

Teen dating violence and self-harm among adolescents in Denmark

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Study objectives:

The overall study objective is to examine the prevalence of teen dating violence among adolescents in Denmark. To study whether there is a higher prevalence of vulnerability, thoughts of self-harm or self-harming behaviour among adolescents who have experienced dating violence compared to those who have not.

To offer the affected adolescents participation in a psychoeducation program, Travellers.

The Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality financially supports the project.

Methods and material:

The data is collected through a questionnaire administered to schools in Denmark. The questionnaire, The Youth Barometer, is web-based and includes up to 57 questions in 2017-2018. The number of questions depends on the adolescents' answers on self-harm and experience with violent relationships. Up to nine questions concern violence (psychologically, physically and sexually).

If the student has experienced teen dating violence, he/she is offered participation in a psychoeducation program called Travellers.

Results:

In total, 5841 adolescents aged 13-18 years completed the questionnaire. 519 adolescents (9%) had experienced one or more types of violence by a current or former boy-/girlfriend, thereof most had experienced psychological violence (80%). 41% had experienced sexual violence and 34% had experienced physical violence.

Type of violence	
Psychological	80%
Sexual	41%
Physical	34%

More than twice as many females ($n=369$) than males ($n= 150$) had experienced violence by a current or former boy-/girlfriend.

35% of 519 adolescents who have experienced violence by a current or former boy-/girlfriend are vulnerable, 57% have serious thoughts of self-harm and 46% have self-harming behaviour. In comparison, 12% of the adolescents who have not experienced violence by a current or former boy-/girlfriend are vulnerable, 27% have serious thoughts of self-harm and 14% have self-harming behaviour.

Teen dating violence	Experience	No experience
Vulnerable	35%	12%
Serious thoughts of self-harm	57%	27%
Self-harming behaviour	46%	14%

Despite various attempts and different methods, it has not been possible to recruit participants to the psychoeducational program, Travellers.

Conclusion:

Teen dating violence is a problem among adolescents in Denmark. There seems to be a higher prevalence of vulnerability, serious thoughts of self-harm and self-harming behaviour among adolescents who have experienced violence by a current or former boy-/girlfriend. Whether the higher prevalence is only due to their experiences or other factors come into play cannot be answered at this moment.

The shamefulness, often related to the experience with violence in a relationship and the timeframe from when the experience occurred to the time of participation in the survey may be of great importance for the lack of participants.

