



Safeguarding Teenage Intimate Relationships (STIR)

Connecting online and offline contexts and risks

Briefing Paper 3: Risk and Protective (Predictive) Factors for IPVA Victimization and Instigation

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This STIR Briefing Paper aims to explore the STIR survey findings on the risk and protective (predictive) factors associated with experiencing and instigating interpersonal violence in young people's relationships. The main findings are:

- **Being a victim of interpersonal violence and abuse (IPVA) was significantly associated with: not doing well at school; having an older partner; negative gender attitudes; family violence; bullying and, for young men, having peers who used intimidation.**
- **Instigation of IPVA was significantly associated with: not doing well at school; having older and younger partners; negative gender attitudes; watching pornography; family violence; bullying and associating with peers who used intimidation.**





AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The STIR project's aim was to document young people's own experiences of online and face-to-face forms of IPVA in five European countries: Bulgaria; Cyprus; England; Italy and Norway (see www.stiritup.eu). The specific objectives included exploring:

- the incidence of online and offline physical, emotional and sexual forms of violence and abuse in young relationships
- sending and receiving of sexual images between intimate partner
- the subjective impact
- associated risk and protective factors
- help-seeking
- young people's experiences and perspectives on what would help.



METHODOLOGY

STIR was based on a four stage mixed-method approach:

- Stage 1: Expert workshops to map policy and practice in five European countries.
- Stage 2: School-based survey of 4,500 young people aged 14-17 year-olds.
- Stage 3: Interviews with 100 young people
- Stage 4: Development of an app resource for young people (www.stiritapp)

A young people's advisory group was convened in each country to comment on all aspects of the study.



ANALYSIS

Running logistic regressions separately for each country confirmed that, with a few exceptions, predictive factors were largely consistent across all five countries. This indicated the use of a single model for each type of violence. Additionally, separate regressions were run for males and females. Key variables were identified on the basis of existing theory, and progressively added into the model, testing for stability of the associations identified at each step. The initial model contained age and country variables to which other block variables were added including participant characteristics, wider attitudes and childhood violence. Associations were found to be generally stable. For this briefing paper, the Odds Ratios (OR) are provided. Only effects that were significant at 0.05 are reported. As with any cross-sectional survey, we cannot identify causal relationships and are therefore unable to determine if the predictive factors are a cause or effect of violence.



SURVEY FINDINGS: PREDICTIVE FACTORS

The survey measured a range of predictive or protective and risk factors in addition to age and gender. These factors were chosen on the basis of previous research findings and associations identified through direct practice. The factors can be grouped into two categories:

- The first grouping addressed young people’s general experiences and attitudes including: how young people feel they are doing at school; the age of their partner; their gendered attitudes and if they regularly watched online pornography (see Table 1).
- The second grouping measured young people’s wider experiences of childhood violence and abuse including: domestic violence and child abuse in the family (family violence); being bullied and bullying others and aggressive peer friendship groups (see Table 2).

Table 1: General Experiences and Attitudes

Country	Gender	Doing well at school			Age of partner		Gendered Attitudes			Regularly watch pornography	
		Yes %	No %	Don't Know %	Includes older %	Same or Younger %	1 %	2 %	3 %	Yes %	No %
Bulgaria	Female	65	7	28	66	34	36	50	14	8	92
	Male	55	16	29	14	86	17	42	41	44	56
	Total	60	11	29	39	61	26	46	28	26	73
Cyprus	Female	78	7	15	57	43	33	59	8	3	97
	Male	76	7	17	24	76	9	50	41	59	41
	Total	77	7	16	41	58	26	46	28	28	72
England	Female	74	8	18	52	48	53	43	4	3	97
	Male	80	4	16	17	83	29	54	18	39	61
	Total	77	6	17	37	63	42	48	10	19	81
Italy	Female	82	1	16	70	30	67	31	2	5	95
	Male	72	3	25	24	76	25	54	21	44	56
	Total	75	3	22	40	60	40	46	14	30	70
Norway	Female	79	8	13	44	56	53	43	4	7	93
	Male	75	9	16	13	87	28	55	16	48	52
	Total	77	8	15	28	72	41	49	10	26	74



General Experiences and Attitudes

Doing Well at School

The survey asked young people: 'Do you feel you are generally doing well at school?' Respondents could answer 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know'. A similar pattern was evident across the five countries showing that the majority of young people felt they were doing well at school. This was slightly lower for Bulgaria where a greater proportion of young people were unsure of how well they were doing. For analysis purposes, 'no' and 'don't know' categories were merged.

