Protective Factors against Dating Violence Perpetration among College Students

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Abstract. This study investigated the protective factors against dating violence perpetration among college students. The data were collected from 157 college students at four-year universities located in D and K city, Korea from September to November 2015. Bivariate logistic regression analysis was performed to determine factors protecting participants from dating violence perpetration. We found that gender, grade and relationship control were protective factors against dating violence perpetration among college students. In other words, male college students were less likely to perpetrate dating violence than female college students and first and second year students were less likely to perpetrate violence than third and fourth year students. Additionally, when relationship control was higher, the probability of dating violence perpetration decreased. These findings should be considered in developing interventions for college students focusing on prevention and management of dating violence perpetration.

Keywords: College Students, Dating Violence Perpetration, Parent Child Intimacy, Empathy, Relationship Control.

1 Introduction

Dating violence perpetration among college students has recently increased in South Korea and has become a social issue. Knag et al.[1] reported that a majority of college students in Korea have experienced dating violence perpetration as the victim (60.9%) and as an assailant (55.8%) more than once in the past year. Dating violence is physically, emotionally, or sexually assaultive behaviors used against a partner in the present or previous close relationships[2].

The most serious type of dating violence involves physically assaultive behaviors[3]. It often starts with a behavioral pattern of throwing around the other party’s belongings or other items, gradually developing to directly hitting the party or using a lethal weapon to harm the person[3]. Park[4] mentions that physical violence can stop
at causing moderate physical damage or can lead to serious mental problems including depression or symptoms of posttraumatic stress.

Previous studies have investigated dating violence perpetration focusing on its influencing factors: childhood experience of domestic violence[5], exposure to violence in close relationships[6], and exposure to violence in previous dating relationships[7]. However, Kinsfogel et al.[8] reported that only about 20% of adolescents who have been exposed to domestic violence are aggressive in dating relationships. This indicates that exposure to violence in close relationships does not necessarily lead to dating violence perpetration and that there are protective factors against dating violence perpetration dangers.

Intimacy between parents and their children means the endearment existing between them and its manifestation. Strong and frequent interaction between parents and their children is emphasized because parents’ attention affects children’s minds[9]. Hardaway et al.[10] reported that positive relationships between child raisers and their children decrease violence in the problematic behaviors of low-income adolescents.

Empathy is an ability to understand and share the feelings and behaviors of another (e.g., experience, need, sorrow, happiness, and anxiety). It is an essential element in one’s ethical development, which is a unique human ability, and in forming positive social relationships[11]. Miller et al. [12] reported that the aggressive adolescents has low empathy scores compared to the other adolescents. Additionally, persons with high levels of empathy are less aggressive toward their colleagues even when they have been exposed to violence[13].

Relationship control is the power to make one’s own decisions (to dominate in decision-making) against the will of another, without being controlled or manipulated. Pulerwitz et al.[14] mention that relationship control allows one to conduct positive and healthy behaviors, e.g., substance using female offenders do not commit dangerous sexual behaviors. Furthermore, women conduct sexual behaviors more safely when they are aware of having more power than the partner has[14].

Thus, this study investigated if these elements play roles as protective factors against dating violence perpetration. The results will be used as fundamental data to develop dating violence perpetration prevention and management programs for college students.

1.2 Purpose

This study investigated the protective factors against dating violence perpetration for college students; the concrete study purposes are as follows:

• Investigate the participants’ general characteristics and divide them into two groups by dating-violence perpetration experiences (with vs. without) to confirm the differences between the two.

• Investigate the levels of participants’ parent-child intimacy, empathy, and relationship control and confirm the differences between the two groups by dating violence perpetration.

• Investigate the participants’ protective factors against dating violence perpetration.
2 Method

2.1 Study design

This study is a descriptive investigation to confirm protective factors against dating violence perpetration among college students.

2.2 Participants and data collection

The participants were 157 college students presently enrolled at four 4-year universities located in D city and K province, Korea. The selection criteria include whether the participants had previous dating relationship experiences and more than one conflict with partners and if the participants agreed to participate in this study. The sample size required for logistic regression analysis was calculated to be 129, with G*power of 3.1, odds ratio of 2.0, significant level of .05, and test power of 0.95. However, 250 students were recruited because of the high rates of nonresponse and low rates of dating relationship experiences. There were 234 completed questionnaires returned. Of them, 157 were statistically analyzed, excluding 47 questionnaires that included insincere answers and 44 by students who did not have dating relationship experiences.

2.3 Instruments

2.3.1 Parent-Child Intimacy: Parent-child intimacy is measured using the “Parent-adolescent Affective Bonding Scale” developed by Lee[15]. This tool was based on the children’s minds and behaviors varying by level of parent-child interaction (in degrees and frequency) and the level of attention parents give to their children. It consists of two subscales, reliability and devotion, which total 40 questions: 20 questions to measure intimacy between father and child and 20 questions to measure intimacy between mother and child. Each question is measured on a five-point Likert scale; the scores range from 40–200 and higher scores indicate higher intimacy. The reliability of Lee’s[15] scale was Cronbach’s $\alpha = .90–.92$ and in this study it is Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$.

