Western
Centre for School
Mental Health

Research Snapshot

Poor relationships predict dating violence in adolescent girls

What is this research about?

Dating violence is an important issue among adolescent boys and girls. Adolescent girls involved in dating violence are at an elevated risk for mental health related problems including depression, anxiety, substance use, and high-risk sexual behaviours. Research suggests that prevalence rates for adolescent dating violence victimization range between 10% and 30%. Adolescent girls are also perpetrators of dating violence and exceed rates reported by adolescent boys (10-40%).

The goals of this study were to identify the longitudinal risk factors that predict different dating violence profiles over a 2.5-year period among adolescent girls. This study also compared dating profiles on other indices of adjustment to describe differences among girls who are involved in dating violence.

What did the researchers do?

Data were collected through a cluster randomized controlled trial in twenty high schools. Baseline data were collected in the fall of the adolescents' grade 9 year and follow-up data were collected in the spring of their grade 11 year. Five-hundred and nineteen girls were included. The average age was 14. Participants were predominantly Caucasian (88%) and living in intact family homes (72%) with employed parents (84%).

Dating violence was measured using the Conflict in Adolescent Relationships Inventory (CADRI). The girls were asked to report physical dating violence perpetration and victimization across eight items of actual and

What you need to know:

This study examined risk factors associated with adolescent girls and dating violence as both victims and perpetrators. Researchers found that the presence of negative factors like poor peer and familial relationships in earlier grades were predictive of dating violence involvement in later grades.

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threatened use of physical violence. Based on CADRI results, girls were classified as victims, perpetrators, mutual victims and perpetrators, or neither.

Five potential predictors were included: child maltreatment, parental rejection, delinquency, peer relational aggression, and sexual harassment. Adjustment indicators included grades, self-efficacy, school connectedness, and community involvement. Maladjustment indicators included emotional distress, problem substance use, sexual intercourse and condom use, and suicidal thought.

Longitudinal Findings:

Adolescent girls in negative relationships with peers and their families in Grade 9 were more likely to be involved in negative romantic relationships, specifically mutually violent relationships, in Grade 11. Reports of delinquency in Grade 9 were predictive of mutually violent relationships or perpetrator-only relationships in Grade 11.

Cross-sectional Findings:

Girls who scored significantly low on adjustment indicators (e.g., grades, school connectedness, personal control) in Grade 11 were more likely to be involved in a mutually violent relationship.

Girls who scored high on all seven maladjustment indicators (e.g., sexual intercourse, emotional distress) in Grade 11 were more likely to be in a mutually violent relationship.

How can you use this research?

The findings in this study provided meaningful insight into physical dating violence among girls. Past research in this area has predominantly focused on males. It is clear that there is a predictive relationship between existing patterns of adjustment and maladjustment indicators and current and future involvement in dating violence. Adolescents who demonstrate low levels of adjustment factors and high levels of maladjustment factors tend to be more likely to be involved in mutually violent relationships. These findings can underscore the importance of developing early prevention programming to enhance adolescent feelings of school connectedness, positive school attitudes, and engaging in personal control to reduce the likelihood of involvement in dating violence.

Original Research Article:

For a complete description of the research and findings, please see the full research article:

Chiodo, D., Crooks, C. V., Wolfe, D. A., McIsaac, C., Hughes, R., & Jaffe, P.G. (2012). Longitudinal prediction and concurrent functioning of adolescent girls demonstrating various profiles of dating violence and victimization. *Prevention Science, 13*, 350-359.

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About this Summary: This summary was written by Jasprit (Jessy) Pandori, PhD Candidate at Western University. For further information about Western's Centre for School Mental Health, visit **www.edu.uwo.ca/csmh**.

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