Factors associated with dating violence and childhood abuse in college students
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Background:
Childhood trauma, anxiety, and depression have all been found to be associated with intimate partner violence in college aged students. Specifically, childhood abuse was shown predict mental health problems and female-perpetrated physical and psychological dating violence (Kendra, Bell & Guimond, 2012). Additionally, not only are females more likely to experience childhood abuse, they are also more likely to perpetrate violence when engaged in mutually violent relationships at the college level (Kaukinen, Grover & Hartman, 2012). Furthermore, both male and female students experience increased levels of anxiety and depression as a result of dating violence (Amanor-Boadu et al, 2011). The purpose of the current study was to examine the different factors that contribute to conflict in college dating relationships.

Method:
Participants: As part of an ongoing project, 35 undergraduate (21 female and 14 male) students participated. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 22 years (M=19.2, SD=1.18). Thirty students reported being Caucasian, two reported being Hispanic, two reported being Pacific Islander, and one reported being of another ethnicity.

Materials: The Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory (CADRI) is a self-report measure of conflict in adolescent dating relationships. Each participant receives two scores: one for being the perpetrator of violence and one for being the victim of violence. This scale has very good reliability and validity. The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ), is a retrospective assessment of childhood trauma. There are five subscales for the CTQ: Emotional Abuse, Emotional Neglect, Physical Abuse, Physical Neglect, and Sexual Abuse. This scale has excellent reliability and validity. The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) is a self-report inventory of current symptoms of major depression. The BDI is in wide research use and has excellent reliability and validity. The State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAII) is a self-report assessment of current anxiety. Participants receive two scores for the STAII: state anxiety and trait anxiety.

Procedure: All questionnaires were presented in a computerized format and participants were assessed individually. Participants provided informed consent. All procedures were approved by the Fairfield University IRB.

Results:
There was a statistically significant correlation between self-reported dating violence perpetrator and victim scores on the CADRI (r=.63, p<.001). In addition, retrospective reports of childhood trauma on all five subscales of the CTQ were significantly correlated with current trait anxiety (all ps<.001) and current depression (all ps<.001) in this sample (please see table below).

Table 1: Correlations between childhood trauma and depression and anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trait Anxiety</th>
<th>Depression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Abuse</td>
<td>.71*</td>
<td>.78*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Neglect</td>
<td>.50*</td>
<td>.70*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>.73*</td>
<td>.85*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Neglect</td>
<td>.70*</td>
<td>.77*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>.75*</td>
<td>.89*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.001

References:

Conclusion:
These results suggest that even in a non-clinical sample of college students, some individuals are experiencing conflictual relationship patterns with both partners exhibiting violent behavior. In addition, a history of abuse was associated with current psychological distress in this sample. Given that dating violence is a growing social health concern, more needs to be done to understand the nature of abuse, as well as risk and protective factors.

- Perpetrator and victim scores on the CADRI were significantly correlated
- Retrospective report of childhood trauma for all five CTQ subscales were significantly correlated with current trait anxiety
- Retrospective report of childhood trauma for all five CTQ subscales were significantly correlated with current depression
- There is a very high prevalence of dating conflicts among the college students in this sample.
- Participants in this sample reported a high degree of childhood trauma, and the experience of past childhood trauma was related to current levels of anxiety and depression
- There is more research needed on both victimization and perpetration in college student dating violence.

Suggestions for future research:
- Continue this research in a larger sample
- Studying more predictors of dating violence, including depression, attachment, and aggression.
- Examine different types of dating conflicts, including physical, emotional, and sexual violence.