthood*

	Percentage	Frequency
General lifestyle		
Solitary, socially isolated, reserved	43.8	7/16
Financial problems	43.8	7/16
Job instability	62.5	10/16
Lives off others' economic resources	25.0	4/16
Lives off money from criminal activity	6.3	1/16
Has experienced homelessness	6.3	1/16
Health problems	31.3	5/16
Suicidal ideation or threats	25.0	4/16
Feelings of loneliness	6.3	1/16
Considers himself inferior, weak	12.5	2/16
Unstable romantic relationships	37.5	6/16
Described as immature	25.0	4/16
Described as seductive	25.0	4/16
Described as jealous	62.5	10/16
Described as manipulative	12.5	2/16
Described as an alcoholic	68.8	11/16
Described as a drug user	31.3	5/16
Described as intolerant to frustration	68.8	11/16
Described as violent, aggressive	68.8	11/16
Blames others/society to justify his difficulties	50.0	8/16
Described as irresponsible	25.0	4/16
Described as impulsive	75.0	12/16
Thinks the world is dangerous	31.3	5/16
Sexual lifestyle		
Has deviant sexual fantasies	12.5	2/16
Described as having unusual sexual practices	12.5	2/16
Sexuality occupies an important place in his life	81.3	13/16
Views violent sexual content	6.3	1/16
Has multiple sexual partners over the same period	6.3	1/16

Table 3*Descriptive Statistics. Lifestyle During Offender Adulthood (continued)*

	Percentage	Frequency
Has exhibited paraphilic behaviors at least once		
Sadism	12.5	2/16
Fetishism	6.3	1/16
Transvestism	6.3	1/16
Pedophilia (girl)	12.5	2/16

Psychopathological Characteristics and Cognitions

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of IPSV offenders' psychopathological characteristics. Depression ($M = 1.25$) and anxiety ($M = 1.88$) levels were low within the sample. Results on the *Brief Aggression Questionnaire* suggest that IPSV offenders were generally aggressive ($M = 7.06$), with especially high physical ($M = 2.19$) and verbal ($M = 1.88$) aggression levels. With regards to personality disorders, 75.0% of offenders met threshold on SAPAS, indicating that a significant proportion exhibit traits of personality disorders. When observing symptoms based on DSM-5 criteria, offenders harbored high levels of cluster B (antisocial, borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic) personality traits. Specifically, significant antisocial ($M = 5.44$), borderline ($M = 3.69$) and narcissistic ($M = 2.56$) traits were present within the sample. It is also interesting to note a small but non-negligible number of paranoid traits ($M = 1.69$) within the sample.

Table 4*Descriptive Statistics. Offender Psychopathological Characteristics*

	Mean	Frequency
Anxiety (GAD-7)		
Total score	1.88	
Depression (PHQ-9)		
Total score	1.25	
Aggression (BAQ)		
Physical aggression	2.19	
Anger	1.81	
Verbal aggression	1.88	
Hostility	.63	
Total score	7.06	
Personality disorder (SAPAS)		
Total score	4.00	
Total score ≥ 3 (%)	75.00*	
Personality disorder (DSM-5)		
Paranoid (0-7)	1.69	
Schizoid (0-7)	.50	
Schizotypal (0-9)	.75	
Antisocial (0-7)	5.44	
Borderline (0-9)	3.69	
Histrionic (0-8)	.75	
Narcissistic (0-9)	2.56	
Avoidant (0-7)	.13	
Dependent (0-8)	.50	
Obsessive-compulsive (0-8)	.13	
Psychopathy (PCL:SV)		
Facets		
Interpersonal	2.63	
Affective	4.63	
Lifestyle	3.25	
Antisocial	2.10	

Table 4*Descriptive Statistics. Offender Psychopathological Characteristics (continued)*

