




NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR VIOLENCE
AND TRAUMATIC STRESS STUDIES

Teenage Intimate Partner Violence - some qualitative results from a European study

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Safeguarding teenage intimate relationships (STIR)

- EU-funded study of teenage intimate partner violence and abuse in five European countries
 - England – University of Bristol: Christine Barter, Nadia Agahtie, Marsha Wood; University of Central Lancashire: Nicky Stanley and Cath Larkins
 - Norway – The Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Research (NKVTS): Per Hellevik, Carolina Overlien
 - Bulgaria – Applied Research and Communications Fund: Georgi Apostolov, Louisa Shahbazyan
 - Italy – CESIE: Noemi De Luca; University of Palermo: Gianna Cappello
 - Cyprus – Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies: Stalo Lesta, Susana Pavlou
- Survey: 4500 teenagers between the ages of 14-17
- Interviews: 100 teenagers between the ages of 13-19
- Funded by Daphne/EU (JUST/2011/DAP/AG/3330)
 - The Norwegian part of the study was also funded by the Ministry of Children and Families (BFD)



Definition

“The physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional aggression within a dating relationship, including stalking. It can occur in person or electronically and might occur between a current or former dating partner.” (CDC)

Definitions cont.

- Teenage/Youth Intimate Partner Violence (and Abuse)
- (Teen) Dating Violence
 - Physical violence
 - Psychological/emotional violence
 - Sexual violence
 - (Digital violence)

Young Women's Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence – Narratives of Control, Terror, and Resistance

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Methods and data from two interconnected studies

- Norwegian study (part of the STIR study)
 - 21 interviews w/ youth who had experienced IPV
 - Informants 15-18 years old
 - 19 girls, 2 boys
 - Subjected to violence in a heterosexual relationships
- Swedish study:
 - 18 interviews w/ youth who had experienced IPV
 - Informants 17-23 years old
 - 16 girls, 2 boys
 - 1 girl and both boys subjected to violence in a same-sex relationship

- The aim is to further our **understanding** of the **dynamics** of YIPV by investigating the contextual, situational, and relational aspects
- Looking across the data, we ask: what are the **main expressions** of IPV among young women?
- Through analyzing the young women's narratives
 - What **meanings** do the young women attribute to the violence?
 - What is **the role of** digital media in their victimization?
 - How can Johnson's (2008; 1995) typology of violence be used to develop our understanding of the violence and abuse experienced by the young women?

Analysis

- Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) - to find patterns in data
- Narrative analysis (Bruner, 1990; Riessman, 2008) - to find depth: context, relationship, situation, meaning

The thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) yielded six themes

- Control
- Humiliation
- Fear
- Sexual coercion
- Secrecy
- Resistance

Control

- Expecting her to prioritize him before family, friends, hobbies, and trips.
- Demanding to know at all times whom she was with or talked to
- Requiring her to be constantly available (physically, mentally, and sometimes also sexually)
- Dictating what she could wear and eat, and her use of make-up
- Putting marks (such as “hickies” or bite marks) on visible parts of her body
- Forcing her to wear his clothes for the school photo
- Restraining her from leaving, for example by threatening to take his own life (cf. Toscano, 2014)

Jennie, 18 years old

He wanted to know what I was wearing every day, he wanted to know what I was doing all the time, when I got up, when I left home, when I got to school, when I had lunch, when I finished school, when I was on the bus on my way home, when I caught the train, when I got home, when I had dinner, if I had dinner, and when I went to bed. He wanted me to text him these things. “Now I am home.” “Now I will sit down and eat.” “Now I have eaten.” And if I didn’t do that, he got really angry.

The amount and intensity of control differed between relationships.

For some, the control was continuous and all-encompassing, while for others it was more related to specific contexts or situations.

A recurring theme related to control concerned how digital media (such as Snapchat) was used to facilitate such behavior.

