

*Violence and Victims, Volume 38, Number 2, 2023*

# (Un)Acknowledgment of Men as Victims of Intimate Partner Violence

**Andreia Machado, PhD**

*Lusófona University, Hei Lab, Porto, Portugal*

**Anita Santos, PhD**

*Maia University Institute – ISMAI & Centre for Psychology at University of Porto,  
Avioso S. Pedro, Portugal*

**Marlene Matos, PhD**

*School of Psychology, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal*

Some victims of interpersonal violence do not acknowledge or label their experience as criminal. This study aims to explore men's experiences as victims of intimate partner violence and identify the key elements that contribute to their (un)acknowledgment and needs. We interviewed 10 Portuguese male victims in heterosexual relationships who requested formal help. A thematic analysis was performed using NVivo 11. Social gender discourses and expectations prevented men from acknowledging their intimate victimization and created barriers to seeking help. Participants struggled to achieve the social status of the victim and to gain access to intervention measures. These findings reflect the invisibility and insufficient social awareness of intimate partner violence against men and enhance our understanding of the need of those men.

**Keywords:** male victimization; social awareness; help-seeking behavior; treatment barriers; needs

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a problem in all countries and cultures (Ali et al., 2016). IPV has been defined as “physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression (including coercive tactics) by a current or former intimate partner” (Breiding et al., 2015, p. 11). Currently, IPV is considered a heterogeneous problem with wide-ranging causes and complex implications for individuals, families, and communities (e.g., Cannon & Buttell, 2016). The costs associated with IPV (e.g., financial and medical) are estimated as elevated (Walby & Olive, 2014), and other costs are unquantifiable (e.g., the impact of IPV on people other than the immediate victim, including children, family, and friends).

For more than three decades, researchers have explored the experiences of women in abusive intimate relationships from a multitude of perspectives (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 2004). However, this gendered approach has had the consequence of narrowing

the literature on men as victims (Bates, 2019a, 2019b) and women as perpetrators of IPV (e.g., Boonzaier, 2008). Additionally, few studies have focused on male victims' experiences and perspectives and the meaning of IPV. Apart from the usual focus on the victimization of women, this could also be because men are generally more reluctant to disclose their victimization and less likely than women to seek help (e.g., Archer, 2000; Barber, 2008; Choi et al., 2015; McCarrick et al., 2015; Tsui et al., 2010). Other identified explanations are the gender paradigm (i.e., a set of premises that view IPV as male-perpetrated abuse against female victims; Dutton & Nicholls, 2005) and the traditional masculine norms dictated by the dominant culture in western European countries and the United States (e.g., Addis & Mahalik, 2003).

More recently, a consistent and growing body of literature states that men are victims of IPV (e.g., Desmarais et al., 2012; Douglas et al., 2012; Hines & Douglas, 2011; Huntley et al., 2019; Machado et al., 2016, 2017). According to studies worldwide, 25%–50% of reported cases of IPV are male victims (e.g., Breiding et al., 2015; Desmarais et al., 2012). European studies have also found a similar prevalence rate pattern for men and women (e.g., Costa et al., 2015; Lövestad & Krantz, 2012). In Portugal, there are no national annual surveys on IPV; however, according to the official crime statistics, in 2020, there were 75% female victims and 25% male victims (Ministério da Administração Interna, 2019). Furthermore, men experience significant negative consequences as a result of IPV (e.g., post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and suicidal ideation; Cook, 2009; Hines & Douglas, 2011; Machado et al., 2016, 2017) and perceive their overall health as poor (e.g., high blood pressure and general psychological distress; Hines & Douglas, 2015).

Despite the numerous international empirical studies, empirical data regarding this phenomenon are insufficient (e.g., Bates, 2019b). Studies exploring the way men (un)acknowledge intimate victimization experiences and manage to gain “recognition” (both from formal organizations and society, in general) of one's victimization or experiences are needed.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT VS. UNACKNOWLEDGMENT AS VICTIMS**

Victim acknowledgment can be an important precursor to victim reporting because a victim who does not label his or her experience as a crime is less likely to seek help. Certain victims of interpersonal violence do not acknowledge or label their experiences as criminal victimization (e.g., victims of sexual assault or stalking). Individuals are more likely to acknowledge victimization when the experience meets certain stereotypical criteria (e.g., an extremely violent act; Englebrecht & Reynolds, 2011).

Acknowledgment as a victim appears to depend on wider historical, social, and cultural processes and other characteristics of the victim, such as gender, ethnicity, or class (Spalek, 2006). Historical, cultural, and institutional narratives of IPV victimization are considered feminine because of the traditional traits associated with victimization (i.e., passivity, helplessness, dependence, vulnerability, and weakness), which are consistent with societal schemas of femininity (e.g., Durfee, 2011; Zverina et al., 2011). In contrast, the dominant representations of manliness valued in western societies appear to include men as “being able to look after themselves and their family” and men who are “strong and resilient.” Therefore, the identification and recognition of men as victims of IPV strongly challenge a society in which men are considered physically, economically,

socially, and politically dominant (e.g., Hine et al., 2020; Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001). These dominant stereotypes have made it difficult for a man to adopt the position of an “abused man” (e.g., Hine et al., 2020; Josolyne, 2011). Adopting this label appears incompatible with maintaining a masculine identity (e.g., Hine et al., 2020; Josolyne, 2011) because victimization, particularly victimization related to physical abuse, is considered a female experience and the antithesis of the contemporary normative gender role of men (e.g., Allen-Collinson, 2009; Durfee, 2011). Thus, claiming victimization is claiming that one is not a “real” man (e.g., Durfee, 2011).

