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Promoting Informal and Professional Help-Seeking for Adolescent Dating Violence

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Abstract

The present study examined factors that differentiate adolescents with varied intentions of informal and professional help-seeking for dating violence. Help-seeking intentions among 518 ethnically diverse adolescents from a rural, southern county who participated in a longitudinal study of teen dating violence were categorized into three groups: adolescents unlikely to seek any help, adolescents likely to seek only informal help, and adolescents likely to seek informal and professional help. Multinomial logistic regression found that gender, family functioning, problem-solving competency, dating status, having an adult to talk to about a dating relationship, and acceptability of family violence significantly predicted membership in the help-seeking groups. Implications for promoting informal and professional help-seeking and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Keywords

Help-Seeking; Dating Violence; Informal Help; Professional Help; Rural

Adolescent dating violence is a serious public health concern associated with numerous physical and psychological consequences (Ackard, Eisenberg, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2007; Banyard & Cross, 2008; Exner-Cortens, Eckenrode, & Rothman, 2013; Foshee et al., 2013; Kaura & Lohman, 2007). While adolescent dating violence is prevalent throughout the United States, adolescents in the rural south are at an increased risk of exposure and in need of specific programming and services related to dating violence (Spencer & Bryant, 2000; Marquart, Nannini, Edwards, Stanley, & Wayman, 2007). Victims and perpetrators often need emotional, information, and instrumental support to distance themselves from current violence, to improve their mental health and well-being, and to reduce the risk of future dating violence. In particular, receiving help from both professional and informal sources may protect against a variety of mental health risks (Baskin et al., 2010; Liang, Goodman, Tummala-Narra, & Weintraub, 2005; Martin, 2002). Unfortunately, previous studies indicate that many adolescents do not seek any help for dating violence (Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Rickwood, Dean, Wilson, & Ciarrochi, 2005). Adolescents that do seek help choose to seek

informal help only or informal and professional help together, and almost none seek only professional help (Author Citation, in press.; Neighbors & Jackson, 1984).

A number of studies have identified factors that influence adolescent help-seeking for dating violence and other mental health problems, including problem definition and evaluation, psychological factors, demographic factors, and social factors (Rothi & Leavey, 2006). Interestingly, these studies have yet to explore which of these factors differentiate adolescents who do not seek any help, who seek only informal help, or who seek both informal and professional help. Identifying characteristics which distinguish adolescents with different intentions of informal and professional help-seeking will allow professionals to identify and target adolescents most at risk of not seeking help, and will allow providers to develop more effective intervention strategies by targeting characteristics likely to increase adolescent intentions of seeking both informal and professional help. This study extends the literature on adolescent help-seeking by determining which factors related to help-seeking differentiate adolescents with varied intentions of informal and professional help-seeking for dating violence.

Adolescent Dating Violence Prevalence and Impact

Dating violence is psychological-emotional, physical, or sexual violence within a dating relationship (St. Mars & Valdez, 2007). As many as one-third of adolescents report being a victim of some form of dating violence (Cyr, McDuff, & Wright, 2006; Foshee et al., 1996; Halpern, Oslak, Young, Martin, & Kupper, 2001; Haynie et al., 2013; Mulford & Giordano, 2008). Prevalence rates have varied from study to study due to differences in the types of violence asked about on surveys, age ranges of participants, and survey administration (Ocampo, Shelley, & Jaycox, 2007). For instance, a Harvard School of Public Health study found that 20% of female students in grades 9–12 reported being physically or sexually hurt by a dating partner in their lifetime (Silverman, Raj, Mucci, & Hathaway, 2001). In contrast, the Department of Alcohol and Drugs Programs found 8.2% of male and female eleventh graders had been victims of physical dating violence in the past twelve months (WestEd, 2004).