	Mean	Frequency
Factor 1	7.25	
Factor 2	6.06	
Total score	13.31	
Total score ≥ 16 (%)	37.50*	
Sexual sadism (SeSaS)		
Total score	2.25	
Score ≥ 4	12.50*	
Score ≥ 7 (%)	6.25*	
Paraphilic disorders (DSM-5)		
Pedophilic disorder (%)	6.25*	
Sexual sadism disorder (%)	.06*	
Cognitive distortions about women		
Women are sexual objects	31.30*	5/16
Women are liars	31.30*	5/16
Women should stay at home, should not work	18.80*	3/16
Women should fulfill sexual duties to their spouse	18.80*	3/16
Women provoke sex with men	31.30*	5/16
Women are the possession of their spouse	43.80*	7/16
At least one cognitive distortion about women	62.50*	10/16
Total cognitive distortions about women ^a	1.40 (0-6)	

Note. * Percentage. ^a Mean (range).

Furthermore, using the PCL:SV, psychopathy was assessed. While the mean total score for the sample is under the significance threshold ($M = 13.31$), it is interesting to note that the affective facet of psychopathy (e.g., shallow affect, callousness, lack of empathy, guilt or remorse) was especially high ($M = 4.63$). With regards to IPSV

offenders' sexuality, none met criteria for a DSM-5 paraphilic disorder. In addition to personality traits, offenders' cognitions about women reveal significant endorsement of objectifying beliefs. Specifically, 43.8% viewed women as the possession of their spouse, while 31.3% believed women are sexual objects, liars, and that they provoke sex with men.

Official and Unofficial History of Criminal Behaviors Prior to Sexual Assault

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics of official and unofficial criminal behaviors exhibited by offenders prior to their crime. Notably, 15 out of 16 them had exhibited at least one official or unofficial criminal behavior prior to their offence (93.8%). Most offences were nonviolent misdemeanors. Half of them had driven under the influence of alcohol (50.0%) and a quarter have committed robbery (25.0%). While the majority of the sample (75.0%) had been convicted at least once prior to the sexual assault, less than half had previously been incarcerated (43.8%).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics. Official and Unofficial Criminal Behaviors of Offender Prior to Sexual Assault

	Percentage	Frequency
Had exhibited a prior official or unofficial criminal behavior	93.8	15/16
Nonsexual violence with weapon	12.5	2/16
Nonsexual violence without weapon	12.5	2/16
Driving under the influence	50.0	8/16
Drug use or possession	25.0	4/16
Drug trafficking	12.5	2/16
Fraud, handling stolen goods	6.3	1/16
Vandalism	12.5	2/16
Robbery	25.0	4/16
Burglary	12.5	2/16
Arson	6.3	1/16
Other (hit and run, child abduction, animal cruelty)	25.0	4/16
Prior conviction	75.0	12/16
Prior incarceration	43.8	7/16

Official and Unofficial History of Intimate Partner Violence Prior to Sexual Assault

Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics of official and unofficial history of intimate partner violence prior to offenders' crime and is divided into two sections: prior IPV on a past partner, and prior IPV on the sexual assault victim. It is important to note that the majority of offenders (87.5%) had committed acts of IPV on a past partner. Offenders had engaged in nonsexual violence such as hitting (68.8%), insulting (62.5%), pushing (31.3%), using weapons or objects (31.3%), sequestering (18.8%), strangulation (18.8%), hair pulling (18.8%) and threatening to kill their intimate partner (12.5%).

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics. Official and Unofficial History of Offender Intimate Partner Violence Prior to Sexual Assault

	Percentage	Frequency
Intimate partner violence on a past partner	87.5	14/16
Strangulation	18.8	3/16
Blows, slaps	68.8	11/16
Hair pulling	18.8	3/16
Insults	62.5	10/16
Death threats	12.5	2/16
Bullying, pushing	31.3	5/16
Violence with weapon or object	31.3	5/16
Sequestration	18.8	3/16
Harassment (prowl)	12.5	2/16
Harassment (telephone)	6.3	1/16
Sexual assault, rape	31.3	5/16
Other	25.0	4/16
Intimate partner violence on victim	50.0	8/16
Physical violence	43.8	7/16
Psychological violence	6.3	1/16
Economic violence	50.0	8/16

In regard to intimate partner sexual violence, 5 out of 16 had sexually assaulted a previous partner (31.3%). As for prior domestic violence on the victim, 50.0% of offenders had committed some form of IPV on their partner prior to the sexual assault. Half of them had engaged in physical violence (43.8%) against their partner.