Consequently, men may be particularly resistant to acknowledging themselves as victims and labeling their experiences as “violent” or “abusive” due to the threat to their masculine identity, the threat of being perceived as weak, and the threat of being subjected to ridicule (e.g., Artime et al., 2014; Barber, 2008; Choi et al., 2015; Hine et al., 2020; Machado et al., 2017; Wallace et al., 2019). Several studies have demonstrated these difficulties (e.g., Artime et al., 2014; Machado et al., 2017). In a study conducted by Machado et al. (2016) of a community sample involving 1,556 heterosexual men, 91% of the participants reported that their partners had perpetrated at least one abusive behavior against them (e.g., psychological, physical, and/or sexual); 84.3% reported two abusive behaviors, and 33.7% reported three to five abusive behaviors. However, only 5.7% of the sample ( $n = 89$ ) acknowledged themselves as victims in response to a direct question, even though, 76.4% revealed that their partner initiated the first abusive behavior in their intimate relationship. Another example was the study made by the ManKind initiative (a UK response to male victims of IPV) that revealed that 71% of their callers would not have made the call if the helpline was not anonymous (Brooks, 2018).

Moreover, embracing the social status of a victim simultaneously presents advantages and disadvantages to the individual, which results in practical consequences when reporting abuse (Allen-Collinson, 2009; Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). When a person is successfully recognized as a victim, a set of intervention measures are granted, such as social assistance and counseling services, and the person gains empathy, the right to suffer, or validation (Allen-Collinson, 2009; Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). However, disclosure can also have negative consequences, such as disbelieving or blaming the victim (Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). For men, recognizing themselves as a victim and disclosing their experiences often result in the acquisition of traits that are not valued by society and may serve to invalidate their victim identity (Zverina et al., 2011). Therefore, men are reluctant to disclose their victimization because they often experience discrimination and disbelief by professionals and society in general (e.g., Barber, 2008; Choi et al., 2015).

Society’s perception of gender differences influences men’s help-seeking behavior and profoundly affects our perceptions of the severity and preferred outcomes of IPV (e.g., Dutton & White, 2013; Tsui et al., 2010). Female victimization is considered more serious than male victimization (Dutton & White, 2013). Regardless of the injuries sustained or other negative outcomes, society views IPV perpetrated against a man by a woman as less dangerous and less potentially harmful to the victim (Dutton & White, 2013). Furthermore, men do not report the violence that they suffer because they believe that others cannot help them to solve their problems (e.g., Tsui et al., 2010). For example, Machado et al. (2016) revealed that the main obstacles experienced by men in identifying themselves as victims were as follows: “I did not notice that I was a victim” (64.7%),

“shame” (30.9%), “distrust of the support system” (19.1%), “fear of others not believing my story” (10.3%), and “fear of retaliation from my partner” (8.8%).

Consistent with the studies in other western nations (e.g., Cook, 2009; Drijber et al., 2012; Hines & Douglas, 2010), in Portugal, the findings by Machado et al. (2016) indicate that it is difficult for a male victim “to fit” in a support system that was not built to consider men as victims. Furthermore, men have reported being victims of legal administrative abuse, which is violence characterized by the differential treatment of men by their female partners and the employees of relevant nongovernmental (e.g., domestic violence agencies) and governmental (e.g., family courts) services based on stereotypes that associate men as being the perpetrators of IPV and women as being the victims (Machado et al., 2016; Tilbrook et al., 2010).

Male victims’ experiences of not being believed or being treated as the perpetrator by the support system exacerbate the impact of IPV, frequently resulting in secondary victimization by the system (Machado et al., 2017). Men’s secondary victimization appears to be endemic during the help-seeking process and creates further barriers to leaving an abusive partner (e.g., Cook, 2009; Drijber et al., 2012; Hines & Douglas, 2010). Furthermore, Cook (2009) and Hines et al. (2014) highlighted that male victims pay a particularly high price for both reporting and experiencing IPV (e.g., losing custody of their children and being targets of false accusations of child abuse).

All these influences prevent male victims from acknowledging their victimization and lead men not to disclose their experiences and obtain the help they need (e.g., Mankowski & Maton, 2010; Wallace et al., 2019). Simmons et al. (2016) constructed a theoretical concept—the balance—that tried to explain men’s disclosure experiences. This study revealed that a sense of urgency to seek help, social networks and support, and feeling ready to talk about one’s victimization were strong factors that tipped “the balance” toward a high likelihood of disclosing victimization, whereas shame, men’s conformity to hegemonic masculinity, fear of negative consequences for themselves or losing their children, fear that they would not be believed and that their story could somehow be turned against them, and a low perceived need for help tipped “the balance” toward a low likelihood of disclosure.

## **VICTIMS’ NEEDS**

Studies investigating the needs of male victims are scarce. To the best of our knowledge, only three studies have investigated this topic (Machado et al., 2016; Tilbrook et al., 2010; Wallace et al., 2019). In a study conducted by Tilbrook et al. (2010), the most commonly expressed needs by men were as follows: feeling heard, having empathetic service providers, having knowledge of other men with similar experiences, having available service providers, having the acceptance and support of family members and friends, and having publicly available information and more education and awareness from the public. In a study conducted by Machado et al. (2016), the needs most commonly endorsed by men were emotional support (i.e., “having someone close to talk to”), specialized and social support (i.e., crisis management, psychological support, and “not being criticized” or being a “laughing stock” because they are male victims), and “having security” (e.g., a place to stay). The participants also indicated the need for access to information/prevention campaigns and health care. Finally, in the study of Wallace et al. (2019), four main themes were identified: “recognition” (of male victims and the impact

of violence), “safety,” “accepting domestic abuse,” and “rebuilding.” The dominant theme—recognition—influenced the capacity for the three other needs to be met (Wallace et al., 2019).

## THE CURRENT STUDY

According to numerous international studies, an experience is more likely to be labeled criminal victimization when the experience has met certain stereotypical criteria (e.g., Englebrect & Reyns, 2011); however, studies rarely examine self-acknowledgment of victimization among men victimized by their intimate partners. Finally, Europe (EU) is in the early stages of developing policy and practice guidelines for addressing male victims of IPV. In the EU, few studies have addressed IPV against men (e.g., Costa et al., 2015; Drijber et al., 2012; Hellemans et al., 2014; Lövestad & Krantz, 2012; Rubla & López, 2012). In Portugal, IPV has been acknowledged as a notable problem since the 1990s (e.g., National Plans against violence—the political action support tools for preventing and intervening domestic violence (DV); Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, 2015), and Portuguese law is gender neutral (Penal, 2014); however, the phenomenon of IPV against men remains an underdeveloped research area, and attention from the media, the political system, and the judiciary system is almost nonexistent.

