

# PROGRAM EVALUATION: YOUTH DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The purpose of this outcome evaluation was to assess the effect of the Youth Dating Violence Prevention (YDVP) program on middle school male students regarding perpetration rates of sexual harassment and dating violence.

**Methods:** The original study conducted by Taylor et al. (2012) was a quantitative, multi-level, experimental, longitudinal, panel design. The YDVP program was delivered to 2,500 sixth and seventh grade students attending 30 public middle schools in New York City. The participating schools were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: classroom-based intervention, school-wide intervention, a combination of classroom and school-wide interventions, and no intervention serving as the control group. A survey was administered to participants at three points: pre-intervention, a posttest immediately post-intervention, and secondary posttest given six months post-intervention. This study utilized the secondary analysis of data provided by the dataset from Experimental Evaluation of a Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program in New York City Middle Schools, 2009-2010 (ICPSR 32901). The results from the post-secondary surveys completed by a subsample of 651 male middle school students were analyzed.

**Results:** No significant association was found on interventions changing the behavior of male students' rates on the following two dependent variables: 1) perpetration dating violence against males or females, and 2) sexual harassment against other males. Of clinical significance, sexual harassment perpetrated by male students against females declined, ( $X^2(9) = 15.75, p = 0.07$ ).

**Discussion:** Considering the effects of the YDVP program intervention began dissipating six months post intervention, it was recommended that intermittent booster sessions be implemented to maintain treatment gains.

## INTRODUCTION

### Significance of Study

- Teen dating violence (TDV) and sexual harassment is a pervasive public health issue estimated to affect up to 60% of adolescents (Taylor et al., 2015).
- TDV is defined as physical, emotional, verbal, psychological, and/or sexual abuse perpetrated by an adolescent against another adolescent with whom they are involved in a dating relationship (Taylor, et al. 2015).
- Sexual harassment is defined as nonconsensual, unwanted, and unwelcomed sexual behavior that directly interferes with the academic life domain (Taylor et al., 2015).
- TDV and sexual harassment have been linked to poor developmental outcomes including declining mental health, increased rates of depression, suicide attempts, and school avoidance (De La Rue et al., 2017).

### Evaluation by Purpose

The purpose of this outcome evaluation is to assess the effect of the YDVP program on the behavior of male middle school students.

### Research Questions

Does the YDVP program administered in middle schools reduce perpetration of sexual harassment and dating violence among male students?

### Hypothesis

male students that take part in the YDVP program will be less likely to be perpetrators of sexual harassment and dating violence.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Social Learning Theory & Social Cognitive Theory

- The development of many school-based dating violence prevention programs are guided by social learning theory and social-cognitive theory developed by psychologist Alfred Bandura (Wedding & Corsini, 2011).
- Social learning theory posits that behavior is vicariously learned through modeling, imitation, and observation (Wedding & Corsini, 2011). In the social-cognitive approach, behavior is learned through environmental factors, external reinforcements and accompanying cognitive processes that are interpreted by the individual (Wedding & Corsini, 2011).
- School-based dating violence prevention program class-room curriculum interventions are the environmental factor introduced to begin the behavior modification (Miller et al., 2014). With reinforcement, the student is encouraged and gains the confidence to speak out against violent behaviors and intervene (Miller et al., 2014).

### Prevalence of TDV

- Studies have illustrated that interpersonal violence perpetrated in dating relationships is at its highest during adolescence (De La Rue et al., 2017).
- TDV is associated with poor academic performance, declining mental health, poor developmental outcomes, isolation, increased risk of substance use, and is predictive of engagement in abusive dating relationships in adulthood (De La Rue et al., 2017).
- Research suggests that violence begins for adolescents as early as middle school, with 15% of middle school aged youth reporting physical violence perpetrated by a dating partner (De La Rue et al., 2017).

### Programs Focused on Male Youth

- Research has found every type of interpersonal violence to be overwhelmingly committed by males (Black et al., 2011).
- Female victims of domestic violence and sexual assault report higher rates of victimization by male perpetrators (Black et al., 2011). Male victims of rape, stalking, and non-contact unwanted sexual experiences also report predominately male perpetration (Black et al., 2011).
- Social norms that enforce male aggression and toxic masculinity lead to an atmosphere that supports interpersonal violence including domestic violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment (Miller et al., 2014).
- TDV prevention programs that target male adolescents encourage gender equity, positive bystander intervention, and promote respect for women in an attempt to reduce or prevent male perpetration of violence against women and girls (Jaime et al., 2018).

