

## ABSTRACT

- Interpersonal violence is violence that occurs between people who are currently, or were once, in an intimate relationship.
- Interpersonal violence is a significant public health crisis in the United States.
- Teen dating violence can also lead to poor academic performance, lower self-esteem, negative body image, and can promote violence in future relationships.
- The author examined secondary data specifically looking to explore the relationship between a teen dating prevention program and victimization rates in female students.
- Findings suggest that these programs, when offered in a school setting, affect the rates of victimization amongst young females.
- Results of the Chi-square analysis indicated that there was a statistical significance in the intervention of The Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program in public middle schools and the lessened rates of victimization among female students in the schools.
- This study supports further research for practice and policy regarding the implementation of school-wide programs in public middle schools.

## INTRODUCTION

### Significance of Study

- The Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program is a school-based intervention program offered to 6th and 7th grade students of randomly assigned public middle schools in New York.
- Dating and interpersonal violence is a pervasive problem evidenced by research suggesting that roughly one in three U.S. high school students experience dating violence from an intimate partner and an equal number have reported committing similar violence themselves (Espelage, Hong, & Valido, 2018).
- According to the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, approximately 10% of high school students were sexually assaulted in 2017 (Stein & Taylor, 2020).
- Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program took a multi-tiered approach of offering classroom intervention, school wide intervention, a combination of both classroom and school wide intervention, and a control group absent of all interventions.
- These interventions were offered via six-week curriculum focusing on consequences for perpetrators of domestic violence, penalties for harassment, gender roles and their construction within society, and determining what a healthy relationship looks like.
- It sought to assess knowledge about domestic violence, myths surrounding both domestic violence, sexual assault, and rape, and to offer resources to those experiencing interpersonal violence, as well as guidance to bystanders of these situations.

### Purpose of the Research

- The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the effects of the Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program on the victimization rate among females.
- This is of interest because nationwide, 12% of high school aged girls have been "physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to" (Stein & Taylor, 2020).
- Moreover, research indicates that 19% of young women report experiencing sexual assault, many times by someone they know such as a friend or fellow student (Stein & Taylor, 2020).

### Research Question

- Does the Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program administered in middle schools reduce the victimization rate of female students?

### Hypothesis

- The hypothesis of this evaluation is that female students that partake in the Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program will be less likely to be victims of sexual harassment, assault, and interpersonal dating violence.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

- To better understand the pervasive public health issue of teen dating violence (TDV), it is important to look for the cause of both TDV and interpersonal violence (IPV) in general, as TDV often precludes IPV.
- Previous research demonstrates the correlation between exposure to violence and the negative impacts among children and youth.
- Exploring family violence may provide some context as to why domestic violence is prevalent in interpersonal and romantic relationships.
- The social learning theory was developed by psychologist Alfred Bandura (Wedding & Corsini, 2011) and suggests that much behavior is learned through imitation and observation.
- Using the social learning theory, one can hypothesize that behaviors modeled to teens in both peer-ships within their social circle and relationships observed in the home can dictate what they deem to be normalized and appropriate (Johnson, S., et al., 2005).
- Understanding what teens view as appropriate conflict resolution behaviors can be used as predictors for future interpersonal violence (Johnson, S., et al., 2005).

## METHODS

### Research Design and Data Collection

- The current study uses secondary data extrapolated from the dataset from Experimental Evaluation of a Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program in New York City Middle Schools, 2009-2010 (ICPSR 32901) (Taylor et al., 2012).

### Sample and Sampling Methods

- The original study included 1,266 sixth grade students and 1,388 seventh grade students from 30 public middle schools in urban New York City during 2009-2010.

### Measures

#### Independent Variable

- The current study's independent variables are the Youth Dating Violence Prevention program's interventions: classroom setting only, school-wide setting only, mixed setting, and neither which is the control. These variables are nominal.

#### Dependent Variable

- The current study's dependent variables are the victimization rates of female middle school students. Victimization in this context is defined as emotional, verbal, physical, and or sexual abuse perpetrated by one adolescent toward another adolescent with whom they are in a dating relationship (Taylor, et al. 2015). The questions utilized in the survey in this current study are both nominal and ratio measurements. These questions include answers with yes/no answers as well as specific frequency of victimization. Some of the questions asked were "Since you last took this survey, has a female or male touched you in a sexual way when you did not want them to?" "Since you last took this survey, has a male or female grabbed you in a sexual way?" "Since you last took this survey, has a female or male spread a rumor that you were gay?"

#### Demographics

- In the current study, the participants are female, in grades 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade, of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and of Asian, Black White, or other race. The variables included in this demographic were age, grade level, ethnicity, race, gender, and if this was the participants first time engaging in a meaningful violence prevention program.