2.3.2 Empathy: The tool used to measure empathy was based on Davis’s[16] Interpersonal Reactivity Index and the Emotional Empathy Scale by Mehrabian et al.[17] and modified and adjusted by Song et al.[18]. This scale consists of three subscales (i.e., acceptance of terms, emotional resonance, and empathic interests) and 33 questions. Each question is measured on a five-point Likert scale; 12 negative questions were inversely coded. The scores range from 33–165 and higher scores indicate higher empathy. The reliability of Song et al.[18] scale was Cronbach’s $\alpha = .77$ and in this study it is Cronbach’s $\alpha = .74$. 
2.3.3 Relationship Control: The tool used to measure relationship control is based on one of the subscales of the Sexual Relationship Power scale developed by Pulerwitz et al.[19], which was then modified and adjusted by Yoo[20]. This scale comprises 12 questions in total; each question is measured on a 4-point Likert scale: 1 for “not at all,” 2 for “it is not,” 3 for “it is,” and 4 for “very much so.” The total scores range from 12–48 and higher scores indicate higher control power in dating relationships. The reliability of Yoo’s[20] scale was Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$ and in this study it is Cronbach’s $\alpha = .74$.

2.3.4 Dating Violence Perpetration: The tool used to measure dating violence perpetration was based on Straus’[21] Conflict Tactile Scale and the Abusive Behavior Inventory developed by Shepard et al.[22] modified and adjusted by Hyun[23]. From this dating violence measure, a physical violence measure was used. This scale comprised 10 questions in total; each question (e.g., “whether one threw things at one’s dating partner in the past year” or “whether one twisted the other’s arms or pulled hair”) is measured by scores of 0 and 1: 0 for “not at all” and 1 for “once or more.” Because the score distribution was skewed, the score 1 (with physical violence) was given when at least one of the ten questions was answered with 1 and the others were coded as 0 (without physical violence). This method is based on the study by Tyler et al.[24], which differentiated by two-tier scales for excessively skewed data (e.g., dating violence). The reliability of Hyun’s[23] scale was Cronbach’s $\alpha = .86$ and in this study it is Cronbach’s $\alpha = .73$.

2.4 Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 20.0. The participants’ general characteristics were calculated using frequency and percentage, and parent-child intimacy, empathy, and relationship control were calculated using mean values and standard deviations. The participants’ general characteristics in the two groups divided by dating violence perpetration were verified using the $\chi^2$ test for the differences between the two groups. The differences between the two groups on parent-child intimacy, empathy, and relationship control were verified using t-tests. Binomial logistic regression analysis was used to investigate the protective factors against participants’ dating violence perpetration.

3 Results

3.1 Predictors of Dating Violence Perpetration among College Students

The results of the binomial logistic regression analysis used to investigate the protective factors against participants’ dating violence perpetration showed the fitness of the
model with a chi-square value of 17.703 and significance level below .001; this eliminated the null hypothesis (all coefficients other than constants are 0).

The dating-violence perpetration potential was lower in men than in women (adjusted OR [AOR]: .319, 95% CI: .121–.839). The potential of dating violence perpetration was lower in 1–2 year students than in 3–4 year students (AOR: .395, 95% CI: .173–.900). The higher the participants’ relationship control score, the lower the potential of dating violence perpetration (AOR: .899, 95% CI: .818–.987). Thus, male gender, lower school-year, and higher relationship control were confirmed as protective factors of dating violence perpetration (Table 1).

**Table 1. Predictors of Dating Violence Perpetration among College Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Adjusted Odds Ratio</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (Reference: Female)</td>
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<td>.121</td>
<td>.839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.319</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>.839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade (Reference: 3-4)</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion (Reference: No)</td>
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<td>.401</td>
<td>2.601</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>.401</td>
<td>2.601</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dating frequency (Reference: 3)</td>
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<td>.192</td>
<td>1.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>.484</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>1.218</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent-Child Intimacy</td>
<td>.991</td>
<td>.975</td>
<td>1.007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>.990</td>
<td>.957</td>
<td>1.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship control</td>
<td>.899</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td>.987</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-2 Log likelihood                  | 153.752             |
\[\chi^2\]                          | 17.703 (p=.013)     |
Cox & Snelle R\(^2\)/Nagelkerke R\(^2\) | .107 / .160         |
Predicted group membership(%)      | 77.7                |

**4 Conclusion**

This study investigated the protective factors against dating violence perpetration for college students and provided fundamental data to develop nursing interventions for dating violence perpetration prevention for college students.
The results show that male gender, lower school-year, and higher relationship control were protective factors of dating violence perpetration. Based on these results, repeated studies on a national scale are needed to investigate the protective factors and confirm the differences by gender in dating violence perpetration among college students.

References


