



THE PREVALENCE OF DATING VIOLENCE: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Se presenta una revisión sistemática de estudios sobre prevalencia de la violencia en el noviazgo (física, psicológica y sexual) cometida y sufrida en adolescentes y jóvenes. De 1221 referencias iniciales, 113 cumplían con los criterios de calidad preestablecidos (evaluación de la violencia con instrumentos fiables y válidos, muestras superiores a 500 participantes u obtenidas mediante muestreo probabilístico). Se encontró una gran variabilidad en los datos de prevalencia, con rangos de variación entre el 3.8% y el 41.9% en violencia física cometida; entre el 0.4% y el 57.3% en violencia física sufrida; entre el 4.2% y el 97% en violencia psicológica cometida; entre el 8.5% y el 95.5% en violencia psicológica sufrida; entre el 1.2% y el 58.8% en violencia sexual cometida; y entre el 0.1% y el 64.6% en violencia sexual sufrida. Los resultados sugieren una mayor prevalencia en la perpetración de agresiones psicológicas por mujeres y sexuales por los hombres; una mayor victimización psicológica y sexual en mujeres; así como tasas ligeramente superiores de agresiones en los adolescentes que en los adultos jóvenes. Asimismo, en muchos de los trabajos revisados las agresiones tenían una naturaleza bidireccional.

Palabras clave: Violencia en el noviazgo, Adolescentes, Prevalencia, Revisión sistemática.

This article conducts a systematic review on the prevalence of dating violence in adolescents and young people. Primary studies about physical, psychological and sexual dating violence (perpetration and victimization) were analyzed. A total of 1,221 references were found and, out of those, 113 met the pre-established quality criteria (studies had to have used assessment tools with evidence of reliability and validity, in samples over 500 participants or obtained through probabilistic sampling). The results showed a great variability of figures on the prevalence of dating violence. Specifically, the percentages range from 3.8% to 41.9% in perpetrated physical violence; from 0.4% to 57.3% in victimized physical violence; from 4.2% to 97% in perpetrated psychological violence; from 8.5% to 95.5% in victimized psychological violence; from 1.2% to 58.8% in perpetrated sexual violence; and finally, from 0.1% to 64.6% in victimized sexual violence. The results suggest a higher prevalence in the perpetration of psychological aggression by women and sexual violence by men; greater psychological and sexual victimization in women; and slightly higher rates of aggression in adolescents than in young adults. Also, in many of the papers the aggression had a bidirectional nature.

Key words: Dating violence, Adolescents, Prevalence, Systematic review.

Any type of intentional aggression of one partner against another in the dating relationships of adolescents or young people is considered violence in dating relationships (DV). Dating aggressions tend to fit into three broad categories (i.e., physical, psychological, and sexual violence) and, as can be seen in Figure 1, these are manifested in different ways (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007; Foshee, 1996; Foshee, Bauman, Linder, Rice, & Wilcher, 2007; Leen et al., 2013; Shorey, Cornelius, & Bell, 2008). Nevertheless, the differentiation between the various forms of violence is useful in order to facilitate their study, but it must be kept

in mind that the different types of aggression are interrelated and very often occur together (Pozueco, Moreno, Blázquez, & García-Baamonde, 2013; Stets & Henderson, 1991).

Since James Makepeace (1981) warned about the need to pay attention to the violence that occurred during dating relationships, an important corpus of empirical research has been generated on various aspects in this area (e.g., theoretical models, prevalence, associated risk factors or intervention programs). The severity of this violent phenomenon and its impact on society today make it necessary to identify its real prevalence and the most relevant associated risk factors. Thus it should be possible to increase the effectiveness of preventive programs of violence against the intimate partner implemented specifically in the educational centers, since the first

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relationships of courtship between adolescents often begin in the centers of secondary education.

In recent years, there have been systematic reviews of the prevalence of intimate partner violence (e.g., Desmarais, Reeves, Nicholls, Telford, & Fiebert, 2012a, 2012b), as well as some critical narrative reviews of dating violence (González-Ortega, Echeburúa, & Corral, 2008; Jackson, 1999; Lewis & Fremouw, 2001; Rey, 2008; Rojas-Solís, 2013; Shorey, Cornelius, & Bell, 2008; Shorey, Stuart, & Cornelius, 2011). In the specific area of DV, although we are aware of a recent systematic review that has been carried out that has analyzed, among other aspects, the prevalence of this type of violence (Leen et al., 2013), the inclusion criteria are very restrictive in regards to the age of the participants (12-18 years) and the period of analysis (years 2000-2011). Moreover, it only reviews the prevalence of violence suffered (victimization), leaving out that of violence committed (perpetration).

