

INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND SELF DISCIPLINE ON DATING VIOLENCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the influence of gender and self discipline on dating among sampled undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe university numbering two hundred and forty (240). 111 (46.3%) were males while 129(53.8) were females. The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to 30 years, with mean age of 21.93 year and standard deviation of 2.60. Two instruments were collapsed into a questionnaire and used in the study. They are an 18 item scale measuring self discipline, and a 25 item questionnaire measuring dating violence which was developed by the researchers. The researchers adopted a 2x2 factorial design.. The statistic used was the two way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The finding of this study revealed that there was significant difference between people of high self discipline and people of low self discipline($F(1, 236) 6.93, p < .05$ level of significance). Males and Females did not differ significantly in their experience of dating violence, although male scores were higher in perpetrating violence.

Key Words: *Dating, Violence, Gender, Self discipline, Undergraduate*

INTRODUCTION

Dating is a form of courtship consisting of social activities done by two persons with the aim of assessing each other's suitability as a partner or as a spouse. While the term has several senses, it usually refers to the act of meeting and engaging in some mutually agreed upon social activity in public, together as a couple. The protocols and practices of dating and the terms used to describe it vary considerably from country to country (en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/dating). The most common sense is two people trying out a dating relationship and exploring whether they are compatible by going out together in public as couples, and who may or may not yet be having sexual relationship, and this period of courtship is sometimes seen as a precursor to engagement or described marriage.

Dating Violence

Dating violence or abuse is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual and or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent against a current or former dating partner. A violent relationship constitutes but not limited to habitual controlling or aggressive behaviour within the romantic relationship in order to gain power and control over the person that they are dating. There are many forms of abuse such as: emotional, verbal, physical and

sexual. Emotional abuse can be defined as a verbalization or behavior which puts down another person and may cause harm to one's self-esteem or cause feeling of shame. Some example of emotional abuse include but are not limited to threat, controlling behavior and withholding affection (Sigelman, Berry, & Wiles, 1984). Physical abuse is a behavior and any action which causes physical pain or injury. Physical abuse may include but is not limited to punching, hitting, spitting, kicking and slapping. Sexual abuse is any unwanted sexual advance or contact (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). Lastly, sexual abuse include but is not limited to unwelcome sexual comments, forced upon sexual activities, forced intercourse and unwanted touching. Physically violent relationship along with sexual assaults and sexual abuse have been well documented and studied over the years.

Three theoretical perspectives are considered germane to this research: feminist theory, ecological theory and social learning theory. Feminist theory addresses gender hierarchy and power. Gordon (1979), as cited in White and Klein (2002) defines feminist theory as "an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it" (p.177). This view suggested that women are suppressed and over powered by male dominance. When specifically applied to dating violence, the feminist theory proposes that all forms of abuse are about power and control, embedded in a particular value system.

One of the variables of interest to this study is gender. Gender differences in the perpetration of dating violence taken from the feminist theory perspective may help to understand the nature of the interaction between males and females especially in terms of hierarchy and power in intimate relationships.

Ecological theory is a socio-cultural view that consists of five environmental systems ranging from direct interactions with a social figure to broad based inputs of culture (San Trock, 1999). The systems are identified as micro-system, and chrono -system. Each system influences the individual and their development. This theory is used to explain the eight risk factors examined in this study, emphasizing that each risk factor is a part of one of these five systems that interacts with the individual. The microsystem involves the direct interactions of the individual with significant others in their life (White and Klein, 2002).

