

Study specifies the neuropsychological deficits of alcoholic abusers

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Sara Vitoria, Ángel Romero, Marisol Lila and Luis Moya Albiol. Credit: Asociación RUVID

A University of Valencia psychology and neuroscience team has defined the specific neuropsychological profile of men with several patterns of alcohol consumption and a history of violence against women in couple relationships. The study, published in *Alcohol*, seeks to facilitate adherence to treatment, as well as the detection of the chances of a relapse of abusers who are brought before a court.

Doctorate student Sara Vitoria and professors Ángel Romero, Marisol Lila and Luis Moya compared three groups of men. Two of them were sentenced for gender violence, one with high and one with low alcohol [consumption](#), respectively, and a third group consisting of men with no criminal records.

The results of the study have shown that abusers

with excessive and continued alcohol consumption show a greater number of deficits in executive functions. They exhibit traits including greater mental rigidity, a deficit of planning, and capacity of greater inhibition, as well as a deficient attention span and lower work memory.

One conclusion of the article, "Differential cognitive profiles of intimate partner violence perpetrators based on alcohol consumption," is that these men have more difficulty empathizing and recognizing their partners' facial expressions than non-alcoholics and non-violent partners.

"The results are essential to develop intervention programs adapted to these particularities, which would be an improvement in their effectiveness," says Sara Vitoria, who points out the importance of interventions that consider the neuropsychological profiles of abusers to improve their effectiveness.

The end aim of the investigation is to create a more complete and accurate assessment of the chance of relapse, which is of utmost importance when a quick decision has to be made in the hours after abusers are brought before a court. In addition, the results can also prevent gender-based violence. The analysis of executive functions and impulsivity makes it easier to detect individuals more likely to commit such crimes.

There are currently few studies that have analysed the neuropsychological characteristics of men sentenced for gender violence, or that delve into the role of [alcohol](#).

One hundred men divided into three groups voluntarily participated in the study: those sentenced for gender [violence](#) with high and low [alcohol consumption](#) and those without criminal records. The investigation, which was carried out during three consecutive sessions at the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Valencia, consisted of several interviews with volunteers in which the

researchers determined which profiles were the best for the neuropsychological tests. Some of the conditions were the conviction for [gender violence](#) with less than two years' imprisonment and without criminal records, and not having any diagnosed mental illness.

More information: Sara Vitoria-Estruch et al. Differential cognitive profiles of intimate partner violence perpetrators based on alcohol consumption, *Alcohol* (2018). DOI: [10.1016/j.alcohol.2018.01.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alcohol.2018.01.006)

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