Precrime Characteristics

Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics of IPSV offenders' precrime characteristics. A little over half of offenders (62.5%) had significantly consumed alcohol and reported feeling angry (66.7%) before committing sexual assault, and 40.0% felt sexually aroused. In regards stressful life events that were possibly triggering for the offenders, half of them had reported significant marital problems (50.0%), felt unsatisfied with their sex life (31.3%), had economic or job-related problems (25.0%), and had legal problems (25.0%) the year before committing their crime. Notably, low self-esteem was reported by 1 offender out of 16 (6.3%). As regards to stressful life events 48 hours before sexually assaulting their partner, these included marital problems (37.5%), feeling lonely or rejected (31.3%) as well as a dissatisfaction with their sex life (25.0%).

Modus Operandi

Table 8 presents the descriptive statistics of IPSV offenders' modus operandi. Taken as a whole, offenders were mostly sexually aroused (68.8%) and/or angry (43.8%), made verbally aggressive remarks (53.3%) or sexual demands (33.3%), and either maintained the same levels of coercive behaviors (37.5%) or increased them (25.0%) in the face of victim resistance. Additionally, 40% of IPSV offenders experienced some form of sexual dysfunction (e.g., erectile, ejaculatory).

Table 7*Descriptive Statistics. Precrime Characteristics*

	Percentage	Frequency
Alcohol consumption	62.5	10/16
Felt offended by the victim	37.5	6/16
Emotional state		
Anger	66.7	10/15
Sexually aroused	40.0	6/15
Well-being	6.7	1/15
Possibly triggering stressful life event, one year before crime		
Marital problems	50.0	8/16
Professional, economic problems	25.0	4/16
Legal problems	25.0	4/16
Unsatisfied with sex life	31.3	5/16
Feeling lonely, rejected	12.5	2/16
Low self-esteem	6.3	1/16
Death of a loved one	18.3	3/16
Alcohol relapse	6.3	1/16
Birth of child	12.5	2/16
Possibly triggering stressful life event, 48 hours before crime		
Marital problems	37.5	6/16
Unsatisfied with sex life	25.0	4/16
Feeling lonely, rejected	31.3	5/16
Low self-esteem	6.3	1/16

Table 8*Descriptive Statistics. Modus Operandi*

	Percentage	Frequency
Emotional state		
Anger	43.8	7/16
Frustration	18.8	3/16
Humiliated	6.7	1/16
Well-being	18.8	3/16
Sexually aroused	68.8	11/16
Offender's conversation		
Silent	33.3	5/15
Aggressive, insulting or humiliating	53.3	8/15
Sexual demands	33.3	5/15
Behaviors		
Sequestration	12.5	2/16
Verbal humiliation	25.0	4/16
Physical humiliation	25.0	4/16
Ties victim	12.5	2/16
Film recording/picture taking	12.5	2/16
Reaction to victim resistance		
Increased coercive behaviors	25.0	4/16
Maintains same coercive behavior levels	37.5	6/16
Threatens victim	6.3	1/16
Stops attack	6.3	1/16
Sexual dysfunction	40.0	6/16

Postcrime Characteristics

Table 9 presents the descriptive statistics of postcrime characteristics. While 40.0% of IPSV offenders felt satisfied after their crime, negative affects such as sadness, (26.7%), frustration (26.7%), and anger (20.0%) were also dominant in the sample.

Table 9*Descriptive Statistics. Postcrime Characteristics*

	Percentage	Frequency
Emotional state		
Anger	20.0	3/15
Frustration	26.7	4/15
Sadness	26.7	4/15
Satisfaction	40.0	6/15
Offender's conversation		
Silent	60.0	9/15
Aggressive, insulting or humiliating	20.0	3/15
Blames victim for being sexually bad	6.7	1/15
Threatening	20.0	3/15
Justifies his actions	6.7	1/15
Denies sexual assault to authorities	75.0	12/16
Justification used for sexual assault to authorities		
Alcohol	18.8	3/16
Emotional state	12.5	2/16
Other	12.5	2/16
Does not justify	68.8	11/16

As a result, a little over half of offenders (60.0%) did not speak to the victim after sexually assaulting them. In addition, three quarters of them have denied the sexual assault to the authorities (75.0%), and 68.8% do not justify their crime.