With this background, the main objective of this work is the systematic review of the primary studies on the prevalence of DV (physical, psychological and sexual), both committed and suffered. The results are analyzed and discussed with particular attention to the socio-

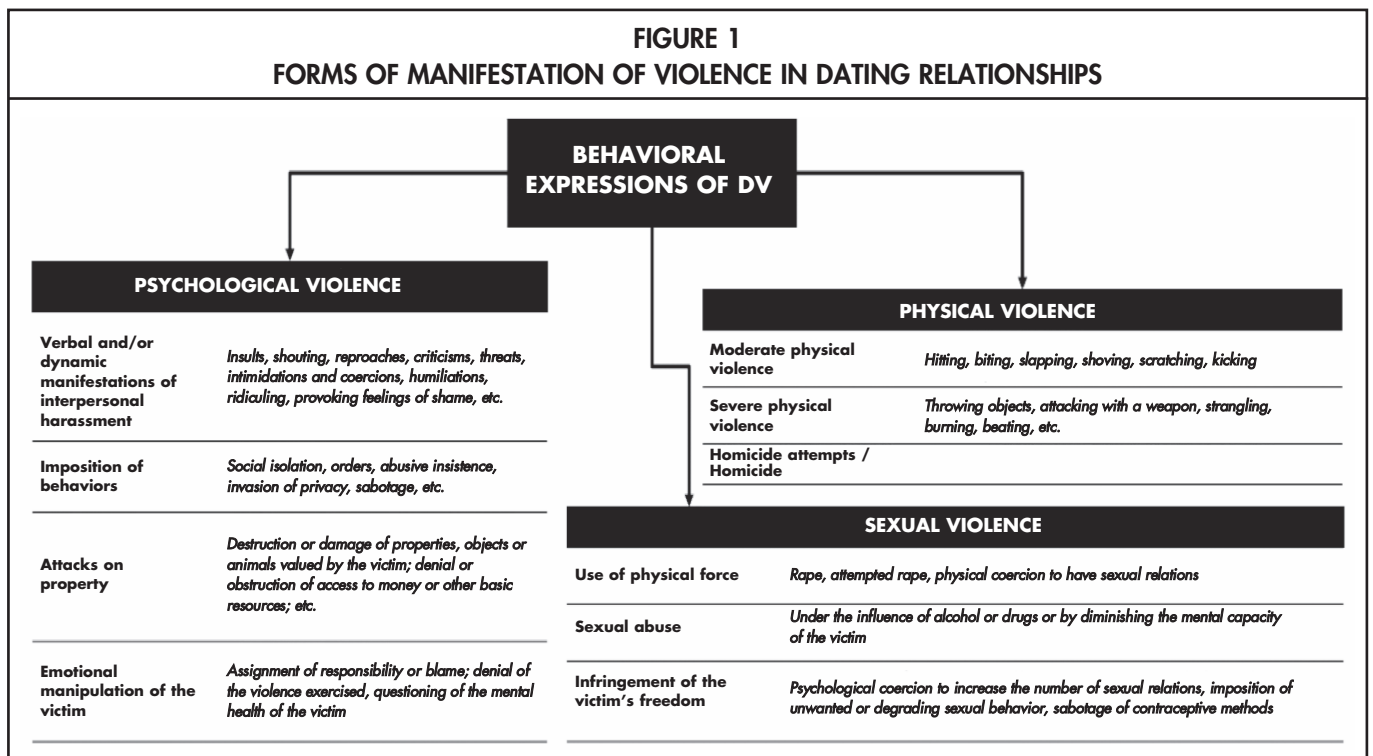
demographic variables of the participants, such as gender (males vs. females), age (adolescents vs. young adults) and partner relationship (ongoing vs. finished), as well as other variables such as the year of publication of the study, the country of origin of the study sample, and the evaluation instruments used, all with the aim of obtaining a more accurate view of the actual prevalence of these violent dynamics.

METHOD

Search procedure

The search terms, the analysis period and the sources consulted follow the methodology used in previous studies (Montesano, López-González, Saúl, & Feixas, 2015; Saúl et al., 2012). In order to select the original primary documents, the following search equation was used in the title (TI), abstract (AB) or keywords (KW) fields: [("date violence" OR "date abuse" OR "date aggression" OR "dating violence" OR "dating abuse" OR "dating aggression" OR "courtship violence" OR "courtship abuse" OR "premarital abuse" OR "premarital violence" OR "premarital aggression")] AND ("prevalence" OR "incidence" OR "frequency"). The databases used were PsycINFO and Medline (thematic), and E-Journals,

FIGURE 1
FORMS OF MANIFESTATION OF VIOLENCE IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS



Academic Search Premier, Scopus and Web of Science (multidisciplinary).

The documentary search was carried out without language restrictions and December 2013 was set as the upper limit of the analysis period.

Regarding the sources consulted, the recommendations of Sánchez-Meca, Marín-Martínez, and López-López (2011) were taken into account, combining formal and informal search strategies (see Figure 2).

Criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies

The inclusion criteria of the studies were established following the PICOS¹ format (see Perestelo-Pérez, 2013):

