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Young people's online and face-to-face experiences of Interpersonal violence and abuse and its subjective impact across five European countries

Introduction

European research, policy and practice on interpersonal violence and abuse (IPVA) has predominantly focused on adult (women's) experiences of violence, and the impact of this on children and young people. In comparison, we know less about young people's (under 18 years old) experiences of IPVA across European contexts (Barter 2009; Gadd et al 2014). While a wide body of predominantly US based evidence on 'dating violence' can be drawn upon, we need to be cautious when applying this understanding to a European context (Hamby et al 2012a). Few studies have sought to identify the subjective impact of IPVA victimisation for young people. In addition, it is only relatively recently that adolescent IPVA victimisation through new technologies have been addressed within the literature. To our knowledge this is the first European comparative study to address the interconnection between online and offline forms of IPVA in young people's relationships and its subjective harm.

Current Understandings and Research Evidence

Much of the available research on IPVA in young people's relationships has been undertaken in the UK. The first large-scale study by Barter et al (2009) involved a survey of 1353 participants aged 14-16 and 100 interviews with young people. The survey showed that 88% had been in some form of intimate relationship. Of these, 25% of girls and 18% of boys reported physical violence, 35% of girls and 16 % of boys reported sexual violence, and 75% of girls and 50% of boys reported some form of emotional violence, mostly controlling behaviours and surveillance. For each form of violence, girls were more likely to report a

subjective negative impact compared to boys; most commonly, girls reported feeling scared and upset whilst boys most often reported feeling annoyed or thought it was funny. Hird (2000) and Wood et al (2010) also found that emotional forms of violence were the most common form of IPVA experienced by young people and that girls reported greater negative impacts than did boys. Fox et al (2013) undertook a survey of 869 13-14 year-olds and focus groups with young people. They established that victimisation rates for both psychological and physical forms of violence did not differ substantially by gender, being 38% (psychological) and between 17-21% (physical) respectively, although girls were more likely to report sexual violence.

Although there is a large body of North American research on this form of IPVA (usually described as 'dating violence' in the US), substantial issues arise in transferring North American research findings to other country contexts (Barter 2009, Hamby et al 2012a). Different European countries contain distinct structural and cultural dynamics which may influence both the degree and nature of IPVA in young people's relationships (Hamby et al 2012a). International research has shown that incidence rates vary considerably depending on the populations sampled, definitions used, forms of IPVA included and acts incorporated (Barter 2009; Stonard et al 2014). Stonard et al's (2014) evidence synthesis on 'dating violence' determined that between 51-59% of females and 45-55% of males reported emotional violence and between 22-29% of females and 19-27% of males reported physical violence. Incidence rates for sexual victimisation were split into two categories due to the variance found by different measures; this showed that between 12- 19% and 26-33% of females compared to 5-6% and 23% of males reported sexual victimisation. The authors concluded that psychological IPVA was the most prevalent and that gender was only a significant factor for sexual violence victimisation.

However, despite the seemingly gender neutral basis of IPVA in young people's relationships, once incidence and impact are considered together a clearer, and perhaps arguably a more comprehensive, picture emerges regarding the gendered nature of IPVA victimisation for young people (Barter 2014). The few international studies to examine impact report similar findings to the UK work described earlier. Hamby et al (2012b) found that more girls than boys reported fear and injury. Jackson et al (2000) in their New Zealand study also reported that girls reported more negative emotional responses to their experiences than boys. Other studies show that girls are more likely to be hurt or require medical attention than boys, whilst boys report responding to the violence perpetrated against them with laughter (Foshee 1996; Molidor et al 2000).

An associated body of US work has addressed the long-term mental health outcomes associated with adolescent IPVA victimisation. Longitudinal studies have shown that IPVA victimisation in adolescence is associated with increased risk of: depression; eating disorders; suicidal thought and attempts; drug and alcohol use (see Exner-Cortens et al 2013, Silverman et al 2001, van Dulmen et al 2012, Barter and Stanley 2016). A recent review of the evidence (Barter and Stanley 2016) indicated that, on balance, there does seem to be sufficient evidence to support the argument that, as with adult IPVA, adolescent girls and boys experience differential IPVA health outcomes, with girls reporting greater negative mental health and psychological consequences.

