

Adolescent relationship violence has mental health implications for victims, perpetrators

March 5 2014

Described by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as "physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse," intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious public health issue affecting millions of people in the United States. New research from sociologists at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) shows that adolescents and young adults who perpetrate or fall victim to IPV are more likely to experience an increase in symptoms of depression.

Titled, "Intimate Partner Violence and Depressive Symptoms During Adolescence and Young Adulthood," the study appears in the March issue of the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior (JHSB)*. The study is the work of post-doctoral fellow Wendi Johnson and Drs. Peggy Giordano, Monica Longmore, and Wendy Manning.

The researchers used data from the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study to examine how relationship violence might affect depressive symptoms during adolescence and young adulthood. The first of four interviews were conducted in 2001, when respondents were 12 to 19. Subsequent interviews occurred approximately one year later, with follow ups occurring in two year intervals. Respondents' ages at the time of the last interview ranged from 17 to 24.

In the *JHSB* study, the researchers examined self-reports of IPV victimization and perpetration and considered the individual's role in the violence (whether violence was mutual or experienced as only a victim or as the perpetrator) as well as earlier victimization by family or peers.

They found that few respondents reported continual involvement in IPV across relationships. A more common pattern was for violence to be present in one or two relationships.

The researchers also found that IPV victimization, perpetration, and mutual violence all correspond with increases in symptoms of depression. Furthermore, these results were present for young men as well as women, documenting that young men are not immune to negative psychological outcomes associated with IPV victimization or perpetration.

"In general, young women experience more symptoms of depression than their male counterparts," Giordano said. "However, in terms of IPV, our study indicates that high levels of discord within an intimate relationship have a similar negative effect on the emotional well-being of [young men](#) and women."

Johnson notes that while "victimization has a more intuitive, straightforward relationship with declines in mental health," perpetration also corresponds with an increase in symptoms of depression.

The researchers argue that perpetration may be significantly related to depressive symptoms because it is a marker of involvement in an intimate relationship characterized by extensive conflict and other negative dynamics.

"Prevention efforts focusing on IPV appear to have changed public attitudes about the general acceptability of these behaviors—in turn, perpetrators are not immune to negative societal views about those who have resorted to [violence](#) within their intimate relationships," Johnson said.

The study goes on to say that psychological distress, including depressive

symptoms, may undermine self-confidence and self-worth, thus compromising young people's ability to comfortably transition into adulthood. "Consequently, the costs of IPV may be long term and have additional implications for individuals' choices associated with family formation and stability as well as economic and educational attainment," according to the study.

Interestingly, however, the accumulation of IPV exposure does not appear to offer additional negative contributions to the relationship between IPV and depressive symptoms beyond those stemming from the current or most recent relationship. Similarly, prior IPV exposure does not amplify the relationship between IPV exposure on [depressive symptoms](#).

Provided by American Sociological Association

Citation: Adolescent relationship violence has mental health implications for victims, perpetrators (2014, March 5) retrieved 20 November 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-03-adolescent-relationship-violence-mental-health.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--