Adolescents in rural areas report higher rates of victimization than in urban or suburban areas, and the south is the region of the United States with the highest adolescent dating violence victimization rate (Spencer & Bryant, 2000; Marquart et al., 2007). McDonnell, Ott, and Mitchell (2010) reported that the odds of dating violence victimization among southern adolescents were 1.3 times that of adolescents living outside of the South. More specifically, [Author Citation] (in press) found that a substantial number of participants in the Adolescent Dating Violence Study reported dating violence victimization and perpetration. Lifetime prevalence of dating violence victimization was 31% for psychological/emotional dating violence, 18% for physical dating violence, 15% for forced sexual touching, and 12% for forced sexual intercourse. The prevalence of dating violence perpetration was 20% for psychological/emotional dating violence, 11% for physical dating violence, 8% for forced sexual touching, and 5% for forced sexual intercourse.

Poor outcomes associated with adolescent dating violence include a wide variety of physical, psychological, and behavioral problems. In addition to the risks of physical injury, dating violence has been linked to eating disorders, suicidal thoughts, and depression (Ackard et al., 2007; Banyard & Cross, 2008; Kaura & Lohman, 2007) substance use (Exner-Cortens, Eckenrode, & Rothman, 2013; Foshee, Reyes, Gottfredso, Chang, & Ennett, 2013), lower academic achievement (Chiodo et al., 2011), risky sexual behavior (Bonomi, Anderson, Nemeth, Rivara, & Buettner, 2013), and adverse health outcomes (Haynie et al., 2013), among others. Out of the above-mentioned studies, only two examined differentiated outcomes based on the type of dating violence victimization. Bonomi et al. (2013), found that there were no differences in health outcomes between males who experienced non-physical dating violence and physical/sexual dating violence, whereas the negative health impacts of physical/sexual dating violence were more pronounced than non-physical violence for females. Haynie et al. (2013) similarly found that females who were victims of both physical and verbal dating violence had more pronounced negative outcomes compared with females who were victims of verbal dating violence only. While it appears that physical and sexual dating violence may have more severe negative impacts than psychological dating violence, particularly for females, it is clear that adolescent dating violence of any kind is a serious public health concern with significant implications for adolescent well-being.

Help-Seeking Impact and Prevalence

Help-seeking refers to the behavior of actively obtaining advice, information, treatment, and general support in response to a problem or distressing experience (Rickwood et al., 2005). It is a form of coping that often relies on social relationships and interpersonal skills. More specifically, informal help-seeking is the behavior of obtaining support from friends and family, while professional help-seeking is the behavior of obtaining support from those who have appropriate training in providing services, such as teachers, counselors, law enforcement officers, or clergy.

Help-seeking is considered an effective coping strategy throughout a wide variety of disciplines (Ansara & Hindin, 2010; Garcia, 2010). In the context of dating violence, informal and professional help-seeking are instrumental in reducing mental health risks like depression and anxiety (Carlson, McNutt, Choi, & Rose, 2002), improving conflict negotiation and management skills, and ensuring self-protection from further violence (Ashley & Foshee, 2005). Professional help is often thought of as the most efficacious source of support (Baskin et al., 2010; Martin, 2002), but some evidence suggests that receiving both informal and professional help is especially important. For example, Liang et al. (2005) argued that victims of dating violence who received both informal support, such as emotional sustenance and material assistance, and formal support, such as social services and mental health counseling, were less susceptible to the psychological impact of partner abuse. Also, findings from Thompson and Peebles-Wilkins (1992) suggested that the best way to reduce or alleviate the stress of black teenage mothers was to effectively incorporate professional services with informal help from family members and peers.

A majority of adolescent victims of dating violence, however, do not seek any help. Ashley and Foshee (2005) found that 60% of adolescent dating violence victims, and 79% of perpetrators, did not seek any form of help. Among adolescents who do seek help, help from informal sources is more commonly sought than help from professionals (Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Ocampo et al., 2007; Fry et al. 2013). While informal help-seeking is often beneficial, informal help-givers may not be prepared to provide adequate support for complex problems like dating violence (Black, Tolman, Callahan, Saunders, & Weisz, 2008; Ocampo et al. 2007). Ocampo, Shelley, and Jaycox (2007) stated that peers are likely to provide emotional support, a sympathetic ear, and advice to leave a violent relationship, but peers are not likely to provide the kind of practical help that would enable the victim actually to leave the abuser. Therefore, professionals must be relied on to provide appropriate information, skills, and services related to ending violence and addressing mental health concerns.