Recent practice definitions of adolescent IPVA or dating violence are now incorporating online forms of abuse (see the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention 2011:

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/definitions.html>) and researchers have begun to examine the role of new technologies in understanding young people's experiences of IPVA (see Stonard et al., 2014). Livingstone et al (2014) demonstrate that, for young people, virtual and 'real' spaces are closely linked and they argue for the empirical investigation of the complex ways in which new technologies are used and made sense of in everyday life. Zweig et al's. (2013) survey of 5,500 young people, found that more than a quarter had experienced 'cyber dating bullying' in the last year, with females being twice as likely as males to report being a victim. A qualitative study revealed multiple ways in which a partner can use new technologies to abuse their partners including monitoring their partner's movements; controlling their activities and emotional online aggression (Draucker and Martsold 2010). Picard's (2007) survey of 615 young people aged 13-18 years found that a quarter reported being called names, harassed or put down by their partner via phones or the internet; 22% reported being asked by phone/internet to do something sexual they didn't want; 17% were made to feel scared if they did not respond to a text or call; and one in ten were physically threatened online. Hinduja and Patchin (2011) identified that 12% of the 4,400 11-18 years olds surveyed reported electronic dating violence. Another recent US survey of 4282 under 18's found that just over half experienced online psychological dating violence: most commonly partners phoning or messaging when they didn't want them to or new technologies being used to call them names or put them down (Cutbush et al., 2012). Stonard et al's (2014) review located 12 adolescent IPVA studies which included new technologies. From these a number of common online abuse mechanisms were identified including: checking the whereabouts of a partner; demanding online; using information online against a partner; threatening a partner sharing embarrassing or private images online, making a partner feel afraid not to respond to contact; and restricting partner's online use. It is important to remember that new technologies also afford

opportunities for survival strategies, including seeking help and distancing a partner's access by not responding to calls, texts and other online contact (Draucker and Martsold 2010) and use of online resources for support (see Hellevik et al 2015).

Many of these online behaviours are consistent with Stark's (2007) account of coercive control. Stark argues that coercion is 'the use of force or threats to dispel a particular response' (Stark, 2007: 228) and 'control' includes 'structural forms of deprivation, exploitation and command that compel obedience indirectly by monopolising vital resources, dictating preferred choices, microregulating a partner's behaviour, limiting her options and depriving her of supports needed to exercise independent judgement' (Stark, 2007: p229). Abusers, through the use of 'surveillance and behavioural regulation', ensure that their victims remain aware of their control even when they are not physically present (Stark, 2007 p. 209), ensuring compliance (Dutton and Goodman, 2005). This is reminiscent of Johnson's earlier work (1995: p1106) on 'intimate terrorism' which is distinguished from other forms of domestic violence by the very high levels of control exercised over a partner. Stark provides a gendered theory of control positioning it as a result of women's inequality as men seek to enhance their own status through subjecting their partners to 'exploitation, structural constraints and isolation' (Stark, 2007: 205). Similarly, Hester (2010) contends that intimate coercive control is a direct consequence of gender inequality and simultaneously acts as a cornerstone for maintaining its existence. Since women have less 'resources, power and opportunities', the violence and abuse perpetrated against women by men 'has entirely different dynamics, meaning and outcomes than the assaults women commit' (Stark, 2009: 1511-1512). Thus coercive control is 'a dynamic process linking a demand with a credible threatened negative consequence for non-compliance' (Dutton and Goodman, 2005: p. 746); to understand its significance we need to examine both its incidence and impact. Others have

argued that, due to this gender divide, women's ability to successfully utilise coercive control is in practice severely limited (Johnson, 1995: Johnson, 2006, Kelly and Johnson, 2008) as they lack the 'social facility to impose comprehensive levels of deprivation, exploitation and dominance' (Stark, 2006: 1024). However, the extent to which Stark's theory, based on adult women's experiences and adult relationship dynamics (such as living together, financial dependency, children) can be used to understand young people's IPVA experiences, which appear at least in some contexts to be gender neutral, remains unclear.

A small number of the above studies have explored the relationship between online and off-line or face-to-face IPVA behaviours. Both Cutbush et al., (2012) and Zweig et al., (2013) found a significant association between online and offline IPVA. Zweig and colleagues conclude that new technologies provide additional ways in which an abusive partner can harass, control and abuse their partners. Qualitative interviews with young people have also highlighted the complex interconnection of online and offline forms of IPVA (Barter et al 2009; Wood et al., 2010). As Stonard et al. (2014) argue, based on their evidence synthesis, more research is needed in order to understand whether online abuse is 'experienced as a continuum of violence and abuse or whether this may in fact create new victims' (p 410).

