

Gender Differences in Resilience Factor for Mental Disorders

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Introduction: The violence experienced in everyday life by vulnerable men, women and children, including intimate partner violence (IPV) and child maltreatment (CM), is one of the main risk factors for mental disorders in Europe and worldwide. Resilience is described by the PreVAiL network <www.prevailresearch.ca> as 'A dynamic process in which psychological, social, environmental and biological factors interact to enable an individual at any stage of life to develop, maintain or regain their mental health despite exposure to adversity'. The experience of violence is significantly different in men and women and we may expect for this and other reasons including the social position of women that patterns and determinants of resilience will also vary by gender.

Objectives: To review the factors contributing to resilience and evidence about effective means to promote resilience in women and men with experience of violence.

Methods: A narrative review of literature and a systematic review of studies on the effectiveness of interventions to promote resilience in adults with experience of IPV and CM.

Results: Twenty studies of complex and simple interventions in community, welfare, employment, prison, and substance abuse and mental illness service settings were identified for review. Several studies emphasise the value of people with this history participating in design, conduct and reporting of the studies.

Conclusions: Better evidence is needed on how to promote resilience with clinical and public health interventions among women and men affected by violence. Obtaining this evidence is critical alongside work towards preventing the violence.