Beyond adolescents' willingness to seek help on their own, professionals have played an important role in proactively seeking out and assisting adolescent dating violence victims. Universal screening at routine medical appointments, combined with referral to appropriate resources, have been shown to reduce exposure to dating violence (Cutter-Wilson & Richmond, 2011). Educational curricula such as Safe Dates have been used in schools to help adolescents recognize warning signs of dating violence and identify appropriate resources for themselves or their peers who may become victims (Foshee & Langwick, 2010). However, adolescent dating violence programs are often unavailable or are only targeted to teens at the highest levels of risk (Martsolf, Colbert, & Draucker, 2012), and more needs to be done to reduce barriers to utilization for existing services (Wilson & Deane, 2001).

Predictive Factors of Help-Seeking

Limited research has focused on predictive factors of informal and professional help-seeking for adolescent dating violence. Studies suggest that adolescent females are more likely to seek informal help for dating violence than are males, but there is evidence to suggest that males are at least as likely as females to seek professional help for dating violence (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Ashley & Foshee, 2005). Older adolescents are also more likely to seek help than younger adolescents (Ashley & Foshee, 2005). Additionally, adolescent Latinos may be more likely to seek professional help for dating violence than whites or African Americans, and African American females may be less likely to seek professional help than other racial and ethnic groups (Fry et al. 2013; Woodward, Chatters, Taylor, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2010).

Research into factors predicting adolescent help-seeking for general physical violence and for mental health issues is more prevalent. Zaykowski (2012) found that adolescent perpetrators of violence and adolescents with higher exposure to violence were less likely to seek professional help for physical violence than their peers who had not perpetrated physical violence or who had low exposure to violence. Gulliver, Griffiths, and Christensen (2010) conducted a review of 22 published studies on professional help-seeking intentions among adolescents and young adults suffering from mental health disorders. The most commonly cited barriers to seeking help in these studies were stigma and embarrassment,

problems recognizing symptoms, and a preference for self-reliance. Positive past experiences with professional providers, high social support, and encouragement from others were cited as facilitators of professional help-seeking behavior. In a separate review of 30 published studies on mental health help-seeking behavior among adolescents, Rothi and Leavey (2006) identified a four-factor framework of facilitators and barriers to help-seeking, including problem definition and evaluation, psychological factors, demographic factors, and social factors. While findings for general help-seeking among adolescents may not be transferable to adolescent dating violence given the unique nature of the problem, these findings do provide a foundation for researchers interested in adolescent help-seeking for dating violence. In particular, Rothi and Leavey's (2006) four-factor framework provides a model within which to organize potential predictive factors of adolescent help-seeking for dating violence.

In addition to the relative dearth of existing literature on adolescent help-seeking specifically related to dating violence, the existing literature generally considers informal and professional help-seeking separately from one another. Instead, researchers need to consider informal and professional help-seeking in tandem. Previous studies have suggested that professional help-seeking may be dependent on informal help-seeking (Author Citation, in press), and some evidence suggests that receiving informal and professional help in tandem may be most effective in protecting adolescents from adverse outcomes (Liang et al., 2005).

Present Research

Given extant literature showing the benefits of receiving both informal and professional help for adolescent dating violence, and the dearth of research on factors influencing informal and professional help-seeking for dating violence, there is a need to better understand what factors differentiate adolescents who intend to seek no help, seek informal help only, or seek both informal and professional help. Understanding these factors will allow professionals concerned with adolescent dating violence to better target at-risk adolescents and to develop programming that promotes both informal and professional help-seeking intentions.

The present study, therefore, examined the following research question: which factors differentiate adolescents with varied intentions of informal and professional help-seeking for dating violence?

