

GENERALIST AND SPECIALIST BATTERERS IN TEEN AND YOUNG DATING VIOLENCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF PREVENTION PROGRAMS

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EXTENDED SUMMARY

Introduction

The study of violence in dating relationships in youth and adolescence (Dating Violence, DV) is especially interesting as it establishes the first learning of relationships dynamics, in which exists the possibility of establishing habits for future relationships. In addition, it constitutes a different context of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) analysis: relations at these ages are not characterized by maintaining a common coexistence, nor by sharing common property, or by the existence of any legal formalities and/or common descendants that can link the couple together.

This research context poses several challenges. One of them, is the empirical determination of the basic ways to exert violence in these ages, which finally should allow the development of specific evaluation instruments for DV. Regarding this, there are reviews that offer concurrent conclusions, highlighting among its results the weaknesses in its elaboration and design, the high variability in the indicators of different types of violence (number of items, categories and contents) and gaps in the justification of structure (25 % of cases), internal consistency (10 %) and criterion validity (35 %).

Another challenge is related to the identification of risk and protection factors, which, once detailed, can provide a solid basis for the development of prevention programs. Despite the numerous studies, the current situation on dating violence is confusing due to the practical impossibility to identify unique and specific risk factors, of broad prediction and generality in the samples

studied. As a matter of fact, when analyzing risk factors for other violent behaviors other than those developed in the field of couple relationships, it is observed that many of these predictors are common to those identified in other problems of adolescence, such as delinquency, substance abuse and risky sexual behaviours. In sum, factors that facilitate the appearance of IPV and DV have been identified but are not specific to it, but rather of more generic and decontextualized violence.

The result of this second challenge has revealed, in turn, that there are few studies that analyze whether the perpetrators of IPV and DV are so exclusively and specifically with their partner or whether this violence is, in fact, one more sample or one expression of their violent behaviors generalized in other environments or with other people. All this leads us to consider whether there are differences in the abuse profile between DV aggressors that also show their abusive behavior in other environments and contexts (generalist), as opposed to those who express them specifically with their affective partner (specialists).

Method

Participants

A sample of 447 women aged between 15 and 26 ($M = 18.77$, $SD = 2.36$) was selected. After distribution on the basis of the above criteria, 211 women (43.2 %) were included in the abused category, (including non-perceived mistreatment) and the remaining 236 (52.8 %) among those not abused sample. Among the first group, 123 indicated that their partners had only been violent with them (58.29 %), while 88 (41.71 %) indicated that their partners were also violent with others. The resulting study groups were: non-abused ($n = 236$, 52.8 %), abused by a generalist aggressor ($n = 88$, 19.7 %) and abused by a specialist aggressor ($n = 123$, 27.5 %).

Procedure

Data collection was carried out through the invitation to participate in the study to educational centers of middle and higher education in various provinces of the state.

The sample as a whole has been divided according to two criteria: the perception of mistreatment in their affective relationships and the type of violence exerted by the couple.

Perception of mistreatment. Participants were grouped on the basis of two criteria by combining the answers to two questions included in the questionnaire: "Do you feel or have you ever felt battered by your partner?" and "Do you feel or have felt scared in your relationship?". This way, the subjects were assigned to the "non-battered" group when there was a double negation in their answers, or they were included in the "battered" group when they considered that they had been mistreated or had been feeling scared in their relationship.

Type of violence. For those subjects assigned to the battered group, a second grouping criterion was used. The victim was asked to indicate whether his or her partner was violent with others outside their relationship, which allowed the aggressors to be classified according to the specialization or generalization of their behavior, that is, if their violent behaviour was exclusively oriented towards the couple, or there were, in addition, violent manifestations towards other people. This was proved by the question: "Is your partner violent with other people?"

This procedure allowed us to establish three groups of analysis, based on the variables dichotomized abuse / non-battered and generalized / exclusive violence in the couple: non-battered, abused by a generalist aggressor and abused by a specialist aggressor.

Measurement instruments

The CUVINO (Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2010) is an instrument of evaluation of the victimization within courtship directed specifically to young people and adolescents. It consists of 42 behavioral indicators evaluated on a Likert scale of 5 points (0: never / nothing, 4: almost always / a lot) grouped into 8 factors or ways of exercising violence in the relationship: detachment, humiliation, sexual, Coercion, Physical, Gender based violence, Emotional and Instrumental Punishment. It also includes 3 dichotomous questions ("Do you feel or did you feel battered in your partner?", "Do you feel or have you felt trapped in this relationship?" And "Do you feel or have you felt fear in your relationship? "). It presents a reliability for the total of the scale of $\alpha = 0.932$ and from 0.588 for the Instrumental factor up to 0.818 for the remaining factors. Its factorial structure has been further confirmed in Mexican, North American and Italian samples.