To fill these gaps in knowledge, we conducted an in-depth qualitative study involving Portuguese male victims of female partners, who have sought formal help (i.e., police, court, and/or domestic violence support agencies) for coping with the victimization. This study intends to provide a deeper analysis of men’s (un)acknowledgment as IPV victims and their needs. Its overall aim was to explore the mechanisms and processes that lead to the victimhood acknowledgment of male victims of IPV, through the following specific questions: How do men (un)acknowledge themselves as victims of IPV? and What are the main needs reported by male victims?

## METHODS

### Participants

Ten Portuguese male victims participated in the study. The participants were victims of IPV in heterosexual relationships who had requested formal help from the legal system (i.e., police and courts) and/or domestic violence support agencies. The men’s mean age was 51.6 years, ranging from 35 to 75 ( $SD = 13.84$ ). The participants’ levels of education ranged from elementary school to a doctoral degree. Five men had completed 4 years of school, two had completed 6 and 9 years, two had completed 12 years, and one held a doctoral degree. Most participants were employed ( $n = 6$ ), their socioeconomic status was predominantly middle class ( $n = 5$ ), and they were mostly from rural areas ( $n = 6$ ). The average length of abusive relationships was 15.5 years ( $SD = 12.43$ ), with the shortest lasting 4 years and the longest lasting 38 years. The participants had one child on average ( $SD = .88$ ;  $Min = 0$ ;  $Max = 2$ ). At the time of data collection, most participants ( $n = 8$ ) were no longer with an abusive partner. Nine participants reported unidirectional IPV and pressed charges. At the end of data collection, the majority of the

processes were still ongoing in the court. However, in two cases, the judicial process was concluded, with female partners receiving suspended sentences and being ordered to pay financial compensation to their partners. None of the participants lived in shelters (for more information on the sample description see Machado et al., 2017).

The participant recruitment was performed at a national level via contacts with Portuguese institutions specializing in IPV support (e.g., police and DV agencies). Information regarding the study's goals was provided to the heads of the organizations, who were asked to collaborate in recruiting participants. These institutions identified potential participants and contacted them to invite them to participate in the study. If the men accepted, a meeting was scheduled with the first author conducting the interview. These meetings were conducted at the location of the organizations specializing in IPV that had first referred the participants and began by obtaining informed consent. Specifically, the consent form contained information regarding the nature of the study, the ethical standard of confidentiality, an explanation of the voluntary nature of participation and the possibility of dropping out of the study at any time, and a request for permission to record the interviews. After signing the consent form, the participants completed a short sociodemographic form. Then, the semistructured interview was conducted. The interviews were completed within 45 minutes to 2 hours. Overall, the data collection phase was conducted over 6 months.

## **Data Collection**

***Sociodemographic Form.*** A sociodemographic questionnaire was used to collect data about age, nationality, current marital status (single, married/cohabiting, or widowed), level of education, professional situation (student, employed, unemployed, or retired), socioeconomic status (lower, lower middle, middle, upper middle, or upper), housing location (countryside or urban area), and family history of direct and indirect violence.

***Semistructured Interview.*** A semistructured interview was developed to explore the men's perspectives regarding the experience of being a victim of IPV. Using open-ended questions, the interview examined the following set of topics: (a) awareness of being a male victim of IPV; (b) the experience of IPV; (c) the help-seeking process; (d) social reactions to male victims of IPV; and (e) the victim's needs and resources for coping with IPV.

***Procedures.*** The data collection procedures were initiated with the development of a semistructured interview protocol, which was performed with two male victims in a pilot study which was later included in the final sample. The resulting final interview included simplified language to improve participants' understanding of the questions. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The first author reviewed the transcripts to ensure the accuracy of the content.

A thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach was performed to code the data. After reading through the transcripts several times to become familiar with the content, the data were then coded in Nvivo. Themes emerged from the data, and identifying them was necessary to do some interpretative work. The initial codes were revised to ensure they are related to the data and represented it well. Finally, extracts were chosen to represent themes to be used in reporting the research. The final coding grid includes main themes subdivided into subthemes (see Table 1).

Several strategies were adopted to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the qualitative data. In the coding procedures, constant comparison of the data was adopted to

**TABLE 1. Main Themes and Subthemes From the Thematic Analysis**

| Themes  | Participants | References |
|---|--------------|------------|
| Acknowledgment as a male victim of IPV                      |              |            |
| Separation/divorce  | 4            | 6          |
| When violence becomes public or severe                      | 3            | 8          |
| External acknowledgment by the police                       | 2            | 5          |
| (Un)acknowledgment of violence and barriers to help-seeking |              |            |
| Social reaction in face of the victim                       | 8            | 27         |
| Social stigma   | 7            | 18         |
| Shame   | 6            | 14         |
| Being a man   | 4            | 7          |
| Devaluation of violence                                     | 4            | 7          |
| Not realize what was happening                              | 2            | 5          |
| Afraid of not being believed                                | 2            | 4          |
| Distrust in public authorities                              | 2            | 4          |
| Victims' needs  |              |            |
| To have access to information about IPV                     | 8            | 19         |
| Changes in traditional answers/support agencies             | 7            | 35         |
| Judicial help   | 6            | 21         |
| Police help   | 5            | 8          |
| Social system   | 3            | 6          |

revise, refine, and rename the themes and categories. Additionally, in the findings section, a thick description of which is provided that includes excerpts from the interviews.

