

Relationship Violence and Condom Use Among Young Adult Dating Relationships: The Role of Severity, Frequency, and Perpetration of Violence

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Aim

- To assess associations between relationship violence (severity and an index of frequency, severity, and perpetration) and condom use among male and female young adults

Background

- Relationship context and partner characteristics are associated with condom use among young adults, but existing research on relationship violence and contraceptive use is limited by use of local/clinic samples, qualitative data, dichotomous measures of relationship violence, or report of only one partner (typically the female partner).
- Examining the association between relationship violence and condom use in a nationally-representative study may inform programs that aim to reduce STDs and unintended pregnancy among young adults.
- Based on a power dynamics approach and a relationship turbulence approach, we hypothesized that more severe, partner-initiated violence would be associated with reduced condom use, while common-couple violence would have a smaller association.

Data and Measures

- Data:**
- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health Wave III (2001-02)
 - White, black, Hispanic, and Asian heterosexual dating relationships (18-25 years old) who were non-missing on key independent and dependent variables (n=3,480) ; 51% female respondents, 49% male respondents

Dependent Variable: Condom Use

- Condom use: at most recent sexual intercourse with that partner

Independent Variables: Past Year Relationship Violence

Severity of Violence Scale: most severe type of violence that respondent or partner perpetrated

- No violence:* no violence perpetrated by the respondent or partner
- Threatened:* most severe violence involved threatening, throwing something, pushing, or shoving
- Hit:* most severe violence involved slapping, hitting, or kicking
- Injured:* most severe violence involved injury to respondent or partner

Violence Index: frequency of violence, perpetrator-dependent

- No violence:* no violence perpetrated by the respondent or partner
- Partner-intense:* frequency of partner perpetration > frequency of respondent perpetration or respondent was injured
- Common-couple violence:* non-injurious, reciprocal violence
- Respondent-intense:* frequency of respondent perpetration > frequency of partner perpetration

Methods:

- Random effects models produced odds ratios of associations between relationship violence and condom use
- Analyses were weighted, single imputations replaced missing data when < 5% missing

Findings

Weighted Sample Characteristics ¹		
	Females	Males
<i>Condom Use</i>		
Used condoms at last sex	54%	57%
<i>Individual Controls</i>		
Age	21.50	21.72 **
Race		**
White	70%	72%
Black	18%	14%
Hispanic	9%	11%
Asian	3%	4%
Living situation		**
Live alone	46%	42%
Live with parents	42%	48%
Live with others	11%	11%
Educational attainment		***
Less than high school	9%	11%
High school	25%	31%
At least some college	67%	58%
Age at first sex	16.39	16.52
Lifetime number of sexual partners (1-50)	6.19	7.08
<i>Relationship Controls</i>		
Length of time knew partner before sex		***
<1 month	22%	36%
1 month – 5 months	34%	27%
6+ months	44%	36%
Age of partner		***
Same age	22%	25%
Partner younger	12%	51%
Partner older	67%	24%
Hormonal/long-lasting contraception at last sex	42%	33% ***
Current relationship (vs. past relationship)	38%	34% ***
Casual relationship (vs. exclusive relationship)	27%	33% ***
Relationship duration (< 3 months)	7%	14% ***
Violence in a prior relationship	4%	2% **

¹Weighted frequencies or means

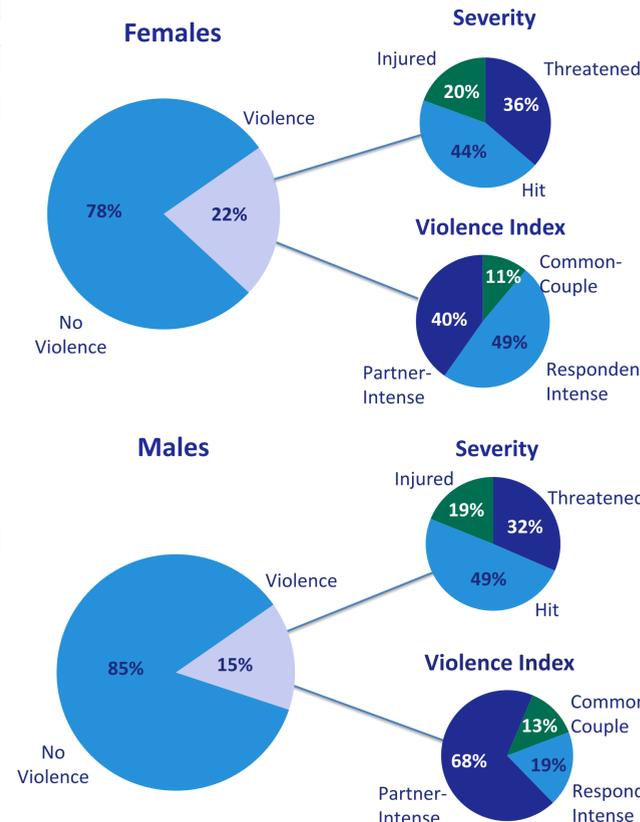
Odds ratios from logistic regressions, Add Health Wave III, by gender

Associations between severity of relationship violence and condom use at most recent sex ¹		
	Females	Males
No violence with partner in past year(ref)	1.00	1.00
Threatened, threw something at, pushed or shoved as most severe	0.82	1.52
Slapped, hit, or kicked as most severe	0.79	0.60
Injury as most severe	0.42 **	0.27 *

Association of violence index and condom use at most recent sex ¹		
	Females	Males
No violence with partner in past year(ref)	1.00	1.00
Partner-intense violence	0.50 **	0.56 *
Common-couple violence	0.85	0.95
Respondent-intense violence	0.91	1.22

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

¹ Associations net of all controls



Summary and Discussion

- Relationship violence is fairly common among young adults.** Our analyses indicated that roughly one in five young adults (22% of females and 15% of males) reported some type of violence in their dating relationship.
- Women are more likely to report respondent-intense violence than men.** Among those who reported violence, women were more likely than men to report respondent-intense violence (49% vs. 19%). At the same time, women were less likely than men to report partner-intense violence (40% vs. 68%). These findings are in line with previous findings, confirming that violence against men is common as well.
- The severity of violence is associated with reduced condom use.** Consistent with prior research, only one in five of the violent relationships in our sample led to injury (20% of females and 19% of males). However, as hypothesized under a power dynamics perspective, violence resulting in injury was associated with dramatically reduced odds of condom use (OR=.42 and OR=.27 for females and males, respectively).
- Partner-initiated violence is associated with reduced condom use.** 40% of female and 68% of males reported partner-intense violence in their relationships, which was associated with reduced odds of condom use (OR=.50 and OR=.56 for females and males, respectively). This finding supports a power dynamics perspective, which suggests that power imbalances are linked to reduced condom use. There was no association between respondent-initiated violence and condom use.
- Few young adults experienced common-couple violence.** Despite some research suggesting that most violence in sexual relationships is common-couple violence, relatively few of the violent relationships in our sample consisted of this less severe, bi-directional violence (11% of females and 13% of males). There was no association between common-couple violence and condom use.
- There were no gender differences in the association between violence and condom use.** This finding supports other research noting that males may be as likely as females to experience negative effects of partner-initiated relationship violence. However, separate analyses (not shown here) indicate that, for females, partner-initiated violence is more than 50% more likely to result in injury than it is for males.
- The study findings highlight the need to implement integrative STD prevention services.** Our findings point to the need to screen young adults for relationship violence and to target those at risk for relationship violence in sexual risk prevention programs. Sexual and reproductive health clinics may represent key points for screening efforts.

Acknowledgements

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