Our comparative European study sought to rectify this knowledge gap as well as identify the subjective impact of different forms of IPVA and associated risk factors. In this paper we examine online forms of non-sexual violence and face-to-face physical and emotional forms of IPVA. In previous publications from this study we examined both online and offline sexual forms of intimate violence (Stanley et al 2016, Wood et al 2015) and we therefore now seek to build on this analysis though examining wider aspects of adolescent IPVA

experiences. The research questions for this paper were: How prevalent is IPVA through new technologies? What is the association between online and emotional and physical offline IPVA? What is the subjective impact of online and offline forms of IPVA and is this gendered? How do these findings fit with theories surrounding coercive control?

Method

The Safeguarding Teenage Intimate Relationships (STIR) study aimed to explore young people's online and face-to-face experiences of IPVA across five European countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, England, Italy and Norway. These countries were selected to provide a wide geographical spread, differences in relation to domestic violence policy and practice generally (as measure by the FRA survey 2014) and to offer diversity in levels of gender equality. We used the European Institute for Gender Equality survey (2013) to ensure our sample contained countries with both high levels of gender equality (England and Norway) as well as countries with less gender equality (Bulgaria, Cyprus and Italy) as measured by this European instrument. We also wanted to ensure we had countries with variations in young people's use of new technologies (Livingstone et al, 2011). However, we found that nearly all young people in each of the country samples, irrespective of age, had individual access to new technology through mobile platforms, generally phones and tablets, reflecting wider findings on children's access and use of new technologies and mobile devices (Livingstone et al 2011).

We aimed to administer a school-based survey in a mixed sample of schools serving more and less affluent populations and to exclude single sex schools. However, while in most countries recruitment was consistent with the framework established, a single sex boys'

school was included in one country. In each country, a young people's advisory group was convened to assist with the design and wording of the survey. The participating schools wrote to parents requesting consent for young people to participate in the study and this was provided on an opt-out or opt-in basis according to the country where the survey was being completed. Young people gave their written and informed consent before completing the survey and an appropriately formatted leaflet made it clear that participation was voluntary, anonymous and confidential. The measures were included in a single paper survey that was professionally translated into the required languages. We were careful to ensure that the language was consistent between all five countries. Researchers supervised the administration of the paper survey in 45 schools in the five countries to ensure that students worked on the questionnaires individually and without being overseen (see Vearey, Barter et al (2016) for a full description). Ethical scrutiny and approval was provided by the University of Bristol, School for Policy Studies, Ethics Committee.

Measures

The survey incorporated questions about different forms of IPVA victimisation and perpetration and their impacts. The face-to-face emotional and physical IPVA measures employed were based on previous studies of young people's experiences of IPVA (Barter et al 2009, Radford et al, 2011) and were developed in collaboration with the young people's advisory groups and piloted in each of the countries to ensure content validity across contexts. In addition, the items used, or measures very similar, have extensive evidence of construct validity.

The face-to-face IPVA measure consisted of 6 questions. Four questions measured experience of face-to-face emotional IPVA. Respondents were asked 'Have any of your partners ever done any of these things face-to-face': put you down in a nasty way? Shouted at

you/ screamed in your face/ called you names? Said negative things about your appearance, body, friends or family? Threatened to hurt you physically?

Physical violence was measured using two questions: 'Have any of your partners ever': used physical force such as slapping, pushing, hitting or holding you down? Have any of your partners ever used more severe physical force such as punching, strangling, beating you up, hitting you with an object? The Chronbach alpha for the face-to-face IPVA measure was between 0.735 and 0.861 for four of the country samples. However, for Italy it was 0.64 below the generally accepted 0.7 threshold. The inter-item correlations suggest that the low alpha values were caused by low correlation between the physical and emotional violence components in this country (i.e. the two sub-dimensions correlate to a lesser extent than in other countries). Thus the results for Italy should be treated with caution.

Appropriate measures for IPVA through new technologies are still in the development stage and, in contrast with measures of face-to-face forms of IPVA which remain relatively fixed, it seems likely that any measures of online IPVA will need to be continually updated to reflect rapid changes in online technologies. Additionally, as our study sought to explore a range of IPVA experiences within a relatively restricted timeframe (a class lesson) the questionnaire, including the new measures, needed to be succinct. In the development stage of the project, the researchers identified online IPVA measures used in previous research with young people to determine the most prevalent forms of online IPVA and their impact. All measures/forms of online IPVA were discussed with the young people's advisory groups in each country alongside country experts to ensure consistency and applicability across country contexts.