## METHODS

### Study Design

- The original study conducted by Taylor et al. (2012) took place from 2009-2010 and was a quantitative, multi-level, experimental, longitudinal, panel design.
- The YDVP program was delivered to 2,500 sixth and seventh grade students attending 30 public middle schools in New York City (Taylor et al., 2012).
- The participating schools were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: classroom-based intervention, school-wide intervention, a combination of classroom and school-wide interventions, and no intervention serving as the control group.
- The current study utilizes secondary analysis of data provided by 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

- The original study included 1,266 sixth grade students and 1,388 seventh grade students across 117 classrooms in 30 public middle schools in New York City (Taylor et al., 2012).
- Participating schools and classrooms were stratified by school location and size. The schools and classrooms were then randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Within the conditions, randomly assigned classrooms were selected to complete the study.
- The current study will utilize a subsample of participants from the original study. Only male students that took part in the classroom intervention, school-wide intervention, or combination of the two, and completed the questions from the secondary post-survey delivered five to six months after one of the assigned conditions will be included in the current study.

### Measures

#### Independent Variable

YDVP program interventions: building only, classroom only, both building and classroom, and neither as the control.

#### Dependent Variable

Perpetration rates of sexual harassment and dating violence by male middle school students.

#### Demographics

Gender (male only), and age (years), Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, a five-category race variable (Asian, Black or African American, White, Other/Multiracial, and Don't Want to Answer), and if the participant has ever taken part in a sexual harassment and domestic violence prevention education program.

## RESULTS

Demographic Information (N = 651)

Variable	Percentage	Variable	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Age (years)</b>	
Male	100	11 or younger	19.8
<b>Race</b>		12	40.2
African American/Black	16.1	13 or older	37.8
Asian	14.7		
White	16.7	<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	
Other/Multiracial	10.9	No	50.1
Did not wish to answer	20.3	Yes	36.6

### Descriptive Statistics

- The 651 participants were male.
- Race/Ethnicity of Participants: 36.6% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 16.1% African American or Black, and 16.7% White.
- Age of Participants: 19.8% or the group were 11 or younger, 40.2% were 12, and 37.8% of the group were 13 or older.

### Inferential Statistics

- A chi-square test was calculated comparing interventions effect on male perpetrating behaviors. There were no long-term effects of the intervention on male student perpetration rates.
- There was not a significant association found on interventions changing the behavior of male students' rates on the following two dependent variables: 1) perpetration dating violence against males or females, and 2) sexual harassment against other males.
- It is of clinical significance to note that sexual harassment perpetrated by male students against females declined, ( $X^2(9) = 15.75, p = 0.07$ ).

## CONSLUSIONS

### Summary

- While rates of sexual harassment perpetrated by male students against females declined, it was not statistically significant. This indicates that the effects of the YDVP program intervention began to dissipate six months post intervention.
- Gains were likely not maintained at the conclusion of the program due to the lack of review sessions or booster interventions to ensure retention of the treatment.
- Another possible explanation is the students' age. Prior research has traditionally been conducted with high school aged students who may have better ability to comprehend the subject matter or have lived experience with TDV and sexual assault leading to alternate results (Taylor et al., 2014). Participants in the original study ranged in age from 11 to 13 years old. While research suggests that violence begins for adolescents as early as middle school, including the younger participants in the study may have skewed the results (Taylor et al., 2014).

### Strengths & Limitations

- Strengths of the original study include a large and diverse sample, and utilization of two post-intervention surveys to assess both short- and long-term effects.
- Limitations of the original study include reliability bring affected by participant's self-reporting their behavior leading to inaccuracy, regional limitations that may have affected the generalizability findings as it took place exclusively in New York City urban school districts, testing effects as the same survey instrument was utilized pre-intervention, post-intervention, and six months post-intervention, and the length of the survey was also problematic due to age of the participants and their comprehension.
- **Implications for Social Work**
- Clinicians, advocates, and school administrators will be able to provide evidence-based programs on TDV and sexual harassment to adolescents, thereby intervening in the cycle of violence before it can take root.
- Early intervention will result in better developmental outcomes for youth, including improved academic performance and mental health, as well as decreased likelihood of future engagement in abusive relationships (De La Rue et al., 2017).

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