Age of Partner

Participants were asked 'generally have your partners been': 'much younger (more than 2 years)'; 'slightly younger (between 1 and 2 years)'; 'same age'; 'slightly older (1-2 years)'; and 'much older (more than 2 years)'. Respondents often ticked more than one category. Consequently, and reflecting previous research findings on predictive factors, we coded responses into two categories: participants who reported at least one older partner; and participants who reported only a same age or younger partner. In all countries, young women were statistically more likely to report an older partner and young men were more likely to have had a younger partner.

Gender Attitudes

Young people's gender attitudes were measured using three questions. Each question was chosen to reflect a specific aspect of gender inequality. Respondents were asked to report on a five point scale 'How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:'

- For the most important job it is better to choose a man instead of women.
- Women lead men on sexually and then complain about the attention they get.
- It is sometimes acceptable for a man to hit women if she has been unfaithful.

Respondents were allocated a score that reflected their levels of agreement with these statements; the higher the score the more negative the gender attitude. For ease of analysis, scores were categorised into three groups: 1 (scored 3-6); 2 (scored 6-9); 3 (scored 10-15). Group 1 held the least negative attitudes and Group 3 the highest negative gendered attitudes. In all countries, young men were statistically more likely than young women to hold more negative gender attitudes. Young people in Bulgaria and Cyprus reported higher negative gender attitudes compared to young people in the other three countries. Focusing on the three questions separately, the highest scores, and therefore the most negative attitudes, irrespective of gender or country, were associated with question two which measured attitudes to women's responsibility for sexual violence.

Pornography

Respondents were asked ‘Do you regularly watch online pornography?’. In line with other research, young men were very much more likely to report watching pornography than young women in all countries. Young men in Cyprus were most likely to report regular exposure to online pornography.



Wider Experiences of Childhood Violence

Table 2: Wider experiences of childhood violence and abuse

Country	Gender	Family Violence		Bullied		Bullied others		Aggressive Peer group		
		yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	Don't know
Bulgaria	Female	26	74	31	69	19	81	64	23	13
	Male	21	78	24	76	33	67	62	23	15
	Total	23	77	27	73	26	74	63	23	14
Cyprus	Female	12	88	19	81	12	88	11	71	18
	Male	14	86	23	77	23	77	18	58	24
	Total	13	87	21	79	17	83	14	65	21
England	Female	32	68	49	51	10	90	11	69	21
	Male	24	76	37	63	19	81	18	56	26
	Total	29	71	44	56	14	86	14	63	23
Italy	Female	19	81	25	75	7	93	6	73	23
	Male	20	80	18	82	23	77	14	61	25
	Total	19	80	20	80	17	83	11	65	25
Norway	Female	22	78	42	58	12	88	33	75	18
	Male	14	86	38	62	22	78	12	68	20
	Total	18	82	40	60	17	83	9	72	19

Child abuse and domestic violence in the family

We measured the extent to which young people had experienced family violence through two interrelated questions. We asked: ‘Have any adults in your house/family regularly used physical force such as punching, hitting, slapping?’ and/or ‘...constant name calling/shouting?’. Participants could answer yes or no to the following options: against you; against other children/young people or against other adults. As affirmative responses to the above questions were relatively low, for the regression analysis, all responses were coded into two categories: experienced family violence or had not experienced family violence. England reported the highest rate, although

as discussed STIR Briefing Paper 2, this may be influenced by wider awareness and willingness to report.

Negative peer experiences

Three questions sought to measure wider experiences of negative peer interactions. We asked participants: 'Have you ever been bullied?'; 'Have you ever bullied anyone else?' and 'Do your friends use aggression or intimidation against other young people?'

