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The Role of Head Trauma in Emotion Dysregulation among Victims of Partner Violence

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Project Title: The Role of Head Trauma in Emotion Dysregulation among Victims of Partner Violence

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Department: Psychology

My project explores the relationship between head trauma and emotion dysregulation, or the inability to modulate the intensity and/or duration of emotional responses in a flexible manner in order to meet individual goals and situational demands (Gratz & Roemer, 2004), among victims of intimate partner violence. Approximately 30% of all women experience physical intimate partner violence (IPV) at some point in their lifetime (Devries et al., 2011; WHO, 2013). Such trauma could result in head injury, which could cause significant impairments if a lesion (i.e., injury to an organ/tissue) is formed in the brain. For instance, patients with lateral frontal lesions in their brain show reduction in emotion, those with medial frontal injuries inhibit mood changes, and those with lateral prefrontal damage show irregular mood regulation (Paradiso et al., 1999). In order to examine this relationship, 352 women were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), which is a reliable, online marketplace. Participants who met eligibility criteria were compensated \$2.00 to complete a series of self-report measures, specifically:

- HTQ (Head Trauma Questionnaire): a 13-item questionnaire that assesses the physical impact of head trauma inflicted by an intimate partner.
- DERS (Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale): a 16-item questionnaire that assesses difficulties regulating negative emotions.
- DERS-P (Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale-Positive): a 13-item questionnaire that assesses difficulties regulating positive emotions.
- CTS (Conflict Tactics Scale): a 12-item questionnaire that assesses physical victimization by an intimate partner.

It was hypothesized that there would be an association between IPV and emotion dysregulation, and that head trauma resulting from IPV would mediate the relation between IPV and emotion dysregulation. The results of this study supported these hypotheses.

Through completion of my honor's project, I learned to proficiently use software to analyze data and to produce a well-written research paper. Specifically, I learned to determine which test (i.e., ANOVA, t-test, regression) to run to ask specific research questions. Further, I learned how to conduct analyses in two statistical software packages, SPSS and R. Moreover, I learned how to create syntax for my data, which I used to score and provide descriptive data (e.g., means, standard deviations), test the psychometric properties (e.g., Cronbach's alpha), and conduct bivariate correlations, linear regressions, and mediation models. Regarding writing a manuscript, I learned to structure my thoughts in an appropriate way to appeal to my audience, which will include students, researchers, and clinicians. Furthermore, I learned to write using statistical notation, understand the analyses, and input graphs in the results section, which is where the data analyzed is explained. Overall, this experience has positively affected my future as a researcher. Developing the skills to analyze data and write a scientific manuscript is essential to be successful in this field of research.