To ensure reliability, a different scholar (second author) independently analyzed 50% of the interviews, which were randomly selected. After the independent coding, discrepancies were solved in consensus meetings to refine the coding grid. The third author audited the coding procedures. A reliability score was computed using the following formula (Vala, 1986):  $F = 2(C1, 2)/C1 + C2$ . The number of coding agreements between the two coders was divided by the total codifications by each of the coders ( $2[638]/638 + 662 = .98$ ). The score of .98 indicates an excellent level of agreement between the independent coders (Guest et al., 2006).

## RESULTS

The data regarding the men's experiences as victims of IPV revealed the following four major themes: (a) acknowledgment as a male victim of IPV; (b) (un)acknowledgment of violence; and (c) the victims' needs. As shown in Table 1, each main theme has several subthemes. In the following sections, the findings are described, and an illustration of the themes is presented.

### Acknowledgment as a Male Victim of IPV

A specific life event (i.e., separation/divorce from the abusive partner) appeared to promote victims' acknowledgment of their condition. Separation from their partners was described as a turning point to realize that the recurrent abusive behaviors were IPV. Most abusive behaviors began during the relationship, but the men began to realize that

they were victims only when the relationship ended. Additionally, separation increased violence severity.

*Well, I'd say the first acknowledgment came after our definite separation (...) it was also at that time that the aggressions were intensified (at that stage with more episodes of physical violence; one of them, I needed hospital treatment). It was this pattern of behavior, postseparation, and the fact that I sought information about these dynamics (...) that made me realize that I was facing someone really harmful (A., 45 years).*

Other turning points for self-acknowledgment reported by the participants included others witnessing episodes of violence and the severity of violence. When IPV became public or more severe, the men appeared to have no more reasons to deny the violence because it was evident even to others, and the men were forced to acknowledge IPV to themselves and others.

*The moment I realized it (being a victim of IPV) was when she lost any sense of shame, and in front of the customers (...), she told me such unbelievable things. I changed my mind because ... I have not changed my mind. I was forced to because it was in front of people. It (IPV) was not public until then, but it became public (D., 53 years).*

Some participants reported that their acknowledgment as victims of IPV was an experience promoted (or triggered) by others namely, the police. Self-acknowledgment only happened as a result of the recognition from the police.

*"I did not identify myself as a victim; the police officers were the ones who listened to my version. When they heard my version, they concluded that I was the victim and not the perpetrator" (B., 35 years).*

### **(Un)acknowledgment of Violence**

Social reaction in face of the victim, social stigma, and shame were the main difficulties presented to the acknowledgment of violence and consequently being able to seek help. The participants commented that when others (e.g., friends, coworkers, and family) knew about their IPV victimization, they were classified as weak and frequently humiliated, causing embarrassment and shame. Participants narrated that being victims of IPV led others to talk and even joke about their situation, and those behaviors led participants to isolate themselves and not obtain help, either informal or specialized.

*"It's embarrassing because other colleagues talk behind our back. In front of us, nobody has the courage to talk, but behind, 'he is a pansy', 'he is this ... he is that', 'she is the one who commands him', etc." (E., 40 years).*

Being a man also contributed deeply to the unacknowledgment of the experience. Being male victims indicates that they might not be as strong as they were expected to be, and they were embarrassed about it.

*"Going out, facing others, and being a man is slightly difficult. Maybe because men are the strongest sex, is not it? (...)" (F., 43 years).*

The devaluation/denial of the violence also prevented the acknowledgment of IPV, its features, and the fact that it was a crime. Devaluing/denying IPV involves the premise that violent behaviors are normal and that one can adjust to those behaviors. Therefore, during the relationship, several participants deny the abusive behaviors of their partners

and the negative impact that this behavior had on them. The men typically reported that the abusive behavior was a part of their “normal” life.

*“We think it’s normal. I think the violent acts started right from the beginning of the relationship, we just do not realize them ...”* (B., 35 years).

On the other hand, men expressed fear of not being believed because society categorizes men as perpetrators and has the belief that men cannot be a victim of IPV. Self-disclosure to others, either formally or informally, was considered harmful.

*Fear of revealing and not having credit from others; so it’s not worth it ... I think disclosure to people, I think it does not bring anything. On the contrary, you get labeled in society, stigmatized. I think there’s the idea that IPV was only for women. And now, having faced it, I think maybe there may be many more men victims* (B., 35 years).

Finally, men reported distrust in the authorities. The men expected the authorities to not believe them, take sides (the women’s side), and provide no help.

*“And others do not trust the authorities, especially do not trust for that reason I told you before: they are always on the other side”* (M., 36 years).

## Victims’ Needs

All participants elaborated on their needs. The participants reported two major needs: to have access to information about IPV and the need for changes in the traditional answers provided by the support system (i.e., judicial, police, and social services). Most men reported that having access to information about IPV was crucial and a determinant of gaining awareness of the phenomenon in the media to disseminate and generalize knowledge about support systems. Additionally, from their perspective, prevention campaigns could reflect the different roles (i.e., perpetrator, victim, or both) that men and women can assume in an abusive relationship.

*Perhaps more dissemination, for example, on television. The disclosure that there is about women in the news, you only see IPV against women ... The woman was killed by her partner. Then, it is also necessary to put in the news that the man was also murdered by his partner or the partner ordered someone to murder him. (...) I think this disclosure would have been more enlightening for the man. Men also watch television, it’s not just women* (B., 35 years).

On the other hand, men emphasized the need for changes in the traditional answers provided by the support system. These institutions were described as not being exempt because they immediately judged the men as the perpetrators. Participants noted negative contacts in their prior experiences with the support system. Specifically, regarding judicial help (i.e., court), participants reported that they needed to have an adequate assessment of their case, including testimony valued as that of any other, and judicial officers needed to show no prejudice and a nonjudgmental attitude toward them; the legal processes needed to be faster and effective.

*The court must act quickly, from one day to the next. Be fast, as fast as possible. And shelter homes are also needed, to have a quick separation of the couple. Because the problem is when you make a complaint, afterward, the victim may have to face revenge. And this situation can be avoided* (C., 66 years).