Method

Procedure

This study was part of the Adolescent Dating Violence Study (ADVS), a four-year, cohort sequential research initiative that examined the developmental trajectory of dating violence victimization and perpetration among adolescents in the rural south. Data were collected in four annual waves from 2012 through 2015 using student and caregiver surveys. Student survey data from the third wave of data collection were used for the current study because adolescents were older, were more familiar with dating violence, and had higher rates of dating violence victimization and perpetration.

Surveys were administered by local partners from a coordinating council of human service providers. All sixth through ninth grade students from ten schools in a rural South Carolina school district were invited to participate in the study. Information letters and invitations were sent to 3,256 eligible students in four grade cohorts, and a total of 589 adolescents agreed to participate. Once response cards from the invitations were returned, trained data collectors scheduled appointments to visit the homes of study participants. Surveys were conducted in homes to enhance the feasibility of participation in the study. Informed consent procedures were followed for caregivers and adolescents. Then student participants were provided a 45 minute survey instrument to complete independently, place in a sealed envelope with a unique numeric identifier, and return to the data collector. Students completed the surveys in a separate room from their caregivers under the supervision of the data collector in order to ensure privacy. Students were provided with a \$20 incentive for completion of the third wave of the survey. All study procedures were approved by the local Institutional Review Board.

Participants

At Wave 3, 27% of students were in 8th grade (n=139), 26% were in 9th grade (n=134), 24% were in 10th grade (n=124), and 23% were in 11th grade (n=121). The ethnic distribution of student participants was 46% African American, 30% White, and 14% Hispanic or other minorities. The proportion of African American students exceeded that of Whites in the study despite the fact that the White population of the county was nearly twice that of the African American population. Female students represented 48% of the sample while male students represented 52% of the sample, and 58% of the sample had a family income below the county's median income of \$32,979. It is unclear why African Americans were disproportionately represented in the sample, although one possible explanation is that because African American families in the study were more likely to fall into lower household income categories than White families, the incentives offered for participation in the study may have been a stronger inducement. However, there are numerous other potential explanations, including the possibility that the African American community in the study area had a greater concern for adolescent dating violence than other racial and ethnic groups. The prevalence of dating violence victimization and perpetration in the sample is presented in Table 1.

Measures

Outcome Measure—Two subscales were created to measure informal and professional help-seeking intentions. The informal help-seeking subscale consisted of nine items indicating the likelihood to seek help from “your parent,” “your friend,” and “another adult” for psychological-emotional, physical, and sexual dating violence. The professional help-seeking subscale consisted of 12 items indicating the likelihood to seek help from “a doctor or healthcare professional,” “a teacher or guidance counselor,” “a Minister, Priest, Rabbi, or Imam,” and “a therapist or counselor” for psychological-emotional, physical, and sexual dating violence. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert-type scale from not at all likely to very likely. The informal and professional help-seeking subscales generated Cronbach's alphas of .88 and .96 respectively, indicating excellent reliability. Construct validity for each subscale was evaluated by testing bivariate correlations of related

constructs. Consistent with hypotheses based on existing literature, there were significant, positive correlations between informal help-seeking and social support ($r=.326, p<.001$) and informal help-seeking and family functioning ($r=.334, p<.001$), and a significant, negative correlation between informal help-seeking and depression ($r=-.149, p=.001$). Also consistent with the literature, significant, positive correlations were found between professional help-seeking and social support ($r=.182, p<.001$) and professional help-seeking and problem-solving competency ($r=.164, p<.001$).

Independent measures—Independent variables were selected and organized using Rothi and Leavey's (2006) four-factor youth mental health help-seeking framework of problem definition and evaluation, psychological factors, demographic factors, and social factors. Table 2 details the specific constructs, measures, reliability, and sources for each predictor variable tested in the present study.