The 6 questions chosen reflected the four main ways in which new technologies could be used to inflict IPVA: emotional abuse; controlling behaviour; surveillance and isolation.

Emotional online abuse was measured by three questions: have any of your partners ever put you down or sent ever sent you any nasty messages? Have any of your partners posted nasty messages about you that others could see? Have any of your partners sent you threatening messages online or by mobile phones? Controlling behaviour was measured by one question: Have any of your partners used mobile phones or social networking sites to try and control who you can be friends with or where you can go? Surveillance was also measured by a single question: Have any of your partners constantly checked up on what you have been doing / who you have been seeing, for example, by sending you messages or checking your social networking page all the time? Lastly, social isolation was measured by: Have any of your partners used mobile phones or social networking sites to stop your friends liking you, for example, pretending to be you and sending nasty messages to your friends? The Chronbach alpha for the online IPVA measure for each country were between 0.755 and 0.862.

Questions were answered on a four-point scale: never, once, a few times and often. For each form of violence we asked survey respondents: How did this behaviour make you feel?

Responses could answer upset, unhappy, humiliated, annoyed, scared, angry, bad about themselves, shocked, embarrassed (negative feelings); felt loved, wanted, good about themselves, thought it was funny, (affirmative feelings) or no effect. Negative and affirmative responses were randomised within the list of responses to reduce response bias.

The responses were developed from previous survey measures (Barter et al 2009, McCarry et al 2008) and qualitative research where young people described the impact of their experiences (Barter et al 2009, Wood et al 2010, Fox et al 2013). Due to time restrictions,

face-to-face emotional and physical violence responses were combined for follow-up questions. For the analysis, responses were grouped into three categories: negative only; negative and affirmative; and affirmative only/no effect. All questions were piloted with young people and the wording was refined in consequence.

The Survey Sample

In total, 4,564 young people aged 14-17 completed the survey across the five countries.

Mean ages of the respondent groups did not differ greatly by country and ranged from 14.73 years in England to 15.29 years in Italy. The majority (72%) reported having had a boyfriend or girlfriend and the likelihood of this increased with age. No association was found between reporting a partner and gender. Most young people (96%) had had a partner of the opposite sex and 4% (n= 124) had had a same-sex partner. The findings reported here are based on the 3,299 young people who said they had been in a relationship. Table 1 shows these respondents by country, gender and age. Fewer participants were recruited in Cyprus reflecting the country's smaller population.

Insert Table 1

Analysis

Data entry was undertaken by the research team in each country using SPSS and the data sets were brought together for analysis. Descriptive statistics including cross-tabulations were run for each country. Difficulties in recruiting schools meant it was not possible to construct a random sample which therefore limits our ability to extrapolate our findings to the general population of young people in each country. However, this is the first large scale comparative survey that has collected information on IPVA in young people's relationships and therefore

constitutes a unique and important source of information despite its limitations. Chi-square tests were used to identify effects in each country and standardized residuals were checked and are reported where relevant. Missing data was handled through pairwise deletion.

Findings

In the following section findings for each form of IPVA are examined in turn.

Online emotional violence

Overall, incidence rates for experiencing any form of online emotional IPVA in a relationship were around 40% (see Table 2). However, male respondents in England and Norway were statistically less likely than females to report being victimised online by a partner; the corresponding rates for boys in these countries were 20% and 25% respectively.

Insert Table 2

To unpack the different dimensions of online emotional violence, we examined the incidence rates between the four online components: online abuse; controlling behaviour; surveillance and isolation (see Table 3). The variable online abuse included those who reported their partners had: put them down or sent nasty messages; posted nasty messages online that others could see; and/or sent threatening messages. Incidence rates for female respondents ranged from 12% in Cyprus and Italy to 35% in England. In most countries, between 14% and 17% of boys reported online abuse. However, in Bulgaria, nearly twice as many male participants (30%) experienced this form of online victimisation. Females were significantly more likely to report being victims of online abuse than males in England and Norway. In Bulgaria, Cyprus and Italy, this pattern was reversed, although the differences were not statistically significant.