In terms of police support, the men reported that police officers need to improve their assessment skills (e.g., questioning both partners equally); change their attitude toward prejudice; avoid prejudging men for being men; and promote equality between men and women throughout their inquiry process.

*There are always two sides, but I want only one law, that the law is the same for both. When there is IPV inside a house, the man is immediately leaning against the wall, and she speaks first to the police, and she still wants to turn to the man and the police stopped her and said, "lady, calm down." If I were to make such gestures, the police would take me to the police station. The law for IPV, instead of being for women or men should be only one law! (C., 66 years).*

At the social services and institutional levels, the participants reported that certain needs should be addressed, such as a better assessment of the situations; a change in the attitude of professionals; avoidance of prejudice and promotion of a nonjudgmental attitude toward male victims; and equality in the treatment of victims.

*They need to pay more attention to men because they only listen to women; for example, the woman, when she goes to complain, there should be other people behind to analyze what was happening, it is not "You treated me badly, you will be condemned". They would have to figure things out and know if it's true or not. For this, there are these social security people who could find out what was going on. Do not just come and incriminate ... they should gather things and see what is happening (M., 36 years).*

## DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the acknowledgment process of men as victims of IPV from their perspective, and, to our best knowledge, it is the first in Portugal that examines self-acknowledgment of victimization among men victimized by their intimate partners and is one of the few at an international level. Although the literature establishes that men are victims of IPV and that this phenomenon has specific characteristics (i.e., perceptions of victimization, violence minimization, help-seeking, and victims' needs; e.g., Arnocky & Vaillancourt, 2014), few studies have explored men's experiences of these specific characteristics and related them with differences in gender role expectations and the differential degree of stigma faced by men when they fail to meet gendered requirements (e.g., Arnocky & Vaillancourt, 2014; Douglas et al., 2012; Tsui et al., 2010).

The men in this study demonstrated difficulties in acknowledging themselves as victims of IPV or labeling their experiences as "violent" or "abusive." In fact, previous studies have revealed that terminologies such as "victim" and "abuser," which have been associated with female victimization, are likely to be heard or responded to differently by male victims (Bates, 2019a, 2019b; Hine et al., 2020; Walker et al., 2020). The gender paradigm used to interpret IPV and the traditional masculine norms negatively influences men's ability to understand and label their experience as abuse, preventing men from recognizing and accepting their victimization (e.g., Bates, 2019a, 2019b; Hine et al., 2020; Lysova & Dim, 2020; Walker et al., 2020; Wallace et al., 2018). Walker and colleagues found evidence that the men experienced fears that their victimization would result in challenges to their masculinity, with fears that they would be seen as weak. Additionally, the main reasons for not acknowledging themselves as victims of IPV were shame, being a man, fear of not being believed, distrust in public authorities, and

the minimization of their victimization, which have previously been reported by other authors (e.g., Artime et al., 2014; Bates, 2019a, 2019b; Hine et al., 2020; Josolyne, 2011; Lysova & Dim, 2020; Wallace et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2020).

In the present study, acknowledgment as victims occurred via self-acknowledgment or external acknowledgment. Self-acknowledgment as victims occurred, in most cases, after a separation/divorce, when others had witnessed violence, or when the violence reached a high level of severity. It is important to note that the increase in the severity of IPV is also associated with help-seeking behaviors (e.g., Lysova & Dim, 2020). Most external acknowledgments occurred through the police. This institution has been found to have a real, important role in recognition. Nevertheless, both turning points (e.g., separation/divorce and the violence becoming public or severe) and external acknowledgment occurred only later in very long relationships (on average 15.5 years). The duration of the relationships most likely contributed to the acknowledgment of being victims. Dim (2020) found results in the same direction, revealing that some male participants could only identify the abuse in retrospection. These participants also indicate that they would have sought more professional help if they had recognized that they were experiencing IPV.

Unacknowledged victimization has serious implications for crime victims, such as lower rates of reporting, help-seeking, and long-term psychological harm (e.g., Bates, 2019a, 2019b; Englebrecht & Reynolds, 2011; Lysova & Dim, 2020; Lysova & Dim, 2020; Wallace et al., 2019). In fact, the acknowledgment of being a victim may be the first significant step toward a victim's psychological well-being and recovery (Englebrecht & Reynolds, 2011). Although disclosing a victimization experience may result in positive reactions from others (i.e., family, acquaintances, and society, in general), not all disclosures were perceived as beneficial (e.g., Englebrecht & Reynolds, 2011; Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). For men, recognizing themselves as a victim and disclosing their experiences often result in prejudice and poor outcomes (e.g., Barber, 2008; Choi et al., 2015). Help-seeking behaviors and acknowledgment of being a victim appear to be intricate.

Indeed, social gender discourses, expectations, perceptions, beliefs, and embedded ideologies surrounding IPV appear to influence the acknowledgment of men as victims by the men, support services, and society as a whole, which appear to lead to disbelief, discredit, insensitivity, or even ridicule and hostility by professionals in the field when men seek for help (e.g., Barber, 2008; Choi et al., 2015; Huntley et al., 2019; Machado et al., 2016, 2017; Walker et al., 2020; Wallace et al., 2019). Male victims of IPV argue that they are targets of prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Addis & Mahalik, 2003), and these reactions from support agencies and society decrease the likelihood that these men will acknowledge being victims or seek for help (e.g., Wallace et al., 2019). Therefore, male victims continue to struggle to be recognized as victims and gain the advantages of that status, such as having the right to social assistance, counseling services, gaining empathy, and the right to suffer or validation (Allen-Collinson, 2009; Sylaska & Edwards, 2014; Wallace et al., 2019).

These findings highlight the importance of contributing to the visibility of IPV against men through different sources, including public policies, media, and society. If IPV against men continues to be socially invisible, male victims will remain hidden because the conditions for the acknowledgment of their victimization have not been met. Moreover, the findings of this study and the review of the literature reveal that if men

have the opportunity to access a language that is not associated with female victimization, to respond to a behavioral checklist, or to disclose anonymously, men recognize their victimization and have long and severe experiences as victims of IPV (e.g., Walker et al., 2020).