Problem definition and evaluation factors included acceptability of family violence, dating violence victimization or perpetration, and knowing a victim of dating violence. The acceptability of family violence scale was adopted from Earls et al. (2006) which consisted of items asking the adolescent whether they would call the police in response to different types of violent acts occurring in the family, such as repeated name calling, hitting and punching, and forced sexual intercourse. Willingness to call the police for each type of violence was used as a proxy for the adolescents' acceptance of various types of family violence. Eight items asking if the student had been a victim of, or perpetrated, psychological/emotional, physical, or sexual dating violence measured dating violence victimization or perpetration. For the purpose of this study, students who selected yes for one or more of these items was considered a victim or perpetrator of dating violence. Similarly, students who selected yes for any of the four items asking if they knew a victim of any type of dating violence were considered to know a victim of dating violence.

Psychological factors included a problem-solving competency scale (McDonnell et al., 1994), a self-efficacy scale (Sherer et al., 1982), and the CES-D depression scale (Radloff, 1977). Demographic factors included grade level, gender, race, and household income. Finally, social factors included social support, family functioning, whether a student was currently dating someone, and whether a student had an adult in their life they could talk to about a dating relationship. Social support was measured using Zimet et al.'s (1988) Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, and family functioning was measured using the general functioning subscale of the McMaster Family Assessment Device (Epstein et al., 1983). Single items created for the study were used to measure whether adolescents were currently dating and whether adolescents had an adult in their life to talk to about a dating relationship.

Analyses

Adolescent responses about informal and professional help-seeking intentions were grouped into four categories in an effort to better understand the distribution of help-seeking intentions among participants in the study. The summed measure of informal help-seeking intentions and the summed measure of professional help-seeking intentions were divided

into quartiles. The quartiles from informal and professional help-seeking intentions were combined, resulting in 16 groups of adolescents. These 16 groups were collapsed into four groups, including adolescents with low scores on both informal and professional help-seeking intentions, adolescents with high scores on informal help-seeking intentions and low scores on professional help-seeking intentions, adolescents with low scores on informal help-seeking intentions and high scores on professional help-seeking intentions, and adolescents with high scores on both informal and professional help-seeking intentions. One-way Analysis of Variance was conducted to confirm that the quartiles were statistically different from one another on informal help-seeking intentions, $F(3, 511) = 1081.91, p < .001$, and professional help-seeking intentions, $F(3, 511) = 449.47, p < .001$. Only five adolescents reported high intentions of professional help-seeking and low intentions of informal help-seeking, so this group was removed from further analyses.

Multinomial logistic regression was used to predict adolescent membership in the three different help-seeking groups. The group of adolescents reporting both low informal and professional help-seeking intentions was the reference category. All of the predictor variables were entered simultaneously into the multinomial logistic regression. Then, nonsignificant predictors were removed so that the final iteration of the model consisted of only significant predictors.

Results

Informal and Professional Help-Seeking Intentions

Half of the sample (50%) reported high intentions of both informal and professional help-seeking for dating violence, 19% of the sample reported both low informal and professional help-seeking intentions, and 31% reported high intentions of informal help-seeking coupled with low intentions of professional help-seeking. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of informal and professional help-seeking intentions for each of the three groups of adolescents.

Predicting Group Membership

Multinomial logistic regression was used to predict membership into the three help-seeking groups. Three variables assessing adolescent problem definition and evaluation, three variables assessing adolescent psychological factors, four variables assessing adolescent demographic characteristics, and four variables assessing adolescent social factors were entered into the model. Results from the initial model are presented in Table 4.

Four predictors were significant, including acceptability of family violence, gender, family functioning, and having an adult to talk to about a violent relationship. Three predictors were approaching significance, including dating someone now, knowing a victim of dating violence, and problem-solving competency. A second iteration of the model included all significant predictor variables and those that were approaching significance in the initial model. This model revealed that the remaining variables were significant predictors except for knowing a victim or perpetrator of dating violence. This variable was removed. The final model is presented in Table 5.

Overall, acceptability of family violence, problem-solving, family functioning, dating status, gender, and having an adult to talk to about a violent relationship were significant predictors of group membership. This model predicted the groups of adolescent help-seeking intentions significantly better than the intercept only model, $\chi^2(12) = 94.69, p < .001$.