Discussion

General Profile of Intimate Partner Sexual Violence Offenders

Academia has only recently begun to investigate IPSV offenders (Proulx & Beauregard, 2014). Earlier research relied primarily on victim samples (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Russell, 1990) rather than on offender characteristics. While these studies provide an important starting point, examining offenders themselves is more likely to yield findings that can inform prevention and intervention. The present study addresses this gap by drawing directly from offender interviews and official forensic and psychiatric reports to construct a general profile of IPSV offenders. In this section, we summarize our main findings and compare our sample to Proulx and Beauregard's (2014) typology of intrafamilial sexual offenders.

Childhood and Adolescence

Offenders in this study had relatively uneventful childhoods in terms of victimization. Fewer than half reported any victimization, and only one instance of sexual victimization was disclosed. This challenges the well-documented association between childhood sexual abuse and later sexual offending (Jespersen et al., 2009), which did not characterize our sample of IPSV offenders. Instead, most were exposed to inappropriate family environments – such as parental alcohol use, domestic violence and recurring parental conflict – rather than direct victimization. These experiences suggest a potential history of early trauma, though not to the extent observed in large samples of extrafamilial sexual offenders (Levenson & Socia, 2016). Notably, most offenders described positive and

attentive mothers during childhood, while fathers were often violent, absent, or authoritarian. The majority of offenders' difficulties appeared to stem from internal struggles, including social isolation, low self-esteem, and feelings of rejection. Proulx and colleagues (2007) identify these three factors as relatively common across various types of sexual offenders – including certain extrafamilial profiles, such as sexual sadists and non-sadists – suggesting that they may serve as transversal psychological markers of sexual offending. A tendency toward anger and physical altercations was also noted in about one-third of the sample; however, these behaviors were not observed at school. A possible explanation is that these externalizing behaviors were contextually triggered by the family environment and directed primarily toward parents or siblings (Marshall & Barbaree, 1990). Additionally, more than half of the sample experienced learning difficulties and/or poor academic performance, often resulting in repeating a school year. Contributing factors may include fatigue or mental overload stemming from an unstable home, inadequate parental support with schoolwork, or undiagnosed cognitive challenges.

Taken together, our findings suggest that men who sexually assault their intimate partners may not have experienced severe childhood adversities but rather grew up in dysfunctional family systems. These environments appear to have fostered emotional and behavioral vulnerabilities that may have contributed to an early propensity for aggression.

Adult Lifestyle

Our findings suggest that IPSV offenders' general behavior during adulthood is consistent with an antisocial lifestyle (i.e., intolerance to frustration, impulsivity, violence and aggressiveness, a tendency to blame others for their own difficulties), a pattern well-documented in the sexual offender literature and consistent with Hanson and Morton-Bourgon's (2005) key predictors of sexual recidivism. A notable proportion of the sample also showed a propensity for alcohol abuse, which may reflect early exposure to parental alcohol misuse or the influence of antisocial peer groups. Supporting the hypothesis of an antisocial lifestyle rather than a sexually deviant inclination, sexually deviant behaviors were significantly less prevalent in our sample compared to other types of sexual offenders, despite most offenders viewing sexuality as important in their lives – a characteristic also observed in sexual sadists and non-sadists (Knight & Prentky, 1990; Proulx et al., 2007). Moreover, most had regularly consumed non-violent pornography and did not report deviant sexual fantasies, suggesting a closer fit with the non-sadistic sexual offender profile described by Knight and Prentky (1990). This implies that their sexual coercion was less driven by sadistic or violent sexual fantasies and more by a need to assert control over their partner – often fueled by jealousy, possessiveness, and poor emotional regulation (i.e., intolerance to frustration, impulsivity, aggression). When unmet sexual needs created conflict or tension within the relationship, and in the absence of adequate coping and communication skills, violence may be perceived as a means to regain control or satisfy those unmet needs.