Sexual coercion

- Being pressured to have sex
- Being forced to perform sexual acts with others
- Being hit until “agreeing” to perform
- Being expected to be sexually available regardless of one’s own wishes

Most often intertwined with other forms of violence.

Karen, 18 years old

After we broke up for a while, I said okay, we can give it a try again, but that nothing [sexual] should happen, that I wanted the emotions to be in place first, and he said alright at first, but then he wondered how much longer, and I said that I wasn't sure, and then he said that I never sacrificed anything for him, and then I said okay, fine, if I only had sex with him I would be allowed to leave and go home, and after we had sex I went to the bathroom to cry, because I really didn't want to, but he just got so angry, and had such low self-esteem, he thought I didn't want to have sex with him because he was ugly, for gaining weight, for not being tanned enough, it was not enough to say "hey, I don't feel like it, I'm not ready."

A matter of 'gray zone sex'? (Cahill, 2014; 2016)

- Persistent control of her throughout the relationship
- If she says 'no' he would never leave her alone and would always find her (is consent possible in abusive relationships?)
- Narrative told as a response to the question "Did he ever put any sexual pressure on you?"
- Low agency – 'unjust sex' (Cahill, 2014;2016)
- Some young women seem to have the understanding that, in a relationship, women have a duty to have sex and to be bodily available at all times (cf. Aghtaie et al., 2018; Davies, 2019).

Michaela, 17 years old

I took a bucket or something and went to his bedroom, and sat on the bed with the bucket in front of me, and felt really sick, and then a friend came in and asked how I was doing. In retrospect I wish I had asked her to stay, because then nothing would have happened—it is easy to be smart when it is all over. I said I felt ill but that I was okay, so she went out and he came in and lay behind me in bed, and then, well, I sat there with the bucket and was nauseous, but still he thought that was a great time to abuse me [said ironically], he tried to get me down on the bed, and I said “no, I don’t feel well,” was about to throw up, but still he just kept going, and finally he got me down and I gave up resisting, so then he had intercourse with me.

The sexual coercion in needs to be understood in the context of age, gender and relation (Kelly, 1988).

He is:

- Significantly older
- Physically stronger
- More experienced in regards to sex and alcohol
- Has his own apartment
- She defines him as her boyfriend (want to explain, don't want to upset him)

Resistance

Parallel to any narrative of victimization is a narrative of resistance (Cavanagh, 2003; Hydén, 2005; Wade, 1997).

Hence, in order to tell (more of) the whole story, we need to include the stories of how victims of violence also resist violence.

Lene, 18 years old

I was at his house, because he was with his father...and he got pissed off because I didn't want to kiss him, so he got pissed off and we started fighting and it ended up with him holding me down, I wanted to get away, but he locked me into a room and I wasn't allowed out, I tried to break free but he held me and threatened me with his fist...I asked him to let me go, but he didn't, my god my breathing was so heavy... I still have a recording of it on my phone.

Interviewer: You have a recording of it?

Lene: Yes.

Interviewer: And how did you do that?

Lene: I just wanted proof that he was not alright.

Interviewer: And when he holds you down you reach for your phone.

Lene: Yes, and I put it in my bra.

Interviewer: You put it in your bra.

Lene: Yes, to record it.

What meanings do the young women attribute to the violence?

- It is a matter of age (“we were young and childish”)
- It was meant to purposely hurt and destroy
- Attributing it to the male partner’s personal issues (he had a “meltdown”, is mentally unstable, has had a difficult childhood)
- Blaming it on her own behavior or appearance
- Thinking that his behavior lacked meaning (feeling confused and seeing no reason for the abuse).

Impact - Increased attention in policy and practice

- TIPV and the STIR study included in reports from Norwegian NGO's
- Given the large interest from our government - TIPV included in the next action plan?
- STIR in numerous media articles
- STIR used to get funding for a new hotline in Sweden (1000 opportunities) specifically and exclusively for young people (victims and perpetrators of IPV)
- Lots of interest from the practice field (digital violence)!

Thank you!