Wide variation in the proportion of young people reporting being a victim of bullying was evident across the five countries. England and Norway reported the highest levels; again this may reflect the greater level of recognition in these countries. Around one in five young people reported being a bully, although the proportion was slightly higher in Bulgaria. On average, young men were twice as likely as young women to report this behaviour. In respect of wider peer aggression, and generally reflecting the pattern found for bullying across the five countries, around one in ten respondents reported that their peers used intimidation. However, in Bulgaria, over 60% of young people reported this, although this may reflect a different interpretation of the question. Levels of intimidation did not differ substantially by gender except in Norway where young women were three times as likely as young men to state that their peers used intimidation.



Predictive Factors for Experiencing IPVA

Predictive Factors for Female Experience of IPVA

Wider Experiences and Attitudes: Young women who reported doing well at school were *less* likely to report online (OR.68), face-to-face (OR.55) and sexual (OR.60) victimisation. However, we do not know if 'not doing well at school' is a *consequence* of being in an abusive relationship or a *risk* for entering into an abusive relationship due to, for example, low self-esteem. Female participants with older partners had a greater chance of experiencing victimisation online (OR 2.5), face-to-face (OR 1.7) and sexually (OR 2.0). Young women who reported less positive gender attitudes (category 2) were more likely to report online (OR 1.5), face-to-face (OR 1.3) and sexual (OR 1.4) violence, compared with young women with the most egalitarian gender attitudes (category 1).

Wider Experiences of Violence: Two forms of childhood violence were statistically significant in predicting female experience of IPVA: family violence and bullying.

Family violence was associated with an increased risk of online (OR 2.1), face-to-face (OR 2.2) and sexual (OR 2.2) female victimisation. Three different categories of bullying were associated with an increased risk of intimate violence: victim only; victim and bully and bully only. Being a victim of bullying was associated with being a victim of online (OR 1.8); face-to-face (OR 1.9) and sexual (OR 2.0) violence. Similarly, being both a victim and perpetrator of bullying was associated with experiencing face-to-face (OR 2.5) and sexual (OR 2.1) victimisation. Being a 'bully only' also showed significant association with female victimisation online (OR 2.0); face-to-face (OR 2.4) and sexually (OR 1.9). Associations with wider peer intimidation were not statistically significant.

Predictive Factors for Male Experience of IPVA

Wider Experiences and Attitudes: Similar predictive factors were also identified in the regression analysis for male victims. Doing well at school was, however, only a protective factor in relation to face-to-face male victimisation (OR 0.7). As with female participants, having an older partner increased the risk of male victimisation online (OR 2.0), face-to-face (OR 1.8) and sexually (OR 1.6). Similarly, negative gender attitudes were associated with increased male victimisation: young men with the most extreme attitudes were most likely to be victims of online (OR 1.9), face-to-face (OR 2.0) and, most strongly, sexual violence (OR 3.3). We know that many young men who reported being victims of sexual violence also reported sexual perpetration which may help to illuminate this association.

Wider Experiences of Violence: For young men, family violence was associated with an increased risk of experiencing online (OR 1.6), face-to-face (OR 1.8) and sexual violence (OR 2.5). Being a victim of bullying was significantly predictive of victimisation online (OR 1.6) and face-to-face (OR 1.6). Young men who reported being a victim and a perpetrator of bullying were also at an increased risk of intimate victimisation online (OR 1.7) face-to-face (OR 2.0) and sexually (OR 1.9). Lastly, for this variable, being a bully only was a risk for online (OR 1.4) and sexual (OR 1.5) intimate violence. In contrast to female victimisation, having peers who used intimidation was a statistically significant predictor of male victimisation online (OR 2.1) and sexually (OR 1.6). In addition, not knowing if their peers used intimidation was also associated with online (OR 1.6) and face-to-face (OR 1.5) victimisation.



Predictive Factors for IPVA Instigation

Predictive Factors for Female Instigation

Note: few young females reported using sexual violence; accordingly the sample sizes for female instigators of sexual violence are very small.

