

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Boys Are Victims Too? Sexual Dating and Injury Among High-Risk Youth

Reidy, D.E., Early, M.S., & Holland, K.M. (2017). Boys are victims too? Sexual dating violence and injury among high-risk youth. *Preventative Medicine*, 101, 28-33. doi:10.1016/j.ypmed.2017.05.018

SUMMARY: Boys and girls who have been exposed to violence in childhood may be the perpetrators or victims of teen dating violence. Using data collected from the surveys of adolescents in high-risk communities, this study examined whether poly-victimization (exposure to multiple forms of violence) was associated with sex differences in teen dating violence. Results suggest that although boys from high-risk communities may perpetrate teen dating violence more than girls, they are just as likely to be victimized.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Sex differences in teen dating violence perpetration were present among adolescents with high rates of poly-victimization, with boys reporting more perpetration.
- Younger adolescents ages 11 through 14 who experienced poly-victimization were at a greater risk for sexual teen dating violence and perpetration.
- Adolescents ages 11 through 18 were more likely to be a victim of teen dating violence if they were exposed to multiple forms of violence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with organizations that service military families attend or are familiar with (e.g., schools) to increase awareness and prevention efforts regarding teen dating violence
- Facilitate support groups for the adolescent children of Service members who have been victims of violence, including teen dating violence

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide education to military families regarding the risk of their adolescent being exposed to teen dating violence if their adolescent experienced poly-victimization
- Disseminate information regarding the association between an adolescent violent victimization and teen dating violence and where families can find help

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support policies that address the unique challenges the families of Service members face in high-risk communities, including teen dating violence
- Recommend professional education regarding poly-victimization and teen dating violence in high-risk communities for professionals who work with Service members and their families

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METHODS

- Data were collected from the completed surveys of adolescent students in grades seven through twelve. All students under 18 required parental permission.
- The survey included questions regarding demographics, exposure to violence, sexual perpetration and victimization, and injury perpetration and victimization.
- Poly-victimization (i.e., multiple victimizations) was measured by the exposure to four types of violence: community, interpersonal, physical child abuse, and sexual.
- Researchers analyzed how poly-victimization and age were associated with sex differences in the perpetration or victimization of teen dating violence.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 2,577 (52% female and 48% male) adolescents enrolled at public schools in high-risk areas.
- Participant ages were between 11-18 years and most participants were racial or ethnic minorities (43% Latino, 25% White, 22% Black, and 11% other).
- Students were sampled from communities that ranked in the top ten U.S. cities for serious crime.
- All participants reported a dating history in the preceding 12 months.

LIMITATIONS

- The data is cross-sectional and therefore the direction of effects cannot be determined.
- The polyvictimization measure did not assess frequency of victimization. Students who were exposed to repeated forms of violence may be more affected than those who experienced a single incident.
- The data were collected via self-report and results may include self-report bias.
- Data were collected over ten years ago and may not be generalizable to current students in high-risk areas.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Conduct a study using more recent data to increase generalizability since cultural influences and motives for teen dating violence may shift over time
- Assess for number of victimizations (i.e., single incident or repeated experiences) to assess for differences based on frequency of exposure
- Conduct a study that compares data of those collected from students in high-risk areas with students in low-risk areas

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