A) *Types of participant*: adolescents and young adults of

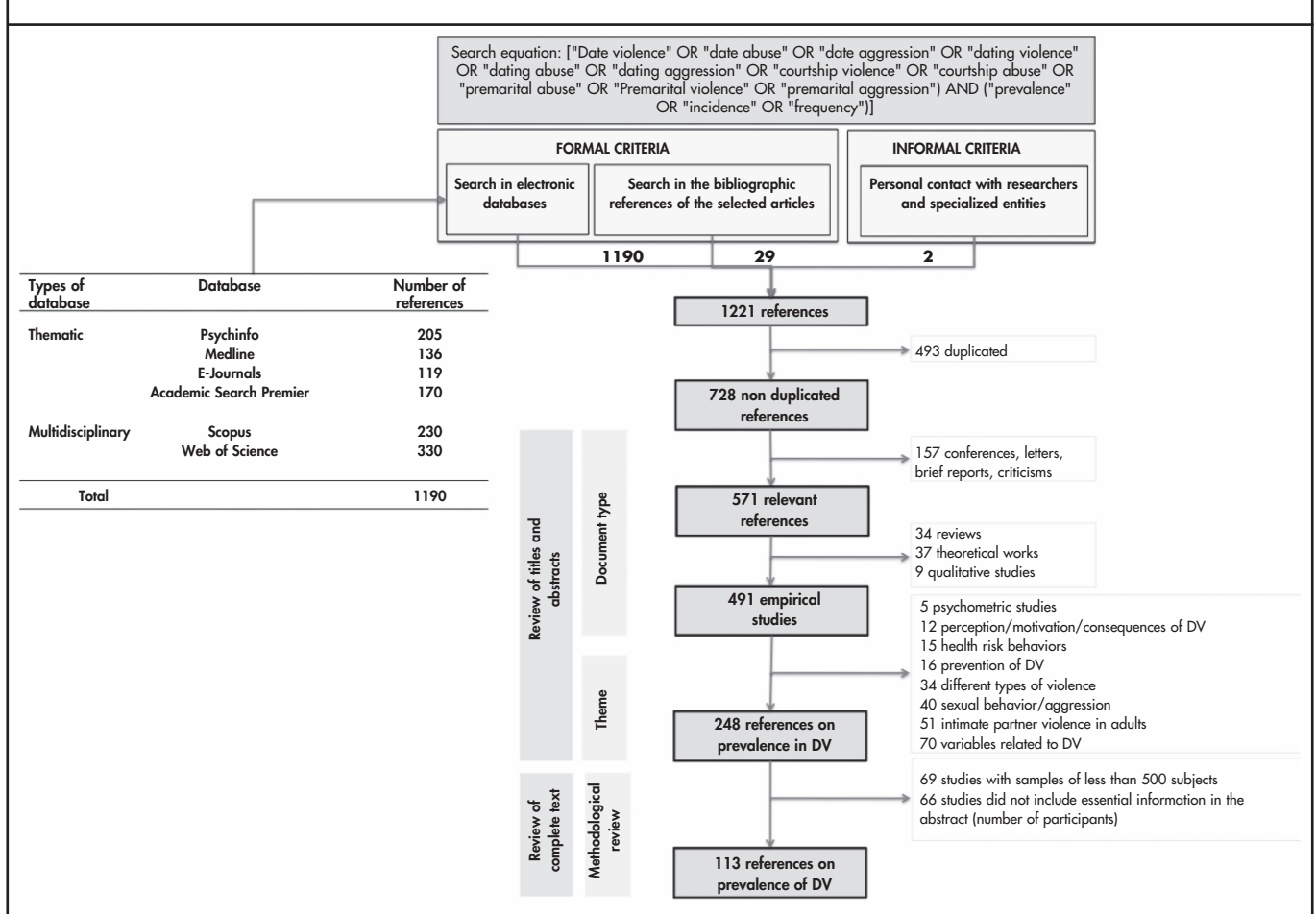
both sexes, age range (12-35 years), without known psychiatric pathology, from the general population and in a dating relationship on the date of the study or at an earlier moment.

B) *Types of study*: primary studies on the prevalence of physical, psychological or sexual violence committed (perpetration) and/or suffered (victimization) in dating relationships.

C) *Types of outcome measure*: validated assessment instruments with evidence of reliability.

D) *Types of design*: empirical studies with large samples (more than 500 subjects). Also included were studies with less than 500 participants if the sample had been obtained using probabilistic sampling techniques.

FIGURE 2
SEQUENCE OF THE SEARCH AND SELECTION PROCEDURE OF THE STUDIES



¹ PICOS = P: participants; I: interventions; C: comparisons; O: outcomes; S: study design

As for the exclusion criteria, studies were excluded that omitted fundamental methodological information in the abstract, such as the number of participants or their age, and those that did not provide differentiated data according to the type of violence (physical, psychological, and/or sexual). Review studies, essays, case studies, and any other qualitative studies were also excluded.

With regards to the types of publication, these included journal articles, doctoral theses, books and book chapters. Informative newspapers, short reports, talks, conference proceedings, letters and essays were discarded.

Coding of studies

A database was generated with the following categories: (a) bibliographic data: name of author and year of publication; (b) variables related to the participants: number, sex, type of sample (adolescents vs. young adults) and status of the relationship (ongoing vs. completed); (c) contextual variables: the country where the study was performed; (d) methodological variables: instruments used to assess violence; and (e) extrinsic variables: presence of conflict of interests.

RESULTS

In total, 1,221 references were retrieved; 90.8% were rejected after the analysis of the title and the abstract of each of them, obtaining a total of 113 studies with quality control. Figure 2 shows the sequence of the procedure for

searching for and selecting studies, with the specification of the databases consulted and the records found in each of them, as well as the number of discarded studies and the causes of elimination.