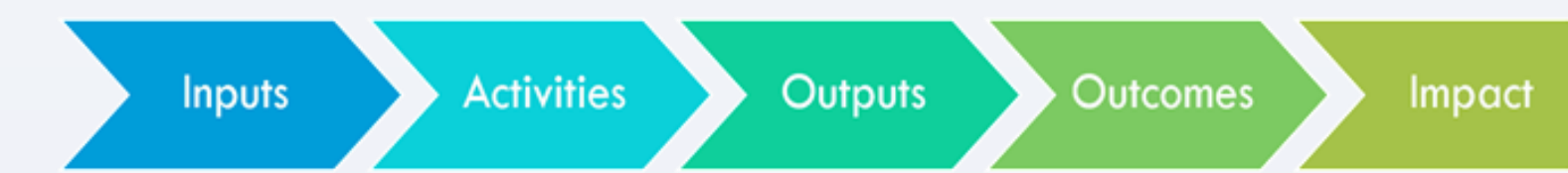
## RESULTS

### Demographics

Of the 862 females surveyed, the ages ranged from 11 years old or younger to 13 years or older. Regarding gender, females were the only gender looked at because of the researcher's interest in discovering if victimization rates dropped after they had completed this intervention. Demographics of this sample are delineated in Table 1. Of this sample, 46.1% self-identified as Hispanic or Latino, 14.5% as Black or African American, 23.5% as Asian, and 21.1% as Caucasian. The ages of the participants were: 32.6% 11 years or younger, 50.9% 12 years old, and 16.5% 13 years old or older

### Chi-Squared Test

A Chi-Squared test compared the effect of the intervention on female victimization in students grade 6 and 7, as shown in Table 2. Based on the evidence seen in this sample, there was some long-term effects of the intervention on female victimization rates. This test demonstrated that the female students attending this program reported less physical violence perpetration as well as less sexual harassment than their peers who did not attend this program. There was statistical significance showing a positive relationship found when examining rates of female victimization of sexual harassment and/or domestic violence in students who had completed the program. This was seen in the following dependent variable: victimization of dating violence and/or sexual harassment in females attending this program,  $(X^2(9) = 18.52, p=0.03)$ . This suggests that this program holds promise for mitigating various forms of sexual violence and harassment in teens.



Trainer	Classroom Intervention:	Six session classroom curricula delivered to middle school students.	Increased knowledge of dating violence and sexual harassment.	Short term: Increase knowledge of dating violence and sexual harassment.
School Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize the consequences for perpetrators of domestic violence and sexual harassment.</li> <li>• Educate on the construction of gender roles and healthy relationships.</li> </ul>	School-wide intervention delivered to middle school students, school faculty, and administration.	Development of conflict resolution skills.	Intermediate: Actions taken to increase bystander intervention and alter harmful behaviors.
School Administration				
Security Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher levels of faculty and security presence.</li> <li>• Use of posters to increase awareness of reporting domestic violence and sexual harassment.</li> </ul>	School-wide intervention delivered to middle school students, school faculty, and administration.	Reduction of perpetration behaviors.	Long-term: Engagement in healthy relationships from adolescence into adulthood.
Classroom				
Materials	School Wide Intervention:		Promotion of healthy relationships.	
Participants			Increased bystander intervention and reporting.	

Figure 1. Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program

### Descriptive Statistics for Prevalence of Female Victimization of Sexual

Treatment	Harassment/Domestic Violence (n=518)			
	Zero	1 to 3	4 to 9	10 or more
School only	98	3	0	0
Classroom only	112	8	3	0
Both school and classroom	99	1	2	4
Neither - Control	176	8	3	1

### Demographics of the Sample by Group (n= 862)

Characteristics	n	%
Sex (%)		
Female	862	100
Spanish, Latino, or Hispanic?		
Yes	223	41.6
Ethnicity		
White	87	21.1
Black or African American	60	14.5
American		
Other	68	16.5
Asian	97	23.5
Age		
11 years or younger	275	32.6
12 years old	429	50.9
13 years or older	139	16.5

## CONCLUSIONS

The current study explored the association between an early intervention and prevention program, the Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program, and rates of female victimization. The author hypothesized that students engaging in this program would have lower rates of victimization. Originally, the major focus of study in interpersonal violence was historically adult populations (Dasgupta, 2017). This study examines the younger population and seeks to understand if early education and intervention can hold promise toward lowering rates of interpersonal violence in teen dating relationships. By engaging in this study, the author discovered that there are significant findings of lowered rates of victimization amongst females who had participated in this intervention. These findings call for future research and highlight the need for implementing these programs in more public middle schools. Without future research and further examination of existing research, the trauma of interpersonal violence may increase thus creating more of a public health concern throughout the United States, as interpersonal violence is a pervasive health concern without clear boundaries (Espelage, D, 2018). If future research indicates that early intervention and prevention programs can mitigate this threat, schools can further become a place of healing and support for youth and families, as interpersonal violence can lead to generational trauma (Stöckl, 2014).

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