Therefore, anger management skills, relationship satisfaction, witnessing parental violence and the experience of childhood abuse would be explained by this level. The mesosystem consists of inter-relations of two or more Microsystems (White and Klein, 2002). This level includes partner's use of physical aggression and partner's use of psychological aggression since these both incorporate how the partner's actions influence the individual. The exosystem does not have direct interactions with the individual; however it does impact the person's microsystem and or mesosystem, therefore incorporating the length of a dating relationship as a possible influential factor. The macrosystem involves the culture in which

one lives by adhering to or being influenced by patterns and beliefs. Problems with alcohol may occur in this system if drinking is viewed as acceptable within the culture. Lastly, the chronosystem involves the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the course of time (Santrock, 1999). No variable representing the chronosystem were selected for this study. These systems and risk factors affect each other and the individual. Looking at a variety of factors from different ecological levels allows for a multifaceted view of what influences someone to become violent within a dating relationship.

Social learning theory suggests that through observational learning, individuals learn social interaction skills (Myers, 2007). Thus, a person can learn violent intimate relationship behaviour through personal experience or through witnessing violent relationship. Attachment theory suggests that individuals form working models of interpersonal relationships based on their interactions with their significant caregivers. Securely attached children are more likely to engage in mutually supportive adult intimate relationships whereas individuals with inconsistent parenting experiences are more likely to form dysfunctional relationships, which may involve violence.

RISK FACTORS THAT PLAY A ROLE IN DATING VIOLENCE

Witnessing parental violence

Violence is perceived as a learned behaviour that becomes a vicious cycle potentially passed down through the generations. As children develop, they learn behaviours from those around them, especially their parental figures. Millions of children are likely to be exposed to parental violence because marital violence is so common (Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe 2001). This causes alarm that these children may experience negative effects while they are being exposed and further long-term effects, such as choosing to engage in this learned violent behaviour in this future intimate relationships. Children who witness violence between their parents learn powerful messages about gender hierarchy and power that could influence their relationships later in life. Witnessing violence as a child has also been linked with increased feelings of shame and guilt (Wagar and Rodway, (1995). Shame can have the effect of causing the person to feel inferior, defective, and helpless and is associated with high anger arousal, all of which are characteristics of domestically abusive adults.

Although many have hypothesized that witnessing parental violence will continue the cycle of violence in later dating relationships, findings are inconsistent. For example, the relationship between witnessing parental violence and dating violence has been found significant in several studies (Foo and Margolin, 1995; Gwartney – Gibbs et al., 1987; O'Keefe, 1997). However, the research is very contradictory on differences between witnessing parental violence and dating aggression and found to be stronger for males than females in several studies (Foo & Margolin, 1995; Gwartney. Gibbs et al., 1987; Reitzel –

Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001). For example, Foo and Margolin (1995) collected data from 111 male and 179 female college students and found that witnessing parental abuse accounted for 13% of the variance for male physical aggression (out of 41% model variance) when included in a multiple regression with sexual abuse, alcohol use, socioeconomic status, childhood abuse, humiliation and self defense. For the females witnessing parental abuse was not significant. Similarly, Gwartney – Gibbs et al. (1987) found that in a sample of 130 male and 159 female college students, the likely-Good of physical abuse by males was positively and significant related to witnessing parental violence when tested with parental violence when tested with parent, peer and personal violence. On the contrary, Luthra and Gidyez (2006) found parental violence to not be a major influence in male perpetration of violence, yet a strong factor for females. Despite this study's inclusion of a variety of variables including parent-child aggression, and problems solving skills, it had a small sample (N=100 males, n = 100 females) with only 25% of women and 10% of men who admitted to perpetrating violence against a dating partner making these findings not as valuable.

Experiencing childhood violence

Witnessing and experiencing violence in childhood has seldom been differentiated in the literature; a history of abuse, whether witnessed or experienced is related to later involvement in an abusive relationship. However, studies that do differentiate between the two have found in consistent results on the connection between childhood valence and perpetrating dating violence. It is believed that experiencing or witnessing violence equally affect both males and females. However Rosenbaum & O' Leary, 1981; O' Leary & Jurley, 1986 suggest that males are more likely to replicate the abusive behaviors compared to females. Furthermore, O' Keefe (1997) found that out of 385 and 554 females. males were more likely to experience parent-child violence, which may explain their greater likelihood of perpetrating in dating relationships. The only study that contradicts the previous finding was by luthra and Gidyez (2006) who found that women are more likely to perpetrate violence in their dating relationships after experiencing abuse as a child. The study may differ from others because it included the influences of several other potential risk factors that may have produced different final results. The studies that found males to perpetrate violence in their dating relationships after experiencing abuse as a child only examined the relationship between experiencing abuse and perpetrating it in later relationships. Inclusion of other variable may provide a more accurate assessment since more factors could be accounted for.