The data from the 113 selected studies revealed the wide range of variance in the prevalence of the three types of violence committed and suffered. In physical violence committed, the range varied between 7.7% and 40.3% in the case of men, and between 3.8% and 41.9% in women. The variability in physical violence suffered ranged from 0.4% to 53.7% in men, and from 1.2% to 41.2% in women, however, it rose to 77.8% in the combined data for men and women (Smith, White, & Holland, 2003). The range of variance in psychological violence was between 4.3% and 95.3% in men, and between 4.2% and 97% in women. In psychological violence suffered, the prevalence data varied between 8.5% and 94.5% in men, and between 9.3% and 95.5% in women. Finally, the prevalence of sexual violence committed by men ranged from 2.6% to 58.8%, and by women between 1.2% and 40.1%; and the prevalence of sexual violence suffered by men was between 0.1% and 54.2%, and for women between 1.2% and 64.6%. The percentage of sexual violence rose to 79.2% when no distinction was made between the sexes.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 include some of the 113 selected studies on the prevalence of physical, psychological and sexual violence in dating relationships. For reasons of

TABLE 1
PREVALENCE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS OF ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Study	Year	N	Type of sample	Country	Evaluation instrument	Physical violence (%)			
						Committed		Suffered	
						♂	♀	♂	♀
<i>Malik, Sorenson, & Aneshensel</i>	1997	719	Adolescents	USA	CTS	39.3 ⁽¹⁾		38.2 ⁽¹⁾	
<i>Molidor & Tolman</i>	1998	635	Adolescents	USA	CTS			36.5	31.3
<i>Sears, Byers, & Price</i>	2007	633	Adolescents	Canada	CTS	15.0	28.0		
<i>González y Santana</i>	2001	1146	Adolescents	Spain	CTS	7.5	7.1		
<i>Halpern, Oslak, Young, Martin, & Kupper</i>	2001	7493	Adolescents	USA	CTS			3.0	10.0
<i>Muñoz-Rivas, Graña, O'Leary, & González</i>	2007a	2416	Adolescents	Spain	MCTS	37.1	41.9	31.3	37.4
<i>O'Leary, Smith-Slep, Avery-Leaf, & Cascardi</i>	2008	2363	Adolescents	USA	MCTS	24.0	40.0	31.0	30.0
<i>Howard & Wang</i>	2005	13601	Adolescents	USA	YRBS			24.1	33.9
<i>Howard, Wang, & Yan</i>	2007a	7179	Adolescents	USA	YRBS				10.3
<i>Howard, Wang, & Yan</i>	2008	6528	Adolescents	USA	YRBS			10.0	
<i>Howard & Wang</i>	2003	7434	Adolescents	USA	YRBS			9.1	
<i>Howard & Wang</i>	2003	7824	Adolescents	USA	YRBS				9.2
<i>Silverman, Raj, Mucci, & Hathaway</i>	2001	2186	Adolescents	USA	MA-YRBS			8.9 ⁽¹⁾	
<i>Coker, McKeown, Sanderson, Davis, Valois, & Huebner</i>	2000	5414	Adolescents	USA	SC-YRBS	7.7 ⁽¹⁾	7.6 ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Wingood, DiClemente, McCree, Harrington, & Davies</i>	2001	522	Adolescents	USA	AHI			18.4	
<i>Marquart, Nannini, Edwards, Stanley, & Wayman</i>	2007	20274	Adolescents	USA	AHI				15.8 ⁽¹⁾



TABLE 1
PREVALENCE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS OF ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS (continuation)

Study	Year	N	Type of sample	Country	Evaluation instrument	Physical violence (%)			
						Committed		Suffered	
						♂	♀	♂	♀
Ackard, Neumark-Sztainer, & Hannan	2003	3533	Adolescents	USA	AHI		3.8		9.4
Simon, Miller, Gorman-Smith, Orpinas, & Sulivan	2010	5404	Adolescents	USA	DVS	26.4	31.5	53.7	27.4
Zweig, Dank, Yahner, & Lachman	2013	5647	Adolescents	USA	PhyDVS			35.9	23.9
Pradubmook-Sherer	2009	1296	Adolescents	Thailand	CADRI			41.9	41.2
Fernández-Fuertes & Fuertes	2010	567	Adolescents	Spain	CADRI	16.1	30.2	26.3	17.5
Wolitzky-Taylor et al.	2008	3614	Adolescents	USA	NSA			0.4	1.2
Smith, White, & Holland	2003	1569	Young people	USA	CTS				77.8 ⁽¹⁾
White & Koss	1991	4707	Young people	USA	CTS	37.0	35.0	39.0	32.0
Slashinski, Coker, & Davis	2003	13912	Young people	USA	CTS			1.2	4.3
Chan, Straus, Brownridge, Tiwari, & Leung	2008	15927	Young people		CTS2		30.0 ⁽¹⁾		26.0 ⁽¹⁾
Straus	2004	8666	Young people		CTS2		29.0 ⁽¹⁾		
Straus	2008	13601	Young people		CTS2	24.4	31.6		
Corral & Calvete	2006	1130	Young people	Spain	CTS2	14.4	27.7	16.8	18.7
Corral	2009	1081	Young people	Spain	CTS2	11.9	21.4	13.1	13.9
McLaughlin, Leonard, & Senchak	1992	PA625	Young people	USA	MCTS	36.0			
Muñoz-Rivas, Graña, O'Leary, & González	2007b	1886	Young people	Spain	MCTS	32.2	30.4	32.3	29.5
Rey-Anacona	2013	902	Young people	Colombia	LCEMP	40.3	40.0		
Bjorklund, Hakkanen-Nyholm, Huttunen, & Kunttu	2010	905	Young people	Finland	SHS			42.0 ⁽¹⁾	
Amar & Gennaro	2005	863	Young people	USA	AAS				32.0
Lehrer, Lehrer, & Zhao	2009	950	Young people	Chile	AHI			26.6	15.1
Danielsson, Blom, Nilses, Heimer, & Högberg	2009	3170	Mixed ⁽²⁾	Sweden	AHI			27.0	18.0
Rivera-Rivera, Allen-Leigh, Rodríguez-Ortega, Chávez-Ayala, & Lazcano-Ponce	2007	7960	Mixed ⁽²⁾	Mexico	CTS	19.5	20.9	9.8	22.7
Machado, Caridade, & Martins	2010	4667	Mixed ⁽²⁾	Portugal	NS		18.1 ⁽¹⁾		13.4 ⁽¹⁾

