PREVALENCE, PATTERNS AND RISK FACTORS OF DATING VIOLENCE AMONGST MASENO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Violence characterizes many social relationships and dating is no exception. Dating violence amongst university students include acts of physical assault, verbal and sexual abuse. These are known to cause serious long-term psychological and physical effects on those involved. First, the self-esteem of victims is negatively affected alongside their performance of tasks and achievement levels. In addition, murder and suicide among university students are known to occur as a result of dating violence. It has also been reported that violence gets entrenched and becomes a normal occurrence in their future intimate relationships. It is within this background that this study was carried out in order to understand the risk of dating violence among university students.

This study was based on an eclectic view of the Social Learning Theory, the Cognitive Behavioural Theory and the Behaviour Theory as postulated by B.F. Skinner. Using the survey design, the study sought to examine prevalence, patterns and risk factors of dating violence amongst Maseno University students. All the 1587 students of the Faculty of Education were purposively selected for the study. Out of these, a stratified random sample of 476 was drawn to participate in the study. Data was collected using self report questionnaire. The findings showed that 32.3% and 30.0% of the respondents were perpetrators and victims of physical dating violence respectively. Verbal violence was perpetrated by 53.7% while 46.1% were victims. Sexual abuse on the other hand, was perpetrated by 43.6% while victims were 43.8%. In this survey, males reported higher rates of physical and sexual violence perpetration and victimization. Both were however comparable in verbal abuse perpetration and victimization. All the four risk factors examined in this survey: family violence, peer influence, alcohol use and social norms predicted dating violence for both males and females differentially. Family violence and peer influence predicted physical violence victimization, verbal and sexual violence perpetration among the female respondents. Social norms and alcohol use on the other hand, predicted physical, verbal and sexual dating violence for both males and females.

Most studies that have examined dating violence have been Euro-American. It is envisaged that the findings of this study will increase knowledge on dating violence in the Kenyan socio-cultural environment. University administration may find information accruing from the study useful in developing intervention programs aimed at making dating relationships of its students violence-free. This may result in improved academic performance by both victims and perpetrators of dating violence.