As such, our findings suggest that IPSV offenders are more likely to engage in violent and impulsive behaviors when they feel emotionally threatened or rejected, due to their heightened emotional reactivity and limited self-regulatory capacity.

Criminal Background

In line with our portrayal of IPSV offenders as generally leading antisocial lifestyles, all but one had prior criminal records, primarily for nonviolent misdemeanors such as driving under the influence, robbery, and drug-related offences. Interestingly, fewer than half had been incarcerated, suggesting these men kept a relatively low profile and generally flew under the authorities' radar, allowing them to maintain a functional public image and continue forming social and romantic relationships. While stable adult social bonds (e.g., a romantic relationship) typically reduce criminal behavior or encourage desistance (Sampson & Laub, 1990), romantic involvement in our sample did not correspond to decreased partner violence. In fact, most offenders had histories of physical and psychological violence in previous relationships, often used to maintain control over their partners (e.g., slapping, insulting). Moreover, most had already been physically and/or psychologically violent toward their current partner before committing sexual violence. Notably, one-third had previously sexually assaulted a partner, classifying them as IPSV recidivists (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). Furthermore, none had sexually offended outside an intimate relationship, underscoring the uniquely private context of their sexual violence. This raises questions about why their aggression and violent

tendencies target their intimate partner, and why sexual coercion appears confined to that specific relational context.

Overall, IPSV offenders in our sample tended to maintain a low criminal profile while progressively escalating violence within their intimate relationships – a pattern in which physical and psychological aggression often preceded sexual coercion.

Crime Characteristics

Precrime characteristics highlight how emotional and situational factors often precede sexual assault for IPSV offenders. Most were fueled by anger and alcohol consumption, suggesting that emotional dysregulation and lowered inhibitions may act as catalysts for violent behavior, echoing Proulx and Beauregard's (2014) description of the angry pathway, and Monson and Langhinrichsen-Rohling's (1998) characterization of the generally violent/antisocial offender. These elements may also shed light on why their violence is typically confined to the private sphere. Given that these offenders often maintain a low-profile antisocial lifestyle in public, their self-regulatory capacities may become depleted in more intimate or emotionally charged situations. In this sense, alcohol and emotional arousal may not only reduce inhibitions but also serve as internal mechanisms to justify or rationalize their actions. Stressful events in the lead-up to the offence – such as relationship difficulties, sexual dissatisfaction, or feelings of loneliness – may intensify a sense of powerlessness or lack of control, which they attempt to counteract through coercive behaviors. These precrime dynamics suggest that the offence

may be less about deviant sexual gratification and more about regaining a sense of agency or dominance in response to perceived personal failure.

The modus operandi (MO) of this sample reveals patterns reflecting strong emotional arousal and a need to reassert control (Monson & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1998; Proulx & Beauregard, 2014). Offences were most often committed in states of anger and/or sexual arousal, and many offenders displayed verbal aggression or made explicit sexual demands. Rather than de-escalating in response to victim resistance, several maintained or intensified coercive behavior, suggesting a dynamic driven more by dominance than sexual desire. The presence of sexual dysfunction in a notable proportion of the sample may have heightened their frustration, reinforcing aggression during the assault. Moreover, the use of coercion despite sexual dysfunction further supports the idea that sexual violence was instrumental, serving to assert dominance or retaliate against perceived rejection.

Finally, the postcrime phase reveals a complex emotional landscape in this sample of IPSV offenders. While some experienced feelings of satisfaction, many also reported negative emotions such as sadness, frustration, or anger. This emotional ambivalence may reflect an internal conflict, suggesting that the sexual violence did not consistently provide the relief or resolution they sought. Offenders also tended to avoid communication with their victims and deny responsibility to authorities, further indicating patterns of minimization and avoidance of the moral implications of their actions.