Controlling behaviour measured by ‘control who you can be friends with or where you can go’ represented a relatively common experience, with between 23-31% of girls and 9-36% of boys reporting controlling behaviour. Gender differences were statistically significant in England and Norway. In both cases, very few male respondents reported this form of online behaviour from a partner. Similarly, surveillance, measured by the question ‘constantly checked up on what you have been doing/who you have been seeing’, was also relatively widespread with between 25%-35% of girls and 10-25% of boys reporting this behaviour from a partner. In Cyprus, England and Norway, statistically significant gender differences were found. As with control, this was primarily due to the lower incidence rates reported by boys in these countries. Attempts at isolation were less commonly reported across most country samples. The only exception was in Italy where a quarter of young people, irrespective of gender, reported this aspect of online IPVA victimisation. Gender differences were only significant in England and Norway, following the general pattern identified in the other online components.

Insert Table 3

Face-to-face emotional violence

Overall, incidence rates for face-to face emotional violence were more wide-ranging compared to online violence (see Table 4). Across the five countries, girls reported victimisation rates of between 31-59% whilst boys’ rates ranged from 19-41%.

Proportionally, Italian respondents reported the highest rate of face-to-face emotional violence. As with online forms of violence, only in England and Norway were gender differences statistically significant: here girls reported higher rates compared to boys.

Insert Table 4

Fewer young people, although still a substantial minority, reported physical violence from a partner (see Table 4). Girls' victimisation rates ranged from between 9% to 22%, whilst boys' rates were broadly similar, ranging from 8% to 15%. As before, girls in the English and Norwegian samples reported significantly greater victimisation levels compared to boys. Indeed, the level of physical violence was particularly high for girls in these two samples: almost one in five reported having experienced physical violence. In contrast, Norwegian boys reported the lowest rate of physical violence (8%).

Intersection between Online and Offline IPVA

Table 5 shows the strong intersection between offline and online IPVA. The majority of respondents in each country (except Cyprus) who experienced online IPVA also reported face-to-face emotional and physical violence.

Insert Table 5 Association between online and offline emotional and physical violence

Subjective Impact

Young people's reports of the subjective impact of each form of IPVA were grouped into three categories: negative only; negative and affirmative; and affirmative only/no effect. As very few respondents experienced physical violence in isolation from emotional violence it was not possible to report on impact separately for these two forms of IPVA. Across each country sample, and for each form of IPVA, statistically significant differences were found in respect of gender and impact: girls were more likely than boys to attribute a negative impact to their experiences whilst boys were more likely to state an affirmative only impact or no

effect. We will initially address the impact of online forms of IPVA before moving on to explore face-to-face IPVA victimisation and impact. With the exception of the Italian sample, the majority of girls experiencing online IPVA reported a negative only impact, with rates ranging from 83% in Norway to 49% for Italy. Nevertheless, compared to face-to-face forms of IPVA for which the vast majority of girls reported a negative impact (see Table 7), girls also reported the highest rates of affirmative only responses in relation to online IPVA, ranging from 34% to 9%. The pattern of impact for boys' online IPVA experiences was more varied. Proportionally, more boys than girls in each country sample provided an affirmative only/no effect response, ranging from 58% to 43%. Nevertheless, this means that, on average, around half of boys reported some form of negative impact, with between 28% and 41% reporting a negative only subjective impact from their IPVA victimisation.

Insert Table 6 Online violence and Impact

A similar, but more pronounced, configuration was evident in relation to face-to-face emotional and physical violence (see Table 7). In respect of girls' face-to-face victimisation, between 68% and 86% reported a negative only impact. As with online forms of IPVA, boys' responses across country samples were more varied, although the gender pattern remained for each country. Between 20% and 47% of boys reported a negative only impact, whilst between 35% and 56% reported an affirmative only impact or no effect

Insert Table 7 Face-to-Face Emotional and Physical Violence and Impact

However, if we also include the type of subjective negative impact reported, the gender distinctions become salient. Overall, a very clear divide in types of negative impact emerged from the analysis with girls predominantly describing feeling scared and/or upset while the main negative impact reported by boys was feeling annoyed, followed by feeling angry. Few

boys reported feeling scared, upset or humiliated as a consequence of their IPVA experiences. Girls also reported feeling annoyed and angry, although to a lesser degree, and such feelings were generally reported in conjunction with other negative impacts. The most common affirmative response from boys was to say they thought that their partner's behaviour was funny.

