

Male Perpetration of Adolescent Dating Violence: A Scoping Review

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

Youth of all genders can be perpetrators and targets of dating violence. However, past research shows that males engage in more violence forms of dating violence, and females report more negative outcomes as a result of being victimized by dating violence. In this paper, the authors reviewed findings from 16 research studies on males' perpetration of adolescent dating violence against females. The authors identified overarching themes related to males' perpetration and make recommendations for trauma-informed intervention.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

- The authors identified three themes associated with adolescent males' perpetration of dating violence: male entitlement; adverse childhood experiences; and ineffective conflict management.
- These themes offer targets for dating violence prevention programs.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The authors searched for studies on adolescent males' perpetration of dating violence. They identified 16 studies conducted in the United States, Spain, South Africa, and Italy. They analyzed the content of the articles to find common themes using a socio-ecological framework, which guided them to look at how different parts of young people's lives – their personal traits, their relationships, their communities, and the society in which they grow up – influence their behaviours.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

From the 16 studies, the authors identified three overarching themes associated with adolescent males' perpetration of dating violence. The first theme, male entitlement, refers to a number of attitudes related to male superiority. A number of studies showed how an acceptance of such beliefs can lead to power imbalances in relationships and increase risk of perpetrating dating violence.

The second theme, adverse childhood experiences, refers to findings that show that exposure to highly stressful events can increase young people's risk of a range of negative outcomes, including perpetration of dating violence. Specifically, adolescents with a history of observing, experiencing, or perpetrating violence at home, at school, or in their communities, are at increased risk of perpetrating violence in their dating relationships.

The final theme, ineffective conflict management, describes deficits in abilities to regulate emotions and communicate in healthy ways. The authors reviewed studies that showed that youth who lack the skills to resolve conflict effectively may turn to unhealthy strategies, including aggression.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

Practitioners and researchers can use this research to target the themes as part of prevention efforts. This research highlights the importance of addressing gendered attitudes related to adolescent dating violence and developing effective conflict resolution skills, and aligns with existing programs that challenge traditional masculinities and their relationship to violence. The theme of adverse childhood events lends support to programs that address the role of the family in promoting healthy relationships. The authors make specific recommendations for trauma-informed assessment and intervention, aimed at primary care providers but which can be applied to any adult who works with youth. These include ways to screen for risk and topics to discuss in counselling.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

Noreen K. Malhi, MN-NP, RN, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

John L. Oliffe, PhD, RN, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada; Department of Nursing, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria, Australia

Vicky Bungay, PhD, RN, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

Mary T Kelly, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

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