Note. ♂ (males), ♀ (females); PA = partners; ⁽¹⁾Combined prevalence rates (males and females); ⁽²⁾Adolescents and young people. AAS = Abuse Assessment Screen; CADRI = Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory; CADRI-S = Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory Short Form; CTS = Conflict Tactics Scale; CTS2 = Revised Conflict Tactics Scales; CUVINO = Cuestionario de Violencia entre Novios [Questionnaire on violence between partners]; AHI = *ad hoc instrument*; LCEMP = Lista de Chequeo de Experiencias de Maltrato en la Pareja [Checklist for Experiences of Abuse in Couples]; MA-YRBS = Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey; MCTS = Modified Conflict Tactics Scale; NE = Not specified; NSA = National Survey of Adolescents; PhyDVS = Dating Violence Scale; SC-YRBS = South Carolina Youth Risk Behavior Survey; SHS = Student Health Survey; YRBS = Youth Risk Behavior Survey. *India, Israel, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong (China), Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, USA. **China, India, Israel, Korea, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Holland, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, USA. ***Iran, South Africa, Greece, India, Tanzania, Holland, Malta, Rumania, Belgium, Mexico, Switzerland, USA, Hungary, Venezuela, Japan, United Kingdom, South Korea, Germany, Russia, Hong Kong, China, Lithuania, Brazil, Israel, Canada, Sweden, Australia, Taiwan, Guatemala, New Zealand, Portugal, Singapore.

TABLE 2
PREVALENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS OF ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Study	Year	N	Type of sample	Country	Evaluation instrument	Physical violence (%)			
						Committed		Suffered	
						♂	♀	♂	♀
Sears, Byers, & Price	2007	633	Adolescents	Canada	CTS	35.0	47.0		
Halpern, Oslak, Young, Martin, & Kupper	2001	7493	Adolescents	USA	CTS			28.0	29.0
Muñoz-Rivas, Graña, O'Leary, & González	2007a	2416	Adolescents	Spain	MCTS	92.8	95.3	92.3	93.7
O'Leary, Smith-Slep, Avery-Leaf, & Cascardi	2008	2363	Adolescents	USA	MCTS	85.0	92.0	85.0	88.0
Fernández-Fuertes, & Fuertes	2010	567	Adolescents	Spain	CADRI	95.3	97.0	94.5	95.5
Sherer	2009	1357	Adolescents	Israel	CADRI			88.9	86.7
Pradubmook-Sherer	2009	1296	Adolescents	Thailand	CADRI			49.2	46.7
Zweig, Dank, Yahner, & Lachman	2013	5647	Adolescents	USA	AHI			44.2	49.7
Jaffe, Sudermann, Reitzel, & Killip	1992	737	Adolescents	Canada	LFCC			16.4	23.6
White & Koss	1991	4707	Young people	USA	CTS	81.0	87.0	81.0	88.0
Follingstad, Bradley, Laughlin, & Burke	1999	617	Young people	USA	CTS		53.4 ⁽¹⁾		
Corral & Calvete	2006	1130	Young people	Spain	CTS2	65.6	81.7	61.5	74.6
Corral	2009	1081	Young people	Spain	CTS2	48.3	58.6	45.2	54.9
Muñoz-Rivas, Graña, O'Leary, & González	2007b	1886	Young people	Spain	MCTS	77.3	83.4	81.2	77.2
Rey-Anacona	2013	902	Young people	Colombia	LCEMP	89.3	82.7		



TABLE 2
PREVALENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS OF ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS (continuation)

Study	Year	N	Type of sample	Country	Evaluation instrument	Physical violence (%)			
						Committed		Suffered	
						♂	♀	♂	♀
<i>Lehrer, Lehrer, & Zhao</i>	2009	950	Young people	Chile	AHI			79.9	67.3
<i>Danielsson, Blom, Nilses, Heimer, & Högberg</i>	2009	3170	Mixed ⁽²⁾	Sweden	AHI		18.0		33.0
<i>Rivera-Rivera, Allen-Leigh, Rodríguez-Ortega, Chávez-Ayala, & Lazcano-Ponce</i>	2007	7960	Mixed ⁽²⁾	Mexico	CTS	4.3	4.2	8.5	9.3
<i>Machado, Caridade, & Martins</i>	2010	4667	Mixed ⁽²⁾	Portugal	NS	22.4 ⁽¹⁾		19.5 ⁽¹⁾	

Note. ♂ (males), ♀ (females). ⁽¹⁾Combined prevalence rates (males and females). ⁽²⁾Adolescents and young people. CADRI = Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory; CTS = Conflict Tactics Scale; CTS2 = Revised Conflict Tactics Scales; AHI = *ad hoc instrument*; LCEMP = Lista de Chequeo de Experiencias de Maltrato en la Pareja [Checklist for Experiences of Abuse in Couples]; LFCC = London Family Court Clinic Questionnaire on Violence in Intimate Relationships; MCTS = Modified Conflict Tactics Scale; NS = Not specified.

