Gender Differences in the Victim–Offender Relationship for On- and Offline Youth Violence

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

The purpose of this research is to explore overlap in the use and experience of teen dating violence and bullying behavior, and whether this overlap differs by setting (on- or offline) or gender. Teen dating violence (TDV) is physical, sexual, or psychological abuse to a current or previous dating partner. YAlthough youth violence behaviour – like TDV and bullying – can look similar across circumstances, and researchers tend to examine these behaviours in separate contexts, the authors of this study argue that these various forms of aggression should be studied in a more comprehensive manner (i.e., how does one form of violence in one setting relate to another form of violence in another situation?). Further, this study is concerned about whether the overlap may differ in terms of gender.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- This study highlights the need for developing youth violence prevention programs that have gender specific components.
- This work takes into account different types of violence in adolescent interpersonal relationships and illuminates how different forms of youth aggression can relate to one another in on- and offline settings.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

In this study, the researcher gathered a sample of 5,647 grade 7-12 students from 10 schools in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. In addition to being asked their gender, age, race, grades earned, parental education, and questions regarding their time spent online, these students responded to questions on four different types of youth violence: physical TDV, cyber TDV, in-person bullying, and cyber bullying. For all forms of violence, questions on both perpetration and victimization were asked. Specifically, physical dating violence was measured by asking students how many times they used/experienced the following acts against/from their partner in person: scratched, kicked, hit, slapped, bit or assaulted with a weapon. Cyber dating violence was measured by how many times they used/experienced things like posting naked photos of their partner or pressuring their partner to send naked texts. In-person bullying was measured by asking students how many times they used/experienced things like teasing, name-calling, physical assault, or damaging another student's property in the last year. Lastly, cyber bullying was measured by asking students about their use/experience of online harassment (e.g., threats using cell phones, texting, teasing, and misuse of other student's accounts).
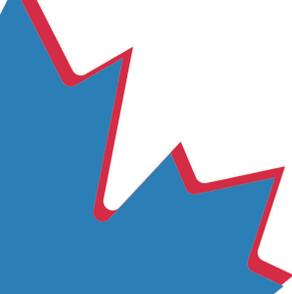
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WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

The author of this study discovered gender differences in perpetration and victimization experiences of youth violence. Specifically, boys in this study engaged in more in-person bullying and cyber bullying acts when compared to girls in the sample, and also reported higher levels of physical TDV victimization. Girls were more likely to perpetrate more physical and cyber TDV and also to report more victimization across all forms of aggression except for physical TDV.

When looking at how types of youth violence overlapped (i.e., how one form of violence in one setting related to violence in another setting), this study found that violence in one type of relationship can influence or encourage violence in other areas as well. A summary of results from Table 4 in the paper is provided below. A checkmark indicates an association was found (e.g., that more physical TDV victimization predicted use of more physical TDV perpetration).

The author also explored whether these associations were moderated by gender (e.g., whether the associations were stronger for girls than boys, or vice versa). The association between physical TDV victimization and physical TDV perpetration, and between physical TDV victimization and cyber TDV perpetration, was stronger for girls than boys. The association between cyber-bullying victimization and cyber-bullying perpetration was also stronger for girls (i.e., more likely to use cyberbullying if also experienced cyberbullying victimization). However, the association between in-person bullying victimization and cyberbullying perpetration was not as strong for girls (i.e., if experienced in-person bullying, were less likely to use cyberbullying).

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

This work can be used by teachers who are interested in developing effective youth prevention programs that improve young people's relationships in both on- and offline settings. Further, this work is useful for scholars looking to expand on the growing literature on cyber bullying, and how technology is changing the way we look at youth violence. Finally, this work is helpful for educators and practitioners who want to begin forming appropriate youth violence intervention programs that include gender specific components.

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KEYWORDS

Gender, socialization, youth, teen, bullying, dating violence, cyber bullying.

FULL REFERENCE

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