

Teens experience both sides of dating violence

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Teens in a relationship that involves dating violence are likely to be both a victim and perpetrator, as opposed to being just one or the other, finds a recent study in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*. In some situations teens play both roles with one partner or they'll play one role in a given relationship and then another role in a subsequent relationship.

"The violence in a relationship can be mutual, in that both partners engage in some [aggression](#)," said lead researcher Denise L. Haynie, Ph.D, M.P.H. "Or it could be a learned behavior, so that someone who is victimized in one relationship perpetrates in another."

The study examined data collected from 2,203 students from 80 schools,

beginning in 10th grade and continuing through the end of high school and into college or the work force. Teens were asked whether their boyfriends or girlfriends had called them names or insulted them, swore, threatened them, pushed or shoved them or threw something that could hurt them. They were also asked if they had engaged in these acts.

About 35 percent reported being the victim of dating violence and 31 percent reported being perpetrators during the study period.

"It is consistent with other literature on dating violence among adolescents to find that boys experience dating violence at similar rates as girls and for girls to perpetrate at similar rates as boys," said Haynie. "This is in contrast with what is known about [intimate partner violence](#) among adults, where women report more frequent victimization."

Aggression in teen relationships may represent a pattern of escalation where it soon becomes hard to differentiate between victim and [perpetrator](#), say the researchers.

In the study, both boys and girls experiencing dating violence reported an increase in psychological complaints and [depressive symptoms](#). Girls involved in dating violence also reported more [physical complaints](#) than girls not involved in [dating violence](#).

"More research is needed but right now the best advice is to help teens understand what a healthy relationship looks like and what to do if it's not going well. Adolescents entering the world of dating are just learning how to negotiate romantic relationships and how to manage conflict," said Deineria Exner-Cortens, MA, M.P.H., and a fourth year doctoral candidate in human development at Cornell University. "That's where a program on healthy relationships is vital for both teen boys and girls."

More information: Haynie, D. et al. (2013). Dating Violence

Perpetration and Victimization Among U.S. Adolescents: Prevalence, Patterns, and Associations With Health Complaints and Substance Use. *Journal of Adolescent Health*; 1-8

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