

Assessing the Violent Offending and Violent Victimization Overlap Among Discharged Psychiatric Patients

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Abstract Prior studies have documented linkages between mental disorder and both offending and victimization. However, few studies have examined the violent offending–violent victimization overlap among mentally disordered individuals and none have examined the factors that are jointly related to their covariation. Here, we assess this overlap during the first ten weeks following hospital discharge among a large sample of psychiatric patients from three large cities. Findings indicate that: (1) violent offending and violent victimization show substantial covariation; (2) although each of the two outcomes were predicted by a few unique risk factors, several risk factors were similarly predictive of both outcomes; and (3) even after adjusting for demographic, clinical, and social risk factors, the correlation between violent offending and violent victimization remained robust. Implications for theory, research, and policy are highlighted.

Keywords Psychiatric patients · Offending · Victimization · Mental illness

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Research on the relationship between mental disorder and violence is wide-ranging. Studies indicate that although most individuals with mental disorders do not engage in violence, the likelihood of committing violence is greater for people with a mental disorder than for those without (Hiday, 2006; Hiday, Swanson, Swartz, Borum, & Wagner, 2001; Hiday, Swartz, Swanson, Borum, & Wagner, 1999; Link, Andrews, & Cullen, 1992; Link & Stueve, 1995; Monahan, 1992; Mulvey, 1994; Silver, 2006; Silver, Felson, & Vaneseltine, 2008; Walsh et al., 2003). In general, research indicates that having a major mental disorder raises the risk of violence, especially when the mental disorder involves paranoid beliefs or substance abuse (Elbogin & Johnson, 2009; Link & Stueve, 1994; Steadman et al., 1998; but see Appelbaum, Robbins, & Monahan, 2000; Skeem, Monahan, & Mulvey, 2002). Additionally, there is a small but growing literature on the victimization experiences of mentally disordered individuals (Hiday et al., 1999, 2001; Silver, 2002; Silver, Arseneault, Langley, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2005; Teasdale, 2009; Teplin, McClelland, Abram, & Weiner, 2005; Walsh et al., 2003), and these studies suggest that mental disorder and its related symptoms increases the risk of violent victimization.

For example, the largest and most comprehensive of these studies found that compared to a sample of over 32,000 individuals measured as part of the National Crime Victimization Survey, a random sample of 936 psychiatric outpatients in Chicago was more than 11 times more likely to be victimized by violent crime after controlling for demographic differences between the two samples (Teplin et al., 2005). Results from the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Human Development Study indicate that even after controlling for several confounding factors, those with: (1) anxiety disorders experienced more sexual assaults, (2) schizophreniform disorders experienced more threatened