Severity of physical dating violence among Spanish adolescents: a matter of meaning?

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Method

Participants: 2695 Spanish adolescents (48.6% boys, 51.4% girls), aged 15-20 (X=16.76; s.d.=1.24), with present or past romantic relationship were interviewed in terms of their involvement on PDV.


AGGRESSION: 2 scales: moderate/severe aggression
Girls: CFA (N=1388; df=17; c²=118.538 (p=.000); NFI=.950; CFI=.956; RMSEA=.066 (.055-.077))
Boys: CFA (N=1126; df=18; c²=104.296 (p=.000); NFI=.974; CFI=.979; RMSEA=.065 (.053-.078))

VICTIMIZATION: 2 scales: moderate/severe victimization
Girls: CFA (N=1401; df=17; c²=146.451 (p=.000); NFI=.944; CFI=.950; RMSEA=.074 (.063-.085))
Boys: CFA (N=1147; df=23; c²=190.629 (p=.000); NFI=.961; CFI=.965; RMSEA=.080 (.069-.090))

Analyses: Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) and descriptive analyses.
Software SPSS 15.0 & AMOS 16.0

Background

During last years have risen a lot of studies about Physical Dating Violence (PDV). Boys and girls are involved in these behaviors more than expected (Foshee & Mathew, 2007; Simon et al., 2010; Strauss, 2004). However the most of this literature has not identified the severity of the aggression or the frequency in which it occurs. Some previous studies have pointed out that PDV follows an increasing aggressive pattern, beginning with moderate forms of violence and developing them to more severe aggressive behaviors (Foshee y Reyes, 2009; 2011; O’Leary et al., 2009).

Aim

To analyze boys’ and girls’ involvement in PDV within their couples, as well as the severity of these aggressive behaviors.

Results and discussion

INVOLVEMENT. As shown in earlier studies, involvement was shown to be above all occasional. The results also showed that abuse and victimization followed different patterns. In line with scaling theory (for example, Straus & Gelles, 1987), victimization may be interpreted as following a pattern which begins with milder forms and gradually progresses to include more severe forms of suffering. Aggressiveness, however, is seen to occur individually in both mild and severe forms, sometimes even combined. This may indicate that both boys and girls do not really perceive a scale of seriousness in these forms of violence. However, no firm conclusions can yet be drawn in this regard. Future studies specifically focusing on adolescent perception of violent behavior may throw more light on the issue.

No sex or age differences were found.

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