



Dating Matters and the Future of Teen Dating Violence Prevention

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

Dating Matters is a school-based dating violence prevention program, developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This paper reviews themes from studies on the Dating Matters program, identifying challenges and successes in program implementation, and future directions for dating violence research.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Studies show that the Dating Matters program can reduce multiple forms of violence, including dating violence.
- Dating Matters is a comprehensive program that targets many risk factors, which is both a strength and a weakness. While comprehensive programs are more effective, schools and communities may not have the resources to sustain such programs.
- Future research should focus on reducing violence in neighbourhoods, include sexual minority youth in interventions, and target the reduction of harmful concepts of masculinity in order to improve the effectiveness and reach of dating violence intervention programs.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

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WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

Dating Matters can reduce multiple forms of violence, including dating violence. The program targets individual, relationship, community and societal factors in order to reduce dating violence, which is a major strength because comprehensive programs are the most effective at preventing dating violence. However, it is also a weakness because schools and communities may not have the available resources to continue the program when external supports are removed, and the positive effects of the program may not be sustained. Additionally, it is not yet known which components of the program are most essential to its success, which makes it difficult for schools to choose to focus on certain aspects of the program if they have limited resources.

The studies reviewed in this paper included primarily Black and Hispanic children who grew up in urban areas because youth from these groups are at higher risk for teen dating violence and are more exposed to violence in their neighbourhoods. Dating Matters' school-based prevention efforts may be undermined by the violence that youth experience in their own neighbourhoods, suggesting the need for a future research that focuses on neighbourhood characteristics outside of the school community. Future research should also take steps to broaden the reach of teen dating violence prevention, such as by including sexual minority youth and by taking an approach that works to reduce harmful concepts of masculinity in order to decrease dating violence perpetration in males.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

This work is useful for researchers who are working on developing and evaluating dating violence intervention programs because it highlights areas that are in need of further investigation. It is also useful for school administrators who are in charge of choosing programs to implement at their schools because it discusses the effectiveness and limitations of the Dating Matters program.

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KEYWORDS

Dating violence, youth, intimate partner violence, healthy relationships, intervention, prevention

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