

School-based programs to prevent dating violence do not change behavior



Prevention programmes improve young people's knowledge about, and attitudes towards, dating violence

What is the aim of this review?

This Campbell systematic review examines the effectiveness of school-based interventions to reduce or prevent violence in intimate relationships. The review focused on programmes to change attitudes and beliefs, reduce perpetration and victimization, and change behaviours. The systematic review included twenty-three studies.

School-based programmes to prevent violence in dating relationships improve knowledge about violence, attitudes that are less accepting of violence in relationships, and awareness of appropriate attitudes to conflict resolution. But they little impact on behaviour change.

What is this review about?

Abuse occurs in an estimated 3-10% of young people's intimate relationships. Psychological, physical and sexual violence in dating relationships have a significant impact on the mental and physical health of young people. Dating violence can have long-term consequences, such as depression, eating disorders, and substance abuse, and affect school performance.

This review summarises evidence on programmes to prevent dating violence implemented in middle and high schools (Grades 6-12).

What studies are included?

Only studies of school-based interventions to reduce or prevent teen dating violence or sexual violence in intimate relationships were included. Some studies used previously developed programmes, such as Love U2, Safe Dates, and Connections: Relationships and Marriage. Others used adapted or newly developed programmes.

To qualify for inclusion in the review, the programmes had to measure the impacts of the interventions on one or more of the following: (a) knowledge about dating violence, (b) attitudes to dating violence, (c) acceptance of rape myths, (d) dating violence perpetration, (e) dating violence victimization, (f) ability to recognize both safe and unhealthy behaviours in intimate partner disputes.

Only studies with a well-defined control group were included.

This systematic review summarizes data from 23



How up-to-date is this review?

The search was completed in July 2013. This Campbell Systematic Review was published on 28 May 2014.

What is the Campbell Collaboration?

The Campbell Collaboration is an international, voluntary, non-profit research network that publishes systematic reviews. We summarise and evaluate the quality of evidence about programmes in the social and behavioural sciences. Our aim is to help people make better choices and better policy decisions.

About this summary

This summary was written by Simon Goudie (Campbell Collaboration). This PLS is based on Campbell Systematic Review 2014:7 'School-Based Interventions to Reduce Dating and Sexual Violence: A Systematic Review' by Lisa De La Rue, Joshua R. Polanin, Dorothy L. Espelage, Terri D. Pigott. (DOI: 10.4073/csr.2014.7). Anne Mellbye (RBUP, Norway) designed the summary, which was edited and produced by Tanya Kristiansen (Campbell Collaboration).

studies, 14 of which assessed as having a high risk of bias. The included studies were conducted in the USA and Canada.

How effective are the school-based programmes?

Prevention programmes improve young people's knowledge about, and attitudes towards, dating violence. These effects were sustained at follow up. Students in the intervention group showed moderate increases in knowledge about dating violence, a lower acceptance of stereotypical 'rape myths', and moderate improvements in appropriately resolving conflicts in interpersonal relationships.

A limited number of studies examined the effects of school-based programmes on the amount of violence perpetrated and on victimization. These studies suggest that prevention programmes have little impact on behaviour.

What are the implications of this review for policy makers and decision makers?

Programmes to prevent violence in relationships are important, because of the impacts that violence has on adolescents' wellbeing, and the risk of its long-term consequences. Existing programmes need to be designed to better support behaviour change. Skill-building components among pupils may help achieve this goal.

What are the research implications of this review?

Prevention efforts require changes to both attitudes and behaviour. Future studies may need to focus more on measuring actual behaviours, rather than just knowledge and attitudes. Programmes may also need to consider contextual social factors, such as the influence of peers, on the social and behavioural development of young people.

All the included studies were from North America. Research from other areas is needed.