Together, our findings suggest that IPSV offenders usually commit their crimes when feeling angry and under the influence of alcohol, use force to control their partners during the assault, and feel mixed emotions afterwards.

Psychopathology

Offenders' psychopathology and personality traits were assessed retrospectively using various psychometric tools and questionnaires. The sample showed minimal anxiety and depressive symptoms, contrasting with high levels of behavioral aggression. They met mean criteria for DSM-5 antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) and displayed notably elevated scores on other Cluster B disorders, including borderline (BPD) and narcissistic (NPD) personality disorders. Borderline personality is marked by impulsivity in response to perceived or actual abandonment, while narcissistic personality features excessive need for admiration, grandiosity, and a lack of empathy. Non-negligible scores for paranoid personality disorder (PPD) also emerged. Given that these disorders reflect deeply ingrained interpersonal patterns – especially Cluster B traits characterized by emotional volatility and erratic behavior – they can profoundly impact relationships. ASPD, specifically, involves a disregard for others' physical and emotional well-being, impulsive and deceitful behaviors, and a lack of remorse for harm caused. Related to ASPD is psychopathy, characterized by a lack of empathy and manipulative, often violent behaviors. Although our sample did not meet full criteria for psychopathy, mean scores approached the cut-off, particularly on affective and lifestyle facets, suggesting traits like emotional shallowness, impulsivity, and irresponsibility. Importantly, the sample did not

show elevated scores for sexual sadism or paraphilic disorders, indicating that sexual violence is not driven by deviant sexual interests. This supports the idea that sexual violence in this group reflects antisocial tendencies toward aggression and control (Proulx & Beauregard, 2014). It is also possible that relationship difficulties trigger fears of abandonment or threats to self-worth, leading to impulsive sexual violence as a maladaptive way to regain control over their partner and relationship.

Many IPSV offenders endorsed traditional and objectifying beliefs about women – such as viewing women as possessions or sexual objects – which reflect cognitive schemas rooted in entitlement and dominance (Polaschek & Ward, 2002). These cognitions likely interact with the aforementioned personality traits and emotional dysregulation, contributing to sexual violence as a perceived justifiable means of exerting control within intimate relationships (Monson & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1998). Consequently, sexual violence in this context may serve both as an expression of underlying psychopathology and as a maladaptive strategy to reassert power when confronted with relational challenges.

Overall, the findings indicate that IPSV offenders exhibit a complex interplay of personality pathology, emotional dysregulation and distorted cognitive schemas regarding women. These factors collectively contribute to patterns of impulsive and aggressive behavior aimed at maintaining control and dominance within intimate relationships.

Comparing with Proulx and Beauregard's (2014) Typology of the Offending Process

To contextualize our findings within existing literature, we chose to compare them to the IPSV typology developed by Proulx and Beauregard (2014), given the similarity in offender samples and the comparable variables examined (i.e., precrime factors, offence characteristics, general lifestyle, and personality traits).

A key distinction between both samples lies in the offender's history of intimate partner violence. Whereas most of Proulx and Beauregard's participants had victimized only one woman, the majority of our sample had documented histories of intimate partner violence. Additionally, personality assessment methods differed; we used DSM-5 criteria, SAPAS, and IPDS, while they relied on the French version of the *Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2* (MMPI-2) and the *Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory* (MCMI).

Regarding precrime characteristics, our findings reveal a strong emotional and situational buildup preceding assault, including anger, alcohol use, and feelings of sexual frustration, loneliness, or rejection. These align with the angry pathway described by Proulx and Beauregard, where intense anger and emotional dysregulation, combined with alcohol and lowered inhibitions trigger violent outbursts aimed at regaining control. Like the angry pathway offenders, our sample used excessive force and verbal aggression, with less emphasis on deviant sexual motivations. The hypersexual pathway was less evident, as sexual violence appeared reactive and instrumental rather than driven by sexual

fantasies or entitlement. Similarly, characteristics of the lonely pathway – such as emotional dependency and controlling behaviors – were less pronounced.

