



RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

Exploring risk and protective factors for adolescent dating violence across the social-ecological model:
A systematic scoping review of reviews



What you need to know

For adolescent dating violence (ADV) prevention programming to be effective it must address risk and protective factors across all levels of the social-ecological model. Therefore, research should shift from focusing primarily on individual level risk factors to using a multi-level approach to understanding risk factors. Furthermore, enhancing a strengths-based approach that identifies protective factors across all levels of the socio-ecological model is also required.

What is the research about?

This systematic scoping review was an assessment of literature on the risk and protective factors of (ADV) across all levels of the social-ecological model (individual, relationship, community and societal). ADV is a serious issue that affects millions of youth worldwide and has shown to contribute to long-term negative mental health outcomes (i.e., depression, post-traumatic stress disorder). Prevention programming is an important element in reducing the negative consequences of ADV. However, for prevention programming to be effective it must address risk and protective factors across all levels of the social-ecological model. Therefore, this study aims to support researchers in designing ADV prevention programs by offering an understanding of what risk and protective factors have already been identified and how they are distributed across the social-ecological model.

What did the researchers do?

A systemic scoping review was conducted on literature on the risk and protective factors of ADV across all levels of the social-ecological model. The researchers developed a research strategy which included the use of six online databases, locating journals using key terms and a specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. To be included, articles had to focus on adolescents between the ages of 11 to 18 or in grades 6-12, with violence occurring prior to adulthood. Publications needed to be a review article with a defined search methodology (e.g., systematic review; scoping review; etc.), that focused on risk and/or protective factors for perpetration and/or victimization of adolescent dating violence.



Articles were excluded if the full text was not available, they focused exclusively on an adult or college-aged population or were not relevant to the review focus (e.g., focused on interventions, prevalence and incidence, theories, etc.). The search identified 11,234 articles. After duplicates were removed, 4798 articles remained for review. Of these articles, 152 met eligibility criteria, with 132 being removed for meeting exclusion criteria. This yielded 20 articles to be included in the systematic review.

What did the researchers find?

The researchers found that current ADV research disproportionately focuses on risk factors at the individual and relationship level of the socio-ecological model, especially for the perpetration of ADV. A small amount was found on the risk factors at the community and societal level for ADV victimization or perpetration. Finally, a very small portion of articles identified protective across any level of the socio-ecological model.

How can you use this research?

Best practice suggesting that ADV prevention strategies should be comprehensive and directed at multiple levels of an individual's social ecology. This systematic scoping review revealed that not much is known about risk factors beyond the individual and relationship level of the socio-ecological model. It also highlighted that research in this area appears to be concentrated on risk, with a limited focus on protective factors. By identifying these gaps in ADV research, this paper advocates that future exploration focuses on risk factors at the community and societal level, and a strengths-approach that targets protective factors across all four levels. This will ensure that future prevention strategies are well informed.



About this summary:

This summary was prepared by Keri Rempel, a research assistant for the HOPE Lab at the University of Calgary. The HOPELab collaborates with a number of community and research partners with the goal of building healthy relationships as a foundation for child and adolescent well-being.



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