Problem with alcohol

Research has supported that alcohol use is associated with an increased risk of perpetrating dating violence (O' Keefe, 1997). The risk is thought to be due to impaired judgment and lowered inhibition caused by intoxication, which are strong contributors to the decision to

engage in partner abuse (Gorney, 1989). It is speculated that alcohol and other drugs is involved in roughly one third of violent incidents among dating couples. Furthermore, perpetrators and victims of violence report higher levels of alcohol consumption when compared to non violent dating relationships.

Length of dating relationship

The length of dating relationships has been studied in regards to dating violence to understand if there is a connection between the time of commitment and the probability of perpetration. Like most risk factors presented on dating violence perpetration, length of dating relationship research results have been inconsistent. However, most findings suggest a positive relationship, indicating that the longer the relationship the more likely physical violence will occur. For example, studies have found that violence occurs during the serious dating phase of a relationship which leads researchers to conclude that a longer relationship can be associated with a higher risk for physical dating violence (Henton, Cate, Koval, Christopher, 1983; O' Keefe, 1997). Likewise, O' Leary and Arias (1988) collected data from 393 engaged couples of which 46% reported experience with dating violence in the prior year. This emphasizes that during this serious phase of the relationship; violence is prevalent and may be increased compared to shorter dating length relationships.

Although few studies have differentiated findings between genders, research has been fairly consistent in that length of relationship had similar effects on male and female use of physical aggression. The study by O' Leary and Arias (1988) focused on couples who were in a long relationship and were in a serious phase indicated by being engaged. It was found that 33% of the men and 92% of the women reported perpetrating dating violence against their partner at least once within the prior year.

Relationship satisfaction

Research has found that individuals in violent dating relationships report lower levels of relationship satisfaction than do individuals in non-violent dating relationships (Follette & Alexander, 1992). It is however plausible that dating violence and relationship satisfaction are bidirectional: low satisfaction may pre exist, leading to violence or low satisfaction may be an outcome of dating violence. Low relationship satisfaction pre-existing violence would suggest that other factors influence satisfaction such as low self-esteem or depression.

Gender is a set of characteristics used to distinguish between males and females, particularly in the case of men and women and the masculine and feminine attributes assigned to them. Depending on the context, the discriminating characteristics vary from sex to social role to gender identity. The historical meaning of gender is things that are treated differently because of their inherent differences. It has three common applications in contemporary English. Most commonly, it is applied to the general differences between male and female

entities without any overt assumption regarding biology or sociology. Here, it alludes to psychobiological concomitants in intimate relationships.

Self discipline is self control and self restrain. It is self reliance and independence. Self control is the ability to control one's emotions, behaviour and desire in order to obtain some reward, or avoid some punishment later ([en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/self control](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/self_control)). Presumably, some (smaller) reward or punishment is operating in the short term which precludes or reduces the later reward or punishment; hence in psychology it is sometimes called 'self regulation'. Self control represents the locus of two conflicting contingencies of reinforcement, which then make a controlling response. Self control could be measured in terms of ones ability to withstand pressure, and this is one characteristic that separates human beings from the rest of the animal kingdom. Hence, rather than responding to immediate impulse, they can plan alternative actions and can refrain from doing things they will regret. Self control is not some king of negative and limiting behaviour, as some people might think. When self control is used wisely and with common sense, it becomes one of the most important tools for success.