TABLE 3
PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS OF ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Study	Year	N	Type of sample	Country	Evaluation instrument	Physical violence (%)			
						Committed		Suffered	
						♂	♀	♂	♀
<i>Molidor & Tolman</i>	1998	635	Adolescents	USA	CTS			0.3	17.8
<i>Fernández-Fuertes & Fuertes</i>	2005	572	Adolescents	Spain	CADRI	58.8	40.1	54.2	50.1
<i>Sherer</i>	2009	1357	Adolescents	Israel	CADRI			46.4	21.7
<i>Pradubmook-Sherer</i>	2009	1296	Adolescents	Thailand	CADRI			43.2	46.7
<i>Howard & Wang</i>	2005	13601	Adolescents	USA	YRBS			5.1	10.2
<i>Howard, Wang, & Yan</i>	2007b	13767	Adolescents	USA	YRBS			4.8	10.3
<i>Ackard & Neumark-Sztainer</i>	2002	81247	Adolescents	USA	N-YRBS			1.2	1.4
<i>Silverman, Raj, Mucci, & Hathaway</i>	2001	2186	Adolescents	USA	MA-YRBS			3.8 ⁽¹⁾	
<i>Ortega, Ortega-Rivera, & Sánchez</i>	2008	490	Adolescents	Spain	SHS	54.5	39.1	50.6	54.5
<i>Poitras & Lavoie</i>	1995	644	Adolescents	Canada	SES	14.3	6.3	13.1	54.1
<i>Foshee</i>	1996	1965	Adolescents	USA	DVS	4.5	1.2	1.1	1.2
<i>Wolitzky-Taylor et al.</i>	2008	3614	Adolescents	USA	NSA			0.3	1.5
<i>Serquina-Ramiro</i>	2005	600	Adolescents	Philippines	AHI			42.3	64.6
<i>Zweig, Dank, Yahner, & Lachman</i>	2013	5647	Adolescents	USA	AHI			8.8	16.4
<i>Ackard, Neumark-Sztainer, & Hannan</i>	2003	3533	Adolescents	USA	AHI		2.9		3.6
<i>Smith, White, & Holland</i>	2003	1569	Young people	USA	CTS			79.2 ⁽¹⁾	
<i>Gámez-Guadix, Straus, & Hershberger</i>	2011	13877	Young people	32p*	CTS2	27.0	20.0		
<i>Corral & Calvete</i>	2006	1130	Young people	Spain	CTS2	16.3	8.3	9.5	19.6
<i>Chan, Straus, Brownridge, Tiwari, & Leung</i>	2008	15927	Young people	21p**	CTS2	20.1 ⁽¹⁾		24.1 ⁽¹⁾	
<i>Corral</i>	2009	1081	Young people	Spain	CTS2	2.6	8.5	2.8	18.8
<i>Rey-Anacona</i>	2013	902	Young people	Colombia	LCEMP	29.0	17.5		
<i>Sears, Byers, & Price</i>	2007	633	Young people	Canada	SES-R	17.1	5.1		
<i>Bjorklund, Hakkanen-Nyholm, Huttunen, & Kunttu</i>	2010	905	Young people	Finland	SHS				5.3
<i>Slashinski, Coker, & Davis</i>	2003	13912	Young people	USA	NVAWS			0.1	3.2
<i>Muñoz-Rivas, Graña, O'Leary, & González</i>	2009	4052	Mixed ⁽²⁾	Spain	AHI	35.7	14.9		
<i>Danielsson, Blom, Nilses, Heimer, & Högberg</i>	2009	3170	Mixed ⁽²⁾	Sweden	AHI			4.7	14.0

Nota. ♂ (males), ♀ (females); ⁽¹⁾Combined prevalence rates (males and females); ⁽²⁾Adolescents and young people. CADRI = Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory; CTS = Conflict Tactics Scale; CTS2 = Revised Conflict Tactics Scales; DVS = Dating Violence Scale; AHI *ad hoc instrument*; MA-YRBS = Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey; ; LCEMP = Lista de Chequeo de Experiencias de Maltrato en la Pareja [Checklist for Experiences of Abuse in Couples]; NVAWS = National Violence Against Women Survey; N-YRBS = National Youth Risk Behavior Survey; SES = Sexual Experiences Survey; SES-R = Sexual Experiences Survey-Revised; SHS = Sexual Harassment Survey; YRBS = Youth Risk Behavior Survey. *South Africa, Greece, India, Tanzania, Holland, Malta, Rumania, Belgium, Mexico, Switzerland, USA, Hungary, Venezuela, Japan, United Kingdom, South Korea, Germany, Russia, Hong Kong, China, Lithuania, Brazil, Israel, Canada, Sweden, Australia, Taiwan, Guatemala, New Zealand, Portugal, Singapore.



space, only the studies that were considered most representative on the basis of the following criteria are shown in the tables: (a) *relevance*, studies with more than 50 quotations in the *Scopus* or *Web of Science* databases; (b) *representativeness*, studies with very large samples ($n > 5000$ subjects); and (c) *transnationality and cultural diversity*, research with samples from different countries and studies carried out in non-Anglo-Saxon settings. The tables were organized according to the age of the participants (adolescents and young adults) and the evaluation instruments used, in order to be able to appreciate, where appropriate, the presence of patterns in the data.

