

Examining the effects of teen dating violence prevention programs: a systematic review and meta-analysis

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

In this paper, the authors examined the efficacy of teen dating violence prevention programs. Typically delivered in schools, these programs aim to prevent dating violence by increasing knowledge, modifying attitudes, developing skills, and increasing healthy relationship behaviours.

This paper is a meta-analysis, which means it synthesizes findings from previous research studies. The authors examined how effective teen dating violence programs are at increasing knowledge about dating violence, changing attitudes, increasing bystander behaviours, and reducing the frequency of dating violence.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The authors identified 38 studies conducted in Western countries that examined dating violence prevention programs for youth under the age of 18. The studies were published between 1997 and 2019. The authors summarized findings from these studies in prose; they also computed statistics that summarize the average effects of these programs.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

- The authors synthesized findings from 38 studies on teen dating violence prevention programs.
- Overall, the programs significantly improved participants' knowledge and attitudes about dating violence, and also reduced reports of dating violence perpetration. There was no significant impact of these programs on reports of being victimized by dating violence or on bystander behaviours.



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WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

Dating violence prevention programs were generally effective at increasing adolescents' knowledge about dating violence and changing unhelpful attitudes about dating violence. Programs that included a discussion on gender roles were more effective at changing attitudes, compared to programs that did not. The positive effects of programs tended to be strongest when they were evaluated at the end of the program; these positive results faded over time.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

This work can be used by decisionmakers, program developers, and researchers. First, it suggests that prevention programs vary in their effectiveness, and that different program components may impact effectiveness. Programs should be carefully selected for how they can meet the users' goals. Further, while current programs are effective at improving knowledge and attitudes around dating violence, these changes are not necessarily translating into long-term behavioural changes. Additional work is needed on the part of program developers and researchers to ensure that prevention programs effectively address dating violence.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

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