Given their experience as victims, the main needs reported by the men were having access to information about IPV and that awareness of the phenomenon should be raised by the media and public policies. Although few studies have addressed this issue (e.g., Machado et al., 2016; Tilbrook et al., 2010; Wallace et al., 2019), men experience the pressure of societal expectations of masculinity, gender-stereotyped treatment, and dual-criteria behavior from professionals and services. In Portugal, as in other western nations, it is difficult for a male victim to fit into a support system that was not built to consider men as victims (e.g., Cook, 2009; Drijber et al., 2012; Wallace et al., 2019). Moreover, participants reported that they needed changes in traditional responses (e.g., not being treated as the perpetrator solely based on being a man), judicial and police help (e.g., biased treatment), and social services (e.g., no prejudice and a nonjudgmental attitude). Previous studies in this field already pointed to these needs as implications of their data. For example, Walker et al. (2020) stated the need to equip social and justice services with training to recognize the prevalence of female-perpetrated IPV in order to eradicate the unbiased response to male victims reporting IPV.

Professionals and society continue to offer stereotyped services, which have frequently resulted in secondary victimization of male victims by the system (e.g., Machado et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2020). Therefore, men are experiencing secondary victimization by the support system, and this appears to be endemic to their acknowledgment and help-seeking process. These experiences appear to be intrinsically linked to the prevailing gender stereotypes in society. Thus, it is unsurprising that these stereotypes similarly affect professionals in the support system (e.g., Machado et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2020). Policies and funding of IPV need to ensure that men have the same opportunity as women to access help and support (e.g., Walker et al., 2020). Furthermore, men who feel supported and have access to publicly available information are more likely to engage in disclosure, gain the status of a victim, and benefit from help-seeking (e.g., Machado et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2020).

Although this study constitutes an important contribution to the field, with new and valuable data that can inform victims, practitioners, and policymakers, it is not without limitations, and it is important to reflect on them. The collected sample only included heterosexual men who requested formal help from the legal system (i.e., police and courts) and/or domestic violence support agencies. We did not gather data on men who did not seek formal support and who are in same-sex relationships. Second, it is important to mention the retrospective nature of the research. The majority of the participants were reporting to their past experiences once they were not in a violent relationship. Third, another potential limitation is the small sample size; however, the richness and in-depth nature of the findings may balance the size of the sample. Finally, we utilized a female interviewer to conduct face-to-face interviews. Regarding this issue, literature on this area indicates that men show a preference for talking to women about these issues, as they feel that they are not judged for showing their feelings and weaknesses (e.g., Proctor, 2008).

## CONCLUSION

Although several studies have highlighted the barriers and double-standard treatment experienced by male victims (e.g., Barber, 2008; Cook, 2009; Hines & Douglas, 2010; Hines & Douglas, 2011; Machado et al., 2016, 2017; Tilbrook et al., 2010; Tsui et al., 2010; Wallace et al., 2019), to the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to explore the acknowledgment of men as victims of IPV in Portugal.

This study revealed that traditional gender discourses and social expectations appeared to prevent Portuguese male victims from acknowledging their victimization and created barriers to obtaining the help that they need. If this phenomenon continues to be socially invisible and men continue to not acknowledge their victimization, male victims will remain unknown and unseen and will ultimately continue to be considered unacceptable victims of IPV. Victimization and its inherent difficulties (e.g., symptoms of maladjustment) may be exacerbated by these conditions, leading to a greater need for prolonged and specialized support, qualified answers, and well-trained professionals.

Furthermore, when men disclose their victimization and reach for help, they are treated by others with disbelief, discredit, insensitivity, or even ridicule and hostility instead of empathy, protection, and safety (e.g., Huntley et al., 2019). Considering the increasing rates of help-seeking behaviors by this group of victims, society and support agencies urgently need to adapt to offer men the same treatment as women and to offer gender-inclusive services and gender-sensitive intervention programs (e.g., Huntley et al., 2019; Lysova & Dim, 2020; Lysova et al., 2020; Walker et al., 2020). According to Lysova and colleagues, professionals also need to use language that encourages a sense of autonomy and agency in men to seek help, avoiding labels like “victim” that already had demonstrated not to help men to disclose IPV. All these changes could help men to recognize themselves as victims of IPV, which is the first step to overcoming this vulnerable condition and could tip the balance toward a higher likelihood of disclosure. Moreover, once men have access to support, belief, and validation, their path to acknowledgment and help-seeking will be easier (Hine et al., 2020; Wallace et al., 2019).

Additional studies are needed to further explore the experiences of male victims, with samples of different characteristics (e.g., men who did not seek help; men in same-sex relationships; and from diverse cultures) and studies specifically designed to explore how victim acknowledgment can help promote positive outcomes for crime victims, support systems, and society (e.g., Englebrecht & Reynolds, 2011).

## REFERENCES

- Addis, M. E., & Mahalik, J. R. (2003). Men, masculinity, and the contexts of help seeking. *The American Psychologist*, 58(1), 5–14. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.58.1.5>
- Ali, P. A., Dhingra, K., & McGarry, J. (2016). A literature review of intimate partner violence and its classifications. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 31, 16–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2016.06.008>
- Allen-Collinson, J. (2009). A marked man: Female-perpetrated intimate partner abuse. *International Journal of Men's Health*, 8(1), 22–40. <https://doi.org/10.3149/jmh.0801.22>
- Archer, J. (2000). Sex differences in aggression between heterosexual partners: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126(5), 651–680. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.126.5.651>