The prevalence of dating violence based on sociodemographic variables

The prevalence data provided by the various selected studies are disparate by sex. However, in a large group of studies, higher prevalence rates can be seen in the committing of psychological aggression and victimization in women. Furthermore, many of the retrieved studies indicate a greater perpetration of sexual assaults on the part of the men and a greater victimization in women. In addition, the results suggest that in many of the studies reviewed, the aggressions are reciprocal or bidirectional, i.e., both partners are both victims and perpetrators. The analysis of the different studies seems to show that bidirectionality is more frequent in psychological aggressions.

Regarding age, the vast majority of studies show slightly higher rates of aggressive behavior in adolescents than in young adults, both in perpetration and victimization, with very high percentages ($> 90\%$) in psychological-type assaults (see Fernández-Fuertes & Fuertes, 2010; Muñoz-Rivas et al., 2007a).

Finally, with regard to the status of the couple's relationship, most of the papers reviewed do not report and do not allow comparisons to be made in this regard.

The prevalence of dating violence based on bibliographic, contextual and methodological variables

There are no significant differences in the prevalence data based on the year of publication or the country of origin of the study. However, the prevalence rates of violence tend to be higher when aggressive behaviors were assessed with the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) and later versions (MCTS and CTS2), or with the Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory (CADRI).

DISCUSSION

In this study, a systematic review has been carried out of the literature that in the last decades has investigated the prevalence of the physical, psychological and sexual violence committed and suffered in the dating relationships of adolescents and young people, combining search strategies in formal and informal sources. The use of a search equation that is exhaustive and easily replicable in other research has enabled us to maximize the finding of primary studies on the prevalence of DV and has revealed the important corpus of empirical research generated.

The most remarkable result is the extraordinary variability in the prevalence data of the reviewed studies, in line with what has been pointed out by other authors (e.g., Hickman, Jaycox, & Aronoff, 2004; Lewis & Fremouw, 2001). The analysis of the prevalence of violence committed and suffered according to sex shows conflicting results from some studies to others between men and women, mainly in the case of physical violence (see, for example, Fernández-Fuertes & Fuertes, 2010; Howard & Wang, 2005; Rey-Anacona, 2013; White & Koss, 1991). However, and being very cautious in this regard, a number of patterns are observed in the presentation of the data. For example, a significant part of the retrieved studies show a higher prevalence of psychological violence committed and suffered by women, in line with some previous review studies (Archer, 2000; Fiebert, 2004; Straus, 2008). As for sexual violence, most of the studies indicate higher rates of male aggression and greater victimization among women, also in line with what has been reported in the literature (e.g., Corral, 2009; Foshee et al., 2009; Jackson, 1999).

A very relevant finding is the existence of bidirectional violence in a significant number of the reviewed studies (e.g., Harned, 2001; Malik, Sorenson, & Aneshensel, 1997; Palmetto, Davidson, Breitbart, & Rickert, 2013; Rubio-Garay, López-González, Saúl, & Sánchez-Elvira-Paniagua, 2012; Straus, 2008; Straus & Ramírez, 2007). In this sense, in the dynamic of a violent couple, both members can act as perpetrators and as victims, so when faced with aggressive behavior one responds with a defensive measure that is also violent (Lewis & Fremouw, 2001). However, it is also common for one partner to attack the other at one point in time and the other to respond aggressively at a different time and context (Palmetto et al., 2013). In the majority of the studies that



show the existence of two-way violence, the participants report on the behavior of their partners or ex-partners and, in very few, the unit of analysis is the dyad (e.g., McLaughlin, Leonard, & Senchak, 1992). Thus, it is not possible to determine whether reciprocal aggressive interactions occur with the current partner or constitute a habitual pattern in relationships with other partners. In any case, it seems that regardless of who initiates the aggression, men use more dangerous forms of physical violence, and women suffer more severe physical and psychological harm (Archer, 2000, 2004; Harned, 2001; Jackson, 1999; Muñoz-Rivas, Graña, O'Leary, & González, 2007b).

Various explanations have been put forward for two-way violence. For example, *the theory of intergenerational transmission of violence* (Lewis & Fremouw, 2001; Palmetto et al., 2013) suggests that victims might observe and learn (for example, from seeing violence between their parents) that the aggressors experience positive consequences with their actions and thus the victims employ similar violent strategies in their current or future partner relationships. Other authors propose that violence engenders violence, so some adolescents and young people are immersed in a culture of violence that leads to such behaviors (Jackson, 1999). The role of self-defense in bidirectional violence has also been postulated (Lewis & Fremouw, 2001), although self-defense strategies would only explain a limited percentage of this type of aggression (Straus, 2008). Finally, there have been other possible explanations such as revenge, i.e., "I attack you because you attack me", jealousy, control, domination, and the deterioration of the relationship itself (Fernández-Fuertes & Fuertes, 2010; Follingstad, Wright, Lloyd, & Sebastian, 1991; Straus, 2008). In any case, it seems necessary to continue investigating the causes of two-way violence and the development of preventive strategies.