In terms of modus operandi, offender behaviors in our sample closely resemble those from the angry pathway. Offenders often acted in emotionally charged states – primarily anger and/or sexual arousal – and often escalated coercive behaviors when met with victim resistance. These patterns demonstrate expressive violence and a reactive need to reassert control, consistent with the angry pathway’s emphasis on emotional instability, impulsivity, and retaliation. While sexual entitlement echoes the hypersexual pathway, our offenders lacked compulsive sexual behaviors, deviant sexual fantasies, or premeditation typical of that profile. Unlike the lonely pathway’s passive, anxious control aimed at maintaining the relationship, our sample showed direct, forceful aggression, highlighting an overtly hostile approach to dominance.

As for adult lifestyle, our findings indicate that IPSV offenders predominantly exhibited antisocial behavioral patterns, partially aligning with traits in the angry and hypersexual pathways, including externalizing behaviors and substance abuse. However, unlike the hypersexual pathway – characterized by compulsive sexual behaviors and deviant fantasies – our sample showed limited evidence of such traits, with most engaging in normative, non-violent pornography and lacking deviant fantasies. This suggests that sexual violence is less about gratification and more about control, consistent with emotional dysregulation and possessiveness emphasized in the angry pathway.

Finally, personality profile in our sample were predominantly antisocial, marked by elevated ASPD, BPD, and NPD traits alongside impulsivity. These align with the angry pathway's emotional volatility, poor impulse control, and reactive aggression. Although psychopathy was not a key characteristic, the elevated affective and lifestyle facets suggest emotional shallowness and irresponsibility contributing to offending behaviors. The lack of sexual sadism or paraphilic traits further distinguishes our sample from sexually deviant offenders, supporting the view that violence is driven by control and aggression. Cognitive distortions about women – such as entitlement and objectification – may further justify coercive and violent behaviors.

Overall, our findings align most closely with Proulx and Beaugard's angry pathway. IPSV crimes are typically preceded by anger, alcohol use, and feelings of rejection, with a modus operandi marked by reactive, emotionally driven violence to regain control. Their lifestyle reflects antisocial traits and impulsivity, rather than deviant sexual interests. Cognitive distortions about women – such as entitlement and objectification – further contribute to their use of sexual violence as a means of asserting dominance.

Conclusion

This study offers novel insights to the understudied field of IPSV offenders by directly examining offender characteristics rather than relying on victim reports or extrapolations from other offender groups. Our findings highlight the distinctive psychosocial profile of IPSV offenders in a French sample – marked by emotional

dysregulation, antisocial behaviors, and cognitive distortions about women, rather than deviant sexual interests. The results emphasize the influence of dysfunctional family environment, impulsivity, and poor emotional regulation in driving violent and coercive behaviors in intimate relationships. These offenders typically maintain a low public criminal profile while escalating violence privately, motivated largely by jealousy, possessiveness, and a need to regain control in the face of perceived rejection or failure.

Although this study provides valuable information on IPSV offenders, it is not without limitations. First, our small sample size restricts generalizability of our findings and prevents clustering analyses that could reveal multiple offender profiles, thus limiting appreciation of this subgroup's heterogeneity. Small samples are also vulnerable to increased variability and outliers, which may influence results and interpretations. Second, inconsistencies in the nature and completeness of legal case file data posed challenges; some participants had little to no background information on their childhoods, and personality assessments were not uniformly conducted, increasing the risk of missing or skewed data. Finally, the inclusion of four sexual homicide cases, while potentially outliers, was retained given the novelty of this research; these cases may represent an extreme manifestation or possible trajectory of IPSV rather than exceptions. Given the relatively small and region-specific sample, caution is warranted when generalizing these findings beyond the French sociocultural context. Additional research across different regions would help assess how sociocultural factors might shape IPSV offender

characteristics. Despite these limitations, we believe our findings provide a solid foundation for future research on the psychosocial characteristics of IPSV offenders.

By integrating developmental, personality, lifestyle, and behavioral factors, this study advances understanding of the complex psychological makeup of IPSV offenders. The findings underscore the critical need for tailored interventions that address emotional regulation difficulties and cognitive distortions, aiming to improve prevention and management of intimate partner sexual violence.

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