Discussion

Limitations, Research Implications, and Clinical and Policy Implications

The findings show worrying levels of both online and offline forms of violence and abuse in young people's relationships across all the country samples. Prevalence rates for IPVA victimisation reflect previous research findings (Stonard et al 2014), including those of other European studies (Barter et al 2010, Fox et al 2013). For some of the European countries participating, this represents the first national study to examine the prevalence of IPVA in young people's relationships and therefore provides important initial findings to develop understanding within that country. Internationally only a limited body of work has sought to measure online forms of violence and abuse in young people's relationships and even fewer have explored the interconnection between online and offline forms of intimate violence and its subjective impact. Thus our study and its findings provide important and innovative insights into the prevalence, nature and dynamics of this form of IPVA.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study was due to difficulties in recruiting schools within the time-frame of the research which meant that it was not possible to construct a random sample in each country. Designing a survey that met the cultural expectations of research in five European countries was challenging and we were not able to collect data on race, religion and ethnicity consistently across each country sample, so limiting analysis of these variables. The online measures used in this study are in their early development stage and we cannot determine their validity at present. However, given the paucity of European research in this area our findings provide new insights.

Research Implications

Discrepancies were identified between the country samples. Some of these incongruences are difficult to decipher and require a more detailed comparative analysis than is possible here. We found that IPVA prevalence rates were significantly associated with gender in only two of the country samples: England and Norway. Indeed, these two countries reported the highest rates for female physical victimisation. Wider European research on adult IPVA has shown that the willingness of participants to report their experiences varies across countries and can be heavily influenced by how intimate violence is viewed in the that country (FRA 2014). The STIR expert meetings (see Barter et al., 2015) identified that England and Norway had the highest levels of IPVA awareness, reflecting wider research in this area (Eurobarometer 2010). Correspondingly, female participants in these two countries also reported the highest levels of physical violence. A possible explanation may be that female participants in Bulgaria, Cyprus and Italy under-reported their experiences of physical violence in a social context where awareness is low and certain forms of IPVA may be viewed as private, leading to increased feelings of self-blame and secrecy. However, such feelings did not appear to impact on boys' responses. Or perhaps the findings are accurate

and reflect the fact that as girls and women gain greater equality, as in England and Norway, they challenge the traditional heteronormative gender roles associated with relationships which may put them at greater risk of violence. These discrepancies are difficult to untangle and are open to multiple interpretations. The pattern of findings produced by the STIR study in respect of young people's experience of online and face-to-face sexual abuse also differed by gender and country and these are reported in Wood, Barter et al (2015). Further research is required to better understand these discrepancies and the role that culture and levels of gender equality play in mediating both experience of IPVA in young people's relationships and willingness to recognise and report it.

Clinical and Policy Implications

Our findings indicate a range of practice and policy implications. We found a strong indication of the interconnection between online and offline forms of IPVA in young people's relationships. The findings show that online forms of violence often represent an extension, and a possible indicator, of wider face-to-face IPVA. In this aspect, our study confirms the conclusions of previous research (Zweig et al., 2013; Cutbush et al., 2012) that online abuse should not be studied or tackled in isolation from face-to-face IPVA, but viewed within a wider strategy which addresses all forms of IPVA in young people's relationships. The close association between online and offline IPVA may also provide an opportunity to better identify victims as young people may be more willing to divulge online abuse compared to face-to-face victimisation, especially physical forms of abuse. However, in all country samples, a substantial proportion (between a third and a half) of online forms of IPVA occurred in isolation from face-to-face victimisation. In these instances, the online context may provide the space for young people to behave in a manner which would not

occur face-to-face. This is the case for cyber bullying where, although many victims experience both online and offline bullying, some bullies only target their victims online due to the anonymity and distance this provides (Smith and Steffgen 2013). The online context may facilitate behaviours which would not be replicated face-to-face. A lack of physical proximity may remove concerns about a partner's immediate reaction and reduce the role of anticipated repercussions in moderating abusive behaviour. Alternatively, online forms of IPVA may represent a precursor to face-to-face IPVA. Longitudinal research or studies which address the development of IPVA behaviours over time are required to unpick these questions. However, they are salient questions which should inform the development of policy and practice strategies for tackling both online and offline forms of adolescent IPVA.

