Major Federal Research Project Studies Domestic Violence Assessment

The U.S. Department of Justice has published its "Intimate Partner Violence Risk Assessment Validation," reporting on the five-year study that assessed the following approaches to managing and predicting risk of future harm or lethality in domestic violence cases:

Domestic Violence MOSAIC (DV-MOSAIC), Danger Assessment (DA), Domestic Violence Screening Instrument (DVSI), and the Kingston Screening Instrument for Domestic Violence (K-SID).

Researchers had full hands-on access to every aspect of DV-MOSAIC for rating 1,307 battery cases. Comparing interviews, follow-up interviews, and criminal justice data, the project found that DV-MOSAIC scores were significantly associated with the level of abuse.

	How likely partner will be physically abusive in next year	How likely partner will seriously hurt you in next year
DA Point Score	.247 **	.344 **
DV-MOSAIC Rating	.450 **	.465 **
DVSI Point Score	.248 **	.297 **
KSID Risk Score	.175 **	.143 **

Table D8. Correlations between T1 (baseline) risk assessment scores and victims' perceived risk of abuse at beginning of interview.

The report notes that the four approaches differ substantially, mostly in that MOSAIC is a comprehensive method, not merely a paper instrument: "DV-MOSAIC was designed to help professionals organize case information and assess the likelihood of escalation, including homicide, while the other instruments were designed to identify risk of re-offending in spousal assault cases."

Aiming at assessing the predictive accuracy of the approaches studied, the project notes that: "Although DV-MOSAIC may enhance predictions made by case-managers, it is not designed solely for prediction."

Still, DV-MOSAIC tested highest on what the researchers called "sensitivity," correctly classifying most of the women that were indeed re-assaulted.

The study determined that when compared to the other approaches, "DV-MOSAIC performed best in predicting subsequent stalking or threats."

DV-MOSAIC also had the strongest correlation between the victims' perception of risk of re-assault and risk of serious harm. [See Table D8]

Respondent Characteristic	Mean (SD)	% < 125 (n)
All respondents (n=641)	162.3 (16.6)	2.7 (17)
African American (n=174)	166.0* (13.9)	.6 (1)
Latina/Hispanic (n=350)	160.3 (17.6)	4.0 (14)
Non-Hispanic White (n=60)	161.3 (17.0)	1.7 (1)
Mixed/Other (n=54)	163.7 (15.6)	1.9 (1)
Foreign Born (n=136)	161.2 (17.1)	2.9 (7)
U.S. Born (n=240)	162.9 (16.3)	2.5 (10)
Spanish Interview (n=56)	157.9** (17.5)	5.9 (6)
English Interview (n=319)	163.1 (16.3)	2.0 (11)

Table D4. DV-MOSAIC I.Q. scores by selected respondent characteristics (shows that DV-MOSAIC captured relevant information equally well with victims of various ethnicities.)

The project found that DV-MOSAIC captured relevant information equally well with victims of various ethnicities. [See Table D4]

Excerpts from the National Institute of Justice Report:

• "It is notable that DV-MOSAIC had the highest Wald statistic for predicting subsequent stalking and threats."

• "Scores on DV-MOSAIC were significantly associated with level of abuse at follow-up. Subjects that scored in the highest rating (8 -10) category on DV-MOSAIC were twice as likely as those who had scores of below 8 to experience potentially lethal abuse during the follow-up period. Those with the highest ratings on DV-MOSAIC were only half as likely to experience no abuse or only verbal abuse." [Among the 38 women who were administered the DV-MOSAIC and subsequently experienced very high (and potentially lethal) violence, all 38 had scores at the highest ratings.]

• "A utility of MOSAIC is that it provides uniformity to assessment (called Inter-rater reliability) such that ten different people of different abilities and styles will come up with the same preliminary rating." [In a prior study, MOSAIC had an Inter-rater reliability of 92%.]

• MOSAIC was found "the most sensitive of the approaches at capturing cases for which re-assault occurred as either reported by victims or found in the criminal justice system."

• "By most analytic strategies, DVSI and DV-MOSAIC had significant associations with future re-assault."

• "The DV-MOSAIC also had a high sensitivity (the method captured 82.6% of women who were re-assaulted)." [See Table 3]

• "Victims in the high-risk level based on their DV-MOSAIC score were twice as likely as women who scored at lower levels of risk to go someplace where their abusers could not find them (44.4% vs. 23.0%). Nearly 1 of every 5 victims in the DV-MOSAIC highest-level ratings went to a shelter in contrast to 1 in every 13 at the lower ratings."

Instrument/ Assessment Method	Levels/ Ratings	Sensitivity (Self Report) Any Severe		Sensitivity & CJ Data Any Severe		Specificity (Self Report) Any Severe		Specificity & CJ Data Any Severe	
DA	(Variable)								
	Increased	.917	.975	.892	.921	.219	.211	.209	.201
	Severe	.704	.775	.683	.730	.492	.523	.486	.472
	Extreme	.477	.538	.460	.494	.684	.672	.679	.666
DV MOSAIC	(3, 4)								
	5-7	.826	.983	.935	.934	.074	.071	.061	.062
	8-10	.360	.458	.331	.395	.680	.679	.652	.672
DVSI	(Low)								
	High	.532	.667	.514	.629	.486	.517	.477	.514
K-SID	(Low)								
	Moderate	.658	.672	.648	.658	.417	.408	.415	
	High	.316	.281	.296	.263	.759	.740	.752	.775
	Very High	.274	.250	.256	.237	.782	.768		
Victim	(Low)								
	Medium	.697	.674	.663		.472	.511	.461	
	High	.556	.543	.521		.589	.624	.576	

Table 3. Sensitivity and specificity for levels of instruments for any and severe re-assault using self report outcomes and self report & criminal justice data.