- Arnocky, S., & Vaillancourt, T. (2014). Sex differences in response to victimization by an intimate partner: More stigmatization and less help-seeking among males. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 23(7), 705–724. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2014.933465>
- Artime, T. M., McCallum, E. B., & Peterson, Z. D. (2014). Men's acknowledgment of their sexual victimization experiences. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 15(3), 313–323. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033376>
- Barber, C. F. (2008). Domestic violence against men. *Nursing Standard*, 22(51), 35–39. <https://doi.org/10.7748/ns2008.08.22.51.35.c6644>
- Bates, E. A. (2019a). "Walking on egg shells": A qualitative examination of men's experiences of intimate partner violence. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*, 21(1), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000203>
- Bates, E. A. (2019b). "No one would ever believe me": An exploration of the impact of intimate partner violence victimization on men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*, 21(4), 497–507. <https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000206>
- Boonzaier, F. (2008). "If the man says you must sit, then you must sit": The relational construction of woman abuse: gender, subjectivity and violence. *Feminism & Psychology*, 18(2), 183–206. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353507088266>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Breiding, M., Basile, K., Smith, S., Black, M., & Mahendra, R. (2015). *Intimate partner violence surveillance: Uniform definitions and recommended data elements, version 2.0*. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/intimatepartnerviolence.pdf>
- Brooks, M. (2018). Male victims of domestic and partner abuse: 35 key facts. <http://www.mankind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/35-Key-Facts-Male-Victims-March-2018-1.pdf>
- Cannon, C. E. B., & Buttell, F. P. (2016). The social construction of roles in intimate partner violence: Is the victim/perpetrator model the only viable one? *Journal of Family Violence*, 31(8), 967–971. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-016-9883-2>
- Choi, A. W.-M., Wong, J. Y.-H., Kam, C.-W., Lau, C.-L., Wong, J. K.-S., & Lo, R. T.-F. (2015). Injury patterns and help-seeking behavior in Hong Kong male intimate partner violence victims. *The Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 49(2), 217–226. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jemermed.2015.03.007>
- Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality. (2015). *National plans. Presidency of the council of ministers*. <https://www.cig.gov.pt/planos-nacionais-areas/violencia-domestica>
- Cook, P. (2009). *Abused men: The hidden side of domestic violence* (2nd ed.). Praeger.
- Costa, D., Soares, J., Lindert, J., Hatzidimitriadou, E., Sundin, Ö., Toth, O., Ioannidi-Kapolo, E., & Barros, H. (2015). Intimate partner violence: A study in men and women from six european countries. *International Journal of Public Health*, 60(4), 467–478. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-015-0663-1>
- Desmarais, S. L., Reeves, K. A., Nicholls, T. L., Telford, R. P., & Fiebert, M. S. (2012). Prevalence of physical violence in intimate relationships, part 1: Rates of male and female victimization. *Partner Abuse*, 3(2), 140–169. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1946-6560.3.2.140>
- Dim, E. E. (2020). Experiences of physical and psychological violence against male victims in Canada: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 65(9), 1029–1054. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X20911898>
- Dobash, R. P., & Dobash, R. E. (2004). Women's violence to men in intimate relationships: working on a puzzle. *British Journal of Criminology*, 44(3), 324–349. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azh026>

- Douglas, E. M., Hines, D. A., & McCarthy, S. C. (2012). Men who sustain female-to-male partner violence: Factors associated with where they seek help and how they rate those resources. *Violence and Victims, 27*(6), 871–894. <https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.27.6.871>
- Drijber, B. C., Reijnders, U. J. L., & Ceelen, M. (2012). Male victims of domestic violence. *Journal of Family Violence, 28*(2), 173–178. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-012-9482-9>
- Durfee, A. (2011). "I'm not a victim, she's an abuser": Masculinity, victimization, and protection orders. *Gender & Society, 25*, 316–334. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243211404889>
- Dutton, D., & Nicholls, T. (2005). The gender paradigm in domestic violence: Research and theory. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 10*, 680–714. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2005.02.001>
- Dutton, D., & White, K. (2013). Male victims of domestic violence. *New Male Studies: An International Journal, 2*(1), 5–17. <http://ukfamilylawreform.co.uk/docs/malevictimsofdvyb-dutton2013.pdf>
- Englebrect, C. M., & Reyns, B. W. (2011). Gender differences in acknowledgment of stalking victimization: Results from the NCVS stalking supplement. *Violence and Victims, 26*(5), 560–579. <https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.26.5.560>
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*, 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Hellemans, S., Buysse, A., De Smet, O., & Wietzker, A. (2014). Intimate partner violence in Belgium: Prevalence, individual health outcomes, and relational correlates. *Psychologica Belgica, 54*(1), 79–96. <https://doi.org/10.5334/pb.af>
- Hine, B., Bates, E. A., & Wallace, S. (2020). "I have guys call me and say 'I can't be the victim of domestic abuse'": Exploring the experiences of telephone support providers for male victims of domestic violence and abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 37*(7–8), 5594–5625. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520944551>
- Hines, D. A., & Douglas, E. M. (2010). Intimate terrorism by women towards men: Does it exist? *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research, 2*(3), 36–56. <https://doi.org/10.5042/jacpr.2010.0335>
- Hines, D. A., & Douglas, E. M. (2011). The reported availability of U.S. domestic violence services to victims who vary by age, sexual orientation, and gender. *Partner Abuse, 2*(1), 3–30. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1946-6560.2.1.3>
- Hines, D. A., & Douglas, E. M. (2015). Health problems of partner violence victims: Comparing help-seeking men to a population-based sample. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 48*(2), 136–144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2014.08.022>
- Hines, D. A., Douglas, E. M., & Berger, J. L. (2014). A self-report measure of legal and administrative aggression within intimate relationships. *Aggressive Behavior, 41*(4), 295–309. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21540>
- Hines, D. A., & Malley-Morrison, K. (2001). Psychological effects of partner abuse against men: A neglected research area. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 2*(2), 75–85. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.2.2.75>
- Huntley, A. L., Potter, L., Williamson, E., Malpass, A., Szilassy, E., & Feder, G. (2019). Help-seeking by male victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA): A systematic review and qualitative evidence synthesis. *BMJ Open, 9*(6), e021960. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2018-021960>
- Josolyne, S. (2011). *Men's experiences of violence and abuse from a female intimate partner: Power, masculinity and institutional systems* [Doctoral Thesis]. University of East London.
- Lövestad, S., & Krantz, G. (2012). Men's and women's exposure and perpetration of partner violence: An epidemiological study from Sweden. *BMC Public Health, 12*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-12-945>

