



# Profiles and Predictors of Dating Violence Among Sexual and Gender Minority Adolescents

## WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

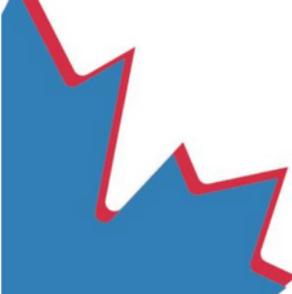
Past research shows that there are a number of different patterns of involvement in adolescent dating violence (ADV). Some youth may perpetrate and others may be victimized by ADV, while some youth may experience both roles. There are also overlaps in different forms of ADV, such as physical, verbal, and sexual violence. This study aimed to identify different patterns of dating violence among sexual and gender minority youth, who – because of social marginalization – experience greater vulnerability to ADV. The researchers examined risk factors that might predict involvement in different ADV patterns, including being bullied or witnessing intimate partner violence within the family.

## WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

This study used data from a large sample of over 87,000 students in Grades 9 through 11 in Minnesota. Participants answered questions about their involvement in dating violence, sexual identity, gender identity, gender nonconformity, bullying (including bias-based bullying), and childhood maltreatment. The researchers analyzed the data to find patterns in participants' responses.

## **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:**

- This study examined adolescent dating violence from the perspective of the minority stress model. This model suggests that sexual and gender minority youth experience health disparities because of social stigma and social stress (such as experiences of discrimination and maltreatment).
- The researchers found that sexual and gender minority youth were generally more likely to exhibit patterns of perpetrating or being victimized by dating violence, or both, compared to heterosexual and cisgender youth.
- The data showed that this heightened vulnerability could be understood in terms of gender and sexual minority youth's experiences of discrimination, childhood maltreatment, and bullying.



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### **WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?**

Similar to past studies, the researchers found five profiles of ADV, representing different combinations and frequencies of perpetrating and being victimized by DV. The majority of youth perpetrated and experienced no or low levels of ADV (about 92% of the sample). The other four profiles were: those who experienced high levels of all forms of ADV, with low levels of perpetration (4%); those who experienced and perpetrated relatively high levels of verbal ADV, but not other forms (2%); those who experienced and perpetrated moderate levels of all forms of ADV (1%); and those who experienced and perpetrated high levels of all forms of ADV (0.7%).

Compared to heterosexual and cisgender youth, sexual and gender minority youth were more likely to experience profiles with high ADV (perpetrating and/or being victimized). Bisexual youth and gender minority youth were particularly vulnerable to perpetrating and or experiencing high levels of ADV.

Additional findings were in line with the minority stress model, which suggests that discrimination and maltreatment contribute to these youth's vulnerability to other negative experiences. In this study, youth's experiences of bullying, discrimination, and childhood maltreatment were related to their greater involvement in ADV. After accounting for these factors, sexual and gender minority youth were only significantly different from heterosexual and cisgender youth in terms of their increased risk of being in the high victimization/low perpetration profile.

### **HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?**

This work adds to our understanding of the increased vulnerability of sexual and gender minority youth to adolescent dating violence. This research highlights the importance of understanding how minority stressors, including discrimination, childhood maltreatment, and bullying, may increase youth's risk of ADV. To promote the healthy development of all youth, prevention programs should address discrimination based on gender and sexual identities.

### **ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS**

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### **KEYWORDS**

teen dating violence; adolescence; sexual minority youth; gender minority youth; minority stress model

### **FULL CITATION**

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