

Dating Violence Among Rural Adolescents: Perpetration and Victimization by Gender

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

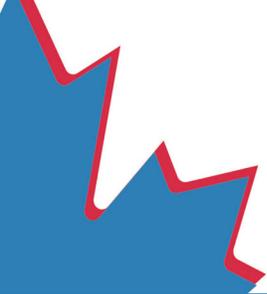
This study adds to our understanding of adolescent dating violence (ADV) by examining the experiences of youth in rural areas. The majority of research has so far been conducted on youth in urban areas. Past research in adult samples has found that relationship violence is more prevalent and severe in rural areas compared to urban areas. These differences have been attributed to a number of factors, including social characteristics (such as more traditional views towards gender and sexuality) and more limited access to resources that may prevent help-seeking. The goal of this study was to examine the different forms of ADV experienced by rural youth.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

- A majority of youth reported experiencing ADV, as perpetrators and/or targets.
- Verbal and online violence were the most common forms of ADV experienced by participants.
- The ADV experiences of rural youth may differ from those of urban youth.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The sample for this study was taken from a larger U.S. study on youth's relationship wellbeing in rural areas. 131 youth (between the ages of 13 and 19), who lived in a rural area and who were currently or previously in a dating relationship, completed an online survey about their experiences of dating violence. For the purposes of this study, areas with a population of less than 50,000 people were considered rural. Participants answered questions about their experiences of different forms of dating violence, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, threatening behaviour, relationship aggression, verbal abuse, and online dating abuse.



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WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

74% of participants reported perpetrating at least one form of ADV and 81% of participants reported being victimized by at least one form of ADV. The most prevalent forms of ADV were verbal and online violence. 51% of male participants and 60% of female participants reported perpetrating verbal ADV. 53% of male participants and 56% of female participants reported perpetrating online violence. Similar figures were reported for rates of being victimized by verbal and online ADV.

There were no significant gender differences for the perpetration of different forms of ADV. A significantly higher proportion of male participants (21%) reported being victimized by physical ADV, compared to female participants (5%). Higher proportions of youth reported perpetrating and experiencing ADV in their current relationships, compared to those who reported ADV in their past relationships.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

The authors note the proportions of youth who reported perpetration and victimization were higher compared to previous research on ADV. They posit that using online sampling procedures and waiving parent consent to participate (requiring only youth consent) may have resulted in these higher rates, compared to in-person surveys that require parenting consent. Researchers in this area should consider how their sampling procedures may affect who participates in their research, and how they respond. Additional differences found in this sample might be related to the rural population it drew from; researchers should also consider comparing the experiences of rural and urban youth.

Higher rates of ADV in current relationships, compared to past relationships, may suggest that youth may need support in identifying unhealthy relationship dynamics and developing the skills to leave an unhealthy relationship. Practitioners who work with rural youth should consider how cultural factors (like social norms around dating and marriage) may impact adolescents' ability to seek help for or leave unhealthy relationships.

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FULL REFERENCE

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