- Lysova, A., & Dim, E. E. (2020). Severity of victimization and formal help seeking among men who experienced intimate partner violence in their ongoing relationships. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 37*(3–4), 1404–1429. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520922352>
- Lysova, A., Hanson, K., Dixon, L., Douglas, E. M., Hines, D. A., & Celi, E. M. (2020). Internal and external barriers to help seeking: voices of men who experienced abuse in the intimate relationships [Advance Online Publication]. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X20919710>
- Machado, A., Hines, D., & Matos, M. (2016). Help-seeking and needs of male victims of intimate partner violence in Portugal. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 17*(3), 255–264. <https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000013>
- Machado, A., Santos, A., Graham-Kevan, N., & Matos, M. (2017). Exploring help seeking experiences of male victims of female perpetrators of IPV. *Journal of Family Violence, 32*(5), 513–523. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-016-9853-8>
- Mankowski, E. S., & Maton, K. I. (2010). A community psychology of men and masculinity: Historical and conceptual review. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 45*(1–2), 73–86. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-009-9288-y>
- McCarrick, J., Davis-McCabe, C., & Hirst-Winthrop, S. (2015). Men's experiences of the criminal justice system following female perpetrated intimate partner violence. *Journal of Family Violence, 31*(2), 203–213. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-015-9749-z>
- Ministério da Administração Interna [Ministry of Internal Affairs]. (2019). *Relatório anual de segurança interna [annual report of homeland security]*. [www.portugal.gov.pt/download-ficheiros/ficheiro.aspx?v=%3D%3DBQAAAB%2BLCAAAAAAABAAzNDA0sAAAQJ%2BleAUAAAA%3D](http://www.portugal.gov.pt/download-ficheiros/ficheiro.aspx?v=%3D%3DBQAAAB%2BLCAAAAAAABAAzNDA0sAAAQJ%2BleAUAAAA%3D)
- Penal. (2014). DL n.º 48/95, March 15 [Portuguese Penal Code]. [www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei\\_mostra\\_articulado.php?nid\\_109&tabela\\_leis](http://www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei_mostra_articulado.php?nid_109&tabela_leis)
- Proctor, G. (2008). Gender dynamics in person-centered therapy: Does gender matter? *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies, 7*(2), 82–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14779757.2008.9688455>
- Rubla, J., & López, F. (2012). Modelo recursivo de reacción violenta en parejas válido para ambos sexos. *Boletín de Psicología, 105*, 61–74. [www.uv.es/seoane/boletin/previos/N105-4.pdf](http://www.uv.es/seoane/boletin/previos/N105-4.pdf)
- Simmons, J., Brüggemann, A. J., & Swahnberg, K. (2016). Disclosing victimisation to healthcare professionals in Sweden: A constructivist grounded theory study of experiences among men exposed to interpersonal violence. *BMJ Open, 6*(6), e010847. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010847>
- Spalek, B. (2006). *Crime victims: Theory, policy, and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-20450-8>
- Sylaska, K. M., & Edwards, K. M. (2014). Disclosure of intimate partner violence to informal social support network members: A review of the literature. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse, 15*(1), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838013496335>
- Tilbrook, E., Allan, A., & Dear, G. (2010). *Intimate partner abuse of men*. Men's Advisory Network. [https://www.ecu.edu.au/\\_dataassetspdf\\_file0007/685276/10\\_Tilbrook\\_Final-Report.pdf](https://www.ecu.edu.au/_dataassetspdf_file0007/685276/10_Tilbrook_Final-Report.pdf)
- Tsui, V., Cheung, M., & Leung, P. (2010). Help-seeking among male victims of partner abuse: Men's hard times. *Journal of Community Psychology, 38*(6), 769–780. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20394>
- Vala, J. (1986). Metodologia das Ciências Sociais [Social science methodology]. In A. S. Silva & J. M. Pinto (Eds.), *A análise de conteúdo [content analysis]* (p. 101128). Afrontamento.
- Walby, S., & Olive, P. (2014). *Estimating the costs of gender-based violence*. <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/MH0414745EN2.pdf>

- Walker, A., Lyall, K., Silva, D., Craigie, G., Mayshak, R., Costa, B., Hyder, S., & Bentley, A. (2020). Male victims of female-perpetrated intimate partner violence, help-seeking, and reporting behaviors: A qualitative study. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*, 21(2), 213–223. <https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000222>
- Wallace, S., Wallace, C., Kenkre, J., Brayford, J., & Borja, S. (2018). Men who experience domestic abuse: A service perspective. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 11(2), 127–137. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-03-2018-0353>
- Wallace, S., Wallace, C., Kenkre, J., Brayford, J., & Borja, S. (2019). An exploration of the needs of men experiencing domestic abuse: An interpretive phenomenological analysis. *Partner Abuse*, 10(2), 243–261. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1946-6560.10.2.243>
- Zverina, M., Stam, H. J., & Babins-Wagner, R. (2011). Managing victim status in group therapy for men: A discourse analysis. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26(14), 2834–2855. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260510390949>

**Disclosure.** The authors have no relevant financial interest or affiliations with any commercial interests related to the subjects discussed within this article.

**Funding.** This research was supported by Grant SFRH/BD/76309/2011 from Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia awarded to Andreia Machado. Additionally, this study was (partially) conducted at Psychology Research Centre, University of Minho, and supported by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology and the Portuguese Ministry of Education and Science through national funds and when applicable co-financed by FEDER under the PT2020 Partnership Agreement (UID/PSI/01662/2013).

Correspondence regarding this article should be directed to Andreia Machado, PhD, Lusófona University, Hei Lab, Porto, Rua Augusto Rosa, nº 244000-098 Porto, Portugal. E-mail: [p5410@ulusofona.pt](mailto:p5410@ulusofona.pt)