Our last two research questions concerned the subjective effects of online and offline forms of IPVA and whether gender played a role in mediating impact as Stark and others have argued in relation to adult victimisation. As we have clearly identified, the impact of IPVA differed by gender. Although both female and male respondents attributed a negative impact to their experiences, girls were much more likely to report a negative only impact compared to boys. Girls' most frequent response was to feel scared and/or upset whilst boy's most common negative response was to feel annoyed. Negative feelings such as being scared, upset and feeling bad about yourself, the responses most often cited by girls, can have substantial detrimental effects in both the short- and long-term (Ropeik, 2004). Previous longitudinal research (Exner-Cortens et al 2013, Barter and Stanley 2016) has identified that IPVA victimisation is often associated with differential gendered mental health and psychological wellbeing outcomes: female victimisation is significantly associated with higher levels of negative mental health outcomes than males. The gendered pattern of mental health problems may be partially explained by the accumulative impact of feelings of anxiety and reduced self-esteem consequent to girls' experience of IPVA.

This does not mean that boys' victimisation does not require attention (Barter et al., 2009) or that girls use of violence should be minimised (Fitzroy 2001). Boys did report negative impacts, most commonly annoyance. However, male victims reported far less fear, upset and greater levels of amusement, reflecting previous findings (Barter et al., 2009; Hamby et al., 2012a; Jackson et al., 2000). This suggests that girls' attempts to exercise coercive control may be largely ineffectual as they do not hold sufficient structural power to ensure compliance from their partners (Stark 2008). Indeed, interviews with young people have shown that boys generally respond to their partners' attempts at control by ending the relationship, something girls rarely do (Barter et al 2009; Barter et al 2015).

Another possible explanation is that boys may be reluctant to voice their vulnerabilities due to the requirement to perform a certain form of hegemonic heteronormative masculinity which is powerful, in control and embodied (Connell 1987). This contention has been previously explored in interviews with young male victims (Barter et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2010). These studies found that although participants acknowledged varying degrees of gender role pressure they did not believe this inhibited their reporting of negative impacts. Most young men repeated our current finding that they sometimes found abusive behaviour annoying but mostly amusing. Thus, and mirroring Stark's theorising in respect of adults, gender inequalities mean that IPVA, including coercive control, has disparate gendered consequences for young people victimised in their intimate relationships. If prevention and intervention programmes primarily adopt a gender neutral position, as do many US interventions (Reed et al 2010), then both male and female participants may feel that programme messages do not reflect their own lived experiences. Practitioners and programme facilitators need to address these gendered dimensions including exploring the role that conceptions of both femininity and masculinity may play in inhibiting young men's ability to report negative impacts associated with IPVA.

Lastly, an affirmative account of the impact of IPVA may indicate the normalisation of IPVA in some peer cultures although this would imply that the normalisation of IPVA has primarily occurred in respect of boys' attitudes. However, online forms of emotional IPVA showed a different pattern with a higher proportion of both boys and girls in a number of country samples describing the impact in affirmative terms. The most common form of online IPVA was controlling behaviour and surveillance. Consequently, the line between what constitutes caring concern and coercive control may be blurred for some young people and aspects of control normalised as an indication or confirmation of love and protection (Barter et al., 2005; Barter et al., 2009). We know from previous research that new technologies play a central role in facilitating, maintaining, endorsing and ending adolescent intimate encounters and relationships (Draucker and Martolf 2010, Toscano 2007). Frequent texting/messaging between partners is a common aspect of teenage relationships (Stonard et al 2016) as well as representing a source of anxiety if frequency of online contact declines (Barter et al 2009). It is therefore unsurprising that young people may find it difficult to recognise when this frequent and reciprocal online communication becomes more worrying, problematic and controlling. Practitioners have a role in supporting young people to decipher when this threshold has been breached.

Conclusion

This is the first comparative study to address both online and offline IPVA in young people's relationships. For some of the participating countries it is the first ever large scale study to investigate IPVA in adolescent relationships. Our research confirms that both online and offline violence and abuse in young people's relationships constitute a major child welfare issue. There has been a proliferation of preventive programmes for children and young people

(Stanley et al 2015) and while the evidence base for the impact of these programmes has proved influential, it is also important that these interventions are informed by young people's own contextual experiences of IPVA (Hanby et al 2012a). These should include online experiences, and the ways in which these experiences may be differentiated by gender. Our findings provide a stronger European evidence base that can inform and enhance this important process.

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