Regarding the influence of age on the prevalence of DV, slightly higher rates of aggressive behavior are observed in adolescents than in young adults. This tendency for aggressive dating behaviors to decrease as age increases has been captured in a number of review studies (e.g., Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt, & Kim, 2012). However, the consequences of violence tend to be much more severe at later ages despite being less frequent (González-Ortega et al., 2008). On the other hand, it should be noted that more than 90% of the studies reviewed were carried out

with secondary school students (adolescents) and university students (young adults), possibly because of their greater accessibility. In the few studies with community samples, the prevalence data for DV were also different, so one can assume that the provenance of the sample used does not seem to be determinant in the prevalence of these violent dynamics. In this sense, it would be advisable for future research to analyze the prevalence of DV in other populations (e.g., adolescents and young people with specific problems) who have been explicitly excluded from this study.

The year of publication does not seem to play a relevant role in the prevalence rates of DV that appear in the studies. The data indicate a very variable prevalence, both in the work published in the final two decades of the last century and in the most recent research, with no definite trend (increasing vs. decreasing) being observed in reported violence rates. Likewise, the country of origin of the various selected studies does not appear to be important in the reported prevalence rates either. In this sense, most of the studies were carried out in the United States and the variability is as wide as in other geographic environments.

Finally, the studies retrieved show that the evaluation of violence has been carried out mainly with self-report measures, with the *Conflict Tactics Scale* (CTS, Straus, 1979) and its later modified (Neidig, 1986) and reformulated versions (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) being the most commonly used instruments. Surveys, interviews, and ad hoc designed instruments were also used less frequently. The data appear to indicate slightly higher rates of violence when the samples were assessed with the CTS, MCTS, CTS2 or CADRI, despite the variability found. However, the CTS and its various versions as instruments for the evaluation of DV have suffered various criticisms, mainly because some items could overestimate psychological violence and female violence, and underestimate masculine violence, due to not being originally designed for the evaluation of adolescent relationships; and due to the underestimation of some indirect aggressions and not differentiating well between moderate and severe violence (see González & Santana, 2001; Jackson, 1999; Muñoz-Rivas, Andreu, Graña, O'Leary, & González, 2007; Ryan, Frieze, & Sinclair, 1999, quoted in Fernández-Fuertes, Fuertes, & Pulido, 2006; White, Smith, Koss, & Figuredo, 2000).

In short, this review has revealed important differences



in the prevalence rates between some studies and others in the physical, psychological and sexual violence committed and suffered in the dating relationships of adolescents and young people. Some authors (e.g., Lewis & Fremouw, 2001; Offenhauer & Buchalter, 2011; Teten, Ball, Valle, Noonan, & Rosenbluth, 2009) have pointed out that these differences could be due to the different operational definitions of DV; some specific characteristics of the sample (e.g., belonging to certain subpopulations that have not been taken into account in the design of the research); or even the different time frames of prevalence chosen (e.g., lifetime prevalence, prevalence in the last 12 months, etc.) From our point of view, the majority use of self-reports in the studies must affect the subjectivity of the answers and, therefore, it would affect their overestimation or not depending on the perception of the respondent and his/her personality characteristics (e.g., empathy, morality, etc.), which could also explain the variability found. This suggests the need to explore the prevalence of this problem through the evaluation of external observers and taking the couple as the unit of analysis rather than the respondents at the individual level. In any case, the review has shown that aggression in courtship, especially verbal and emotional, has a high prevalence, followed by sexual and physical aggression. It is, therefore, a serious social problem that has negative consequences on the overall health and interpersonal functioning of the victims and which, in the school context, translates into greater academic difficulties, lack of security, poor academic performance, lower educational attainment, dropping out of school, absenteeism, etc. (Banter & Cross, 2008; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012; Rubio-Garay, Carrasco, Amor, & López-González, 2015; Teten et al., 2009). All this justifies the need to develop and implement programs of primary and secondary prevention of violence in educational institutions (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007), since the average age of first dating relationships is 14-15 years (Viejo, 2014) and, at these ages, almost all adolescents are studying in secondary schools. The experience of a primary prevention program of DV (Hernando, 2007), carried out with adolescents of a secondary education center in Huelva (Spain), showed a change in individual attitudes towards dating aggression, as well as greater knowledge and ability to detect situations of physical, psychological and sexual abuse, in addition to an increase in the abilities to deal

with these types of situation. The results obtained by Hernando (2007) were in line with other studies that have evaluated the effectiveness of DV prevention programs in educational settings in cultural settings different from ours. These types of programs have shown positive short- and long-term effects in changing attitudes and behaviors with respect to violence, in changing traditional roles and gender stereotypes, in the development of communication skills, peaceful conflict resolution and problem solving, and improved self-esteem (see Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007; Leen et al., 2013, for a review).

The main limitation of this study is a methodological one, since an indeterminate number of studies could have been excluded from the searches performed in the databases due to not including in the title, abstract or keywords some of the terms of the search equation, for example, because the authors of the primary studies chose other keywords. A second limitation arises from the inclusion and exclusion criteria established, since relevant studies may have been ruled out due to the omission of essential data in the summaries/abstracts, either raw data on physical, psychological or sexual violence, or by not recording the number of participants or the type of sampling used.

AUTHOR DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS

No competing interests exist

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