Data analysis

The data were processed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0 statistical package. A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was carried out in order to detect the differences between the study groups (non-battered, generalist battered and specialist battered) in the eight types of violence measured by CUVINO. The compliance of multivariate and univariate homocedasticity assumptions have been confirmed by the Box M test and the Leven statistic, respectively, and, in contrast to the lack of homogeneity, the Dunnett T3 test was used to study the post hoc differences between groups.

Results

In all factors without exception, the highest scores appear in the group of those abused by generalist aggressors, followed by the specialist aggressors and finally, with important differences, in the non-abused ones, which constitutes a good indicator of the effect of

being a generalist perpetrator. Statistically significant differences between groups appear in all factors of the questionnaire.

In all cases, there are statistically significant differences between groups of non-abused and ill-treated, regardless of whether they are generalist or specialist aggressors, which confirms the discriminative validity of the questionnaire applied. The Dunnett T3 statistic shows signs of interest in three of the factors in the questionnaire: Humiliation, Coercion and Gender-Based Violence. In all these cases the group of abused by generalist aggressors showed high scores.

Considering the size of the effects, the differences between the non-battered group, on the one hand, and the groups of generalist and specialist perpetrators, on the other, are high in all cases, except in Instrumental Violence, in which the effect size is medium. Recall that this is the factor with the lowest internal consistency index of the questionnaire. On the other hand, it is verified that the groups of generalist and specialist perpetrators differ significantly in Humiliation, Coercion and Violence based on Gender factors, being the size of the effect average in the three cases. However, it should be noted that, although no statistically significant differences were found between generalist and specialist abuse in all other forms of violence, the effect sizes on the factors of detachment, physical violence and emotional punishment, although small, are appreciable.

Discussion

The numbers of people affected by DV found in our study are not far from those found in other studies, confirming that the numbers of those affected in adolescence and youth are greater than those found in the adult population.

It is this situation that should favor the effort for the analysis and identification of the peculiar risk and protection factors of the DV, with the perspective that the prevention programs at these ages are oriented specifically to the reduction of the first (risk factors) and the promotion of the second (protection factors). In this

sense, it should be noted that both in the IPV field and in the DV field, risk factors, protection factors and their predictors are usually characterized by their variety, high number and small size of their effects considered in isolation, which is indicative of the enormous complexity of this phenomenon.

In this field, one of the research problems, which is still in preliminary stages, is the determination of the specificity of the risk factors for both IPV and DV. It is widely known the existence of risk factors of violent behavior, in general, but we understand that it is of interest to clarify and delimit which of them are typical of IPV and DV. At the intervention level, intervention strategies and programs should be adjusted according to whether we are dealing with a generalist perpetrator who is extending behavior to their affective partner, or the aggressor who only shows them to their emotional partner.

This latter aspect is which has been treated in our study. Our results show a clear trend in the magnitude of perceived frequency with which maltreatment behaviors are manifested in couples of teenagers and adolescents: the scores on the eight factors of the questionnaire obtained in samples of non-abused adolescents are followed, with great differences, by the higher scores obtained by the battered by perpetrators who only show their abusive behavior with them (specialists), while the highest values are found in the sample of battered by generalist aggressors, who not only manifest violent behavior with their partner. This tendency is concretely verified by the MANOVA practiced in the factors of Humiliation, Coercion and Violence based on Gender, which should be added those of detachment, physical violence and emotional punishment considering the effect sizes. These data make it necessary for the identification of the aggressor as a generalist or specialist to be considered in future investigations.

We also emphasize that the generalist perpetrators are violent mostly with their friends or peers, an aspect that has been considered as an important predictor of DV and confirmed throughout our study.

One of the limitations of our work has been the classification system used: the grouping criteria have

been based on the simple combination of answers to several questions included in the questionnaire, although it is the usual information system in this type of studies.

The second criterion used, the distinction between general and exclusive violence against the couple, has been made based on the responses of the victims on the violent behavior of their partners, without the use of validation systems of their own perceptions. As in many other publications, the measurement of a single item has been used to assess the type of violence outside the couple's nucleus, which may have threatened the validity of the responses.

Our results, if confirmed in later studies, have important implications. The first one, at a conceptual level, in the sense that the high comorbidity of violent behavior found in our study indicates that many male perpetrators are not only violent with their partners, but also with other people, whether or not they belong to their family environment. In this sense, the differentiation between generalist and specialist aggressors could be determined not only with predictors related, as an example, to sexism as traditionally has been pointed out, but with predictors of violence that are stable and highly inter-context consistent. This points to the need for an additional and / or additional change in action plans in prevention campaigns, which are much more focused on modifying and changing the specific predictors of IPV and DV and less attentive to the ones corresponding to the most widespread violence.