

Design and Feasibility of a School-Based Text Message Campaign to Promote Healthy Relationships

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

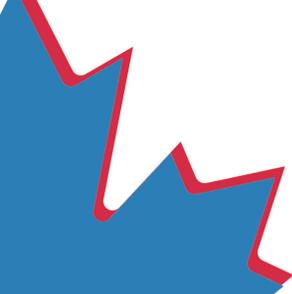
This study outlines how teen dating violence (TDV) is a common occurrence among adolescents, and can lead to serious problems like depression, anxiety, or substance abuse. Fortunately, there has been evidence that some school-based preventative programs can decrease TDV in high schools. Unfortunately, not all schools have the resources to use these intervention programs. In order to prevent TDV in a more resource-friendly way, the researchers of this study pilot tested the design of a cost-effective text messaging program called the healthy relationships campaign (HRC). This is a text messaging campaign that can be used to reduce TDV and promote healthy relationships.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Highlights the need for school-based health intervention programs to use technology platforms like text messaging as a tool to share information with adolescents
- Can serve as a feasible approach to increasing awareness of what healthy or unhealthy relationships look like
- Can help increase awareness of steps teens can take if they see this happening to their peers.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

Through group interviewing (i.e., sharing thoughts and feelings in a face-to-face group setting) the researchers started their initial testing phase with 24 adolescent participants. The researchers began by sending knowledge-based interactive, or open-ended questions via text message to all of the students. They then discussed how the students felt about the campaign after completion of the questions. Specifically, knowledge-based text messages were sent that gave examples of what a healthy or unhealthy relationship looks like. For example, "In a healthy relationship, your partner supports you through both difficult and exciting times without making you feel guilty. REPLY 1 to find out why." Or, "One sign of an abusive relationship is a partner who tries to control or manipulate you. REPLY 1 for an example." Interactive messages showed participants a case study where they needed to send a correct reply back (i.e., "Your partner always checks up on you when you're not with them to keep tabs on you. Is this 1-healthy, 2-unhealthy, or 3-abusive? REPLY 1, 2, 3 to answer"). Open-ended text messages asked participants questions like "What do you think are components of a healthy relationship? REPLY 1 for some examples." After the initial testing phases, a different group of participants were asked to share their feedback to the researchers about the campaign.



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WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

This study found that overall, the majority of the adolescents who participated in the study felt that it was helpful. Further, they found that using text messages as a means to deliver TDV information proved useful. Finally, they found that the HRC encouraged communication and healthy relationships.

These results are important because they provide initial evidence that text message-based information may be a very promising route to share information with youth about what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

The technique of text-based intervention programs (specifically HRC) can be used by researchers, educators, schools and health care providers who are looking to incorporate an engaging approach to teaching youth about how they can recognize and prevent TDV. Indeed, the use of this technology allows students to interact with critical health information through a medium that is suitable for their communication style.

Since this study is a first step in recognizing whether a platform like text messaging can be used to reduce TDV, future studies can begin to implement the HRC into schools in order to determine whether this would be an effective avenue to pursue.

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KEYWORDS

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FULL REFERENCE

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