Wider Experiences and Attitudes: Doing well at school was associated with lower reported rates of face to face instigation (OR 0.7) and it was nearly significant for online violence (OR: 0.8). Female participants with younger partners were more likely to report sexual instigation of violence (OR 3.5). However, and rather oddly, those with at least one older partner reported increased instigation online (OR 2.6) and face to face (OR1.6). As most provided a range of partner ages we cannot be sure that their actions were directed at the older partner. Negative gender attitudes were also a significant predictor of instigating violence online (OR 1.3), face to face (OR 1.5) and, most strongly, sexually (OR 3.6). Watching pornography was associated with increased sexual instigation (OR 5.0), although the number of young women viewing pornography was extremely low which may also explain the very high odds ratio.

Wider Experiences of Violence: Family violence was associated with increased online (OR 2.4) and face to face (OR 2.0) instigation. Being a victim of bullying was a significant predictor of face to face IPVA (OR 1.6). Bullying others was associated with online (OR 1.7) and face to face (OR 2.6) instigation. Also, having aggressive peers was associated with face to face violence instigation, although the effect was relatively weak (OR 1.5).

Predictive Factors for Male Instigation

Wider Experiences and Attitudes: As with female respondents, doing well at school was only associated with lower reported rates of face to face violence instigation by young men (OR 0.7). Having an older partner was, rather unexpectedly, associated with online (OR 2.1) face to face (OR 1.6) and sexual (OR 2.0) instigation, although the above caveat stands. Holding negative gender attitudes was also a significant predictor of online (OR 1.7), face to face (OR 2.3) and, most strongly, sexual (OR 2.8) violence instigation. Lastly, watching pornography was significantly associated with sexual violence (OR 2.4), and was nearly significant for online (OR 1.3) and face to face (OR 1.3) instigation.

Wider Experiences of Violence: Family violence was significantly associated with all three forms of IPVA instigation: online (OR 1.9); face to face (OR 1.9); and sexual (OR 2.3). Being a victim of bullying was a predictive factor for online (OR 1.8), face to face (OR 2.3), and sexual (OR 1.8) violence instigation. Similarly, young men who reported bullying others were also more likely to use online (OR 1.5), face to face (OR 1.5) and sexual (OR 1.6) forms of IPVA. Lastly, having aggressive friends was an indicator for online (OR 2.0 [don't know OR 1.5]) and sexual (OR 1.5) violence instigation.



IMPLICATIONS

1. The consistency of risk and protective (predictive) factors across the five countries indicates that a similar response across European countries to identify young people most at risk of IPVA, and the subsequent targeting of resources, may be appropriate.
2. The findings show that family violence and/or bullying are significant risk factors for experiencing or instigating IPVA in teenage relationships. It is therefore important that associated services providing help and support to children and young people in relation to domestic violence, child abuse and bullying recognise that these young people may also be at greater risk of experiencing and/or instigating IPVA in their own relationships and develop appropriate responses. Our research indicates that unless services and intervention programmes provide a more holistic approach to supporting young people they will fail to address the interconnection of risk, incidence and impact of different forms of childhood violence.
3. The association between young people's wider attitudes and norms, especially in relation to young people's negative gender attitudes, requires closer examination. Although we are unable to determine causation it is still clear that young people who hold negative gender attitudes are more likely to experience and/or instigate IPVA. Societal and peer norms and attitudes which condone IPVA require addressing and young people need to be supported to understand how these attitudes perpetuate harm in young people's relationships. Schools, as a universal provision, are an important site for undertaking this work with young people.
4. The association between mainly young men's regular viewing of online pornography and the use of sexual violence in their own relationships requires attention. Sex and relationships education needs to address young people's use of pornography and encourage the development of more critical attitudes that distinguish between the values and behaviour conveyed by pornography and those that characterise positive intimate relationships.



Briefing Papers

1. *Policy and Practice Awareness in Europe on Teenage Intimate Relationships and New Technology*
2. *Incidence Rates and Impact of Experiencing Interpersonal Violence and Abuse in Young People's Relationships*
3. *Risk and Protective (Predictive) Factors for IPVA Victimization and Instigation*
4. *Young People's Views on Prevention and Intervention for Interpersonal Violence and Abuse in Young People's Relationships*
5. *Young People's Perspectives on Interpersonal Violence and Abuse in Intimate Relationships*



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The full project report will be available in Spring 2015, please contact Christine Barter at Christine.Barter@bristol.ac.uk or go to the website for a copy.

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