

What Works in Violence Prevention Among Young People?: A Systematic Review of Reviews

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

The authors reviewed three decades of research on school-based violence prevention programs for students ages 15 and up. They summarized findings on how effective these programs are at reducing rates of violence and increasing bystander helping behaviours. They also summarized findings on what program features might contribute to program effectiveness and make recommendations for future programming. This paper is a “review of reviews”, meaning that it synthesizes findings from review papers, which are themselves summaries of individual research studies.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

- School-based violence prevention programs can lead to reductions in violence and increases in bystander behaviours.
- Decades of research on prevention programs have contributed to the current evidence-based recommendations for more effective programming, including programs that are longer and more intensive and which include specific skills training.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The authors reviewed 40 previously published review papers that examined school-based violence prevention programs, mainly implemented in Europe and North America. They included English-language reviews (systematic reviews, narrative reviews, or meta-analyses) of violence prevention programs in high schools or universities. This included studies of bullying, dating violence, sexual assault, and antisocial behaviour.



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WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

The majority of review papers reported that school-based prevention programs led to some reduction in violence. Generally, program effects were not sustained after the programs ended. The authors summarized recommendations from across the review papers that may contribute to more effective programming. These recommendations include: administering programs that are longer and more intensive; incorporating violence prevention into school policies; using programming that is grounded in evidence-based theories; including specific skills training, such as conflict resolution and peer support; and targeting changes in behaviour, rather than changes in beliefs alone.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

evaluating violence prevention programs. The article includes a table summarizing recommendations for interventions that target bullying, dating violence, sexual assault, or antisocial behaviour.

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KEYWORDS

bullying; dating violence; sexual assault; adolescence;
school-based intervention

FULL REFERENCE

Kovalenko , A.G., Abraham, C., Graham-Rowe, E.,
Levine, M., & O'Dwyer, S. (2020).
What works in violence prevention among young
people?: A systematic review of reviews. *Trauma,
Violence, & Abuse*, DOI: 10.1177/1524838020939130