In any intimate relationship, the partners are expected to exercise some level of self discipline in order to avoid dating violence. Boys are expected to rule their dick or their dick will ruin them. They should not make choices based on dick expression but with wisdom. This is because lack of dick control can really delay the achievement of the goal of the relationship, (www.mpdspace.com). Where attention goes energy flows, and depending as to what your attention is on blood will flow to the dick.

Social learning theory suggests that through observational learning, individual learn social interaction skills. Thus, a person can learn violent intimate relationship behaviour through personal experience or through witnessing violent relationship. Attachment theory suggests that individuals form working models of interpersonal relationships based on their interactions with their significant caregivers. Securely attached children are more likely to engage in mutually supportive adult intimate relationships whereas individuals with inconsistent parenting experiences are more likely to form dysfunctional relationships, which may involve violence.

Statement of the problem

Dating violence is a significant problem in our society yet researchers have just begun to understand the scope of the problem. It has been estimated that as many as one in every three college couples will be involved in at least one incident of violence during their dating relationship. Dating violence can have severe physical and psychological consequences which include wounds, neurotic states, loss of concentration, depression, post – traumatic stress disorder, and homicide or suicide in extreme cases. Although prevalence rate widely

fluctuate depending on the definition criteria of “dating violence” adopted, it is clear that dating violence is an emerging psychosocial problem and its concomitants need to be properly understood so that it may be adequately addressed.

Purpose of the study

This research is aimed at identifying the extent to which gender and self discipline influence dating violence. In specific terms, the study will identify the influence of each variable on dating violence among sampled undergraduates.

Hypotheses

- 1 There will be no significant difference between males and females on the perpetration of dating violence.
- 2 There will be no significant difference between people of high self discipline and people of low self discipline on dating violence.
- 3 There will be no significant interaction between gender and self discipline on dating violence.

METHOD

.Participants

The participants used in the study were made up of two hundred and forty (240) undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe university, Awka.(the sample comprised of students from both Regular and Diploma).Out of the 240 participants,111 (46.3%) were males while 129(53.8) were females .The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to 30 years, with mean age of 21.93 year and standard deviation of 2.60.

Instrument

Two instruments were collapsed into a questionnaire and used in the study. They are an 18 item scale measuring self discipline, and a 25 item questionnaire measuring dating violence which was developed by the researchers, validated through pilot study and used in the study. The instruments contained both direct and indirect items and the responses response option were based on five point likert format: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree

Validity and reliability of the instrument

The face and content validity of the two instruments were first determined by psychometric experts in the Department of psychology Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. After that, the researcher carried out a pilot study using 65 participants from the faculty of Education who were not among the participants used in the main study. Using alpha reliability test, the researcher obtained a Crombach alpha of 0.49 on self discipline scale and 0.57 on dating

violence scale. These indicated that the two instruments are reliable and as such were used in the study.

Procedure

The researcher met with the course reps of regular year one, regular year two, diploma year one and diploma year two from the departments of psychology and political science and asked for their assistance in order to get the attention of the students. After lectures in each department the researcher went, the researcher was introduced before the students and pledged for full cooperation of the students. With the aid of the course reps the researcher was able to randomly select 250 participants using simple random selection technique. This selection was done by writing a yes and a no in different pieces of paper which were wrapped that one cannot see through it. These pieces of wrapped papers were gathered together and all the students were allowed to pick one each. After they had picked, instruction was given to them to unwrap the paper and those who picked yes were used in the study, while those who picked no were thanked for the time they spent. Copies of the questionnaire were then distributed to the participants. Questionnaires were completed in one session, and to enhance truthful responses, they were told not to write their names on the questionnaires. Out of 250 copies of the collapsed instrument administered, 240 were properly filled and used in the study.

Design and Statistics

The researchers adopted a 2x2 factorial design. The independent variables are gender and self discipline, and the dependent variable is dating violence. The statistic used was the two way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS

Table 1: Summary table of mean and standard deviation of gender with respect to dating violence

Gender	Mean (X)	N	Standard deviation
Male	74.23	111	9.06
Female	74.33	129	9.29
Total	74.29	240	9.17

The table one above indicated that there was no mean difference between male and female students on dating violence.

4.2 Table 2: Summary table of mean and standard deviation of self discipline on dating violence

Gender	Mean (X)	N	Standard deviation
Low	75.66	151	8.23
High	71.95	89	19.25
Total	74.29	240	9.17

Table two above showed that there was a mean difference between people of high self discipline and people of low self discipline on dating violence.

Table 3: Summary table of two way ANOVA on this influence of gender and self discipline on dating violence

Source	Type III sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Gender	57.43	1	57.43	761	.38
Self discipline	523.380	1	523.38	6.932	.09
Gender self discipline	1510.08	1	1510.082	20.00	.00
Error	17818.91	236	75.506		
Total	1344581.00	240			

With respect to table 3, the first hypothesis which stated that there will be no significant difference between males and females on dating violence was confirmed at $f(1, 236) = .76$, $p > 0.05$ level of significance. In addition, the second hypothesis which stated that there will be no significant difference between people of high self discipline and people of low self discipline on dating violence was rejected. Those who are of high self discipline on dating violence at $f(1, 236) 6.93$, $p < .05$ level of significance. The findings also indicated that there was a significant interaction between gender and self discipline on dating violence at $f(1, 236) = 20.00$, $p < .05$ level of significance. Therefore the hypothesis which stated that there

will be no significant interaction between gender and self discipline on dating violence was accepted.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The finding of this study showed that there was no significant difference between male and female participants on dating violence. This means that male and female participants does not differ in their perpetration of dating violence. The mean differences revealed that female participants scored 74.23, which was not greater than the mean for male participants which was of 74.33; this may be interpreted to be that females perpetrate dating violence at the same rate with males. This is in line with Margolin (1995) that dating violence is reciprocal.

The finding of this study also revealed that there was significant difference between people of high self discipline and people of low self discipline. This is in line with Obi-Nwosu (2008) which holds that discipline and restraint are basic and indispensable enhancers of rewarding interpersonal relationships. Highly self-disciplined adolescents outperformed their more impulsive peers on every aspect of life, including standardized achievement test scores, successful relationship and admission to a competitive high school. Theorists suggest that self control represents the locus of two conflicting contingencies of reinforcement which then make a controlling response reinforcing when it causes changes in the controlled response. By this, self-control is directly related to the pressure an individual may face for example, when an individual is in a judgmental and prejudicial environment, the individual may become depressed and unmotivated, losing self control.

Finally, the result of the study showed that there was significant interactive effect between gender and self discipline on dating violence. In an intimate relationship, a person's level of self discipline determines whether there will be perpetration of dating violence. The researcher suggests that more variable such as personality type and alcohol use should be introduced into study of this nature in order to see their influence on dating violence.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the researcher concludes that there was no significance difference between males and females on dating violence perpetration. The research also concludes that there was a significant difference between people of high self discipline and people of low self discipline on dating violence. People high in self discipline are less likely to perpetrate violent behaviours. Dating violence, is considered non normative worldwide, although violence of some sorts seem to be permissible in different cultures, hence most cases are never heard of or reported. Dating violence is a major cause of separation, it has caused severe physical and psychological trauma to many, and has led to reported cases of suicide and homicide.

implication of the study

The study implies that if university wants to control dating violence among undergraduates, they should encourage self discipline among the students since high self discipline brings about decrease in the perpetration of dating violence. Indeed, inculcation of discipline is directly antagonistic to all forms of violent behaviours.

Recommendation

The researchers suggest that more variables such as personality type, and alcohol use should be introduced into study of this nature in order to see their influence on dating violence. Also, the university system should introduce supervisory strategies that will be used to resolve discipline problems among undergraduates which will also reduce the rate of dating violence.

Limitations of the study

The major short comings of this study are the number and distribution of participants, which make full generalization difficult.

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