Being female, having an adult to talk to about a violent relationship, reporting higher levels of family functioning, and reporting lower levels of acceptability of family violence increased the likelihood of belonging to the high informal and low professional help-seeking group relative to the low informal and low professional help-seeking group. Being female, not dating someone now, reporting higher levels of problem-solving competency, reporting higher levels of family functioning, and reporting lower levels of acceptability of family violence increased the likelihood of belonging to the high informal and high professional help-seeking group relative to the low informal and low professional help-seeking group.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify characteristics which differentiate adolescents with varied informal and professional help-seeking intentions, in order to aid professionals in identifying and targeting adolescents most at risk of not seeking any help and in developing more effective intervention strategies for promoting both informal and professional help-seeking for dating violence. Overall findings from this study suggest that gender, adult relationships, family functioning, acceptability of family violence, problem-solving competency, and dating status are important characteristics in differentiating adolescents with varied intentions of informal and professional help-seeking. These findings translate into several strategies for promoting informal and professional help-seeking for adolescent dating violence.

First, a universal approach is best when implementing programming to foster help-seeking for dating violence. Findings revealed that gender was the only demographic characteristic which significantly differentiated adolescents with varied informal and professional help-seeking intentions. Females were more likely than males to belong to the high informal/low professional and high informal/high professional help-seeking groups. It is well-established in the help-seeking literature that females are more likely than males to seek help (Watson, Cascardi, Avery-Leaf, & O'Leary, 2001), but a large number of females who experience dating violence still choose not to seek help (Ashley & Foshee, 2005). Additionally, some prevalence estimates show that dating violence victimization is also a substantial problem for males (Author Citation, in press; WestEd, 2004). Altogether, targeting specific adolescents may not be appropriate for programming related to fostering help-seeking intentions for dating violence. Instead, a universal approach will ensure that all adolescents are provided with opportunities that promote help-seeking intentions, regardless of gender, race, age, or household income.

Second, programming should focus on strengthening relationships among adolescents, family members, and other adults in the community. Findings from this study revealed that adolescents who had an adult they could talk to about a dating relationship and adolescents with higher levels of family functioning were more likely than others to belong to the high

informal/low professional and high informal/high professional help-seeking groups. In order to increase informal and professional help-seeking for dating violence, programming might assist adolescents in identifying adults interested in talking to them about dating and in building or strengthening relationships with these adults. It may be best to include community professionals in this programming to help adolescents recognize professionals as potential help-givers and allow adolescents to build relationships with professionals. Programming might also include specific opportunities for families to strengthen communication skills and to improve relationships. Caregivers should be encouraged to talk to their adolescents about dating violence and about their willingness to engage in discussions about dating relationships. Finally, programming might include opportunities for family members and other adults to learn skills related to help-giving and to receive information about professional services in the community. This will increase the likelihood that adolescents receive effective informal help and encouragement to seek professional services when they turn to the adults in their lives.

Third, programming should address adolescent recognition and evaluation of dating violence and adolescent problem-solving competency. Findings from this study revealed that adolescents with lower levels of acceptability of family violence were more likely than others to belong to the high informal/low professional and high informal/high professional help-seeking groups. Additionally, adolescents with higher levels of problem-solving competency were more likely than others to belong to the high informal/high professional help-seeking group. Interestingly, problem-solving competency did not significantly differentiate the high informal/low professional help-seeking group from the low informal/low professional help-seeking group. This finding suggests that promoting problem-solving competency may be crucial to ensuring that adolescents intend to seek both informal and professional help for dating violence. Altogether, programming should aid adolescents in recognizing violence as a problem, educate adolescents on appropriate actions to take in violent situations, and address the role of the family in the recognition and evaluation of dating violence. Perhaps most importantly, programming must address problem-solving skills related to recognizing dating violence and to seeking informal and professional help for dating violence.

Finally, further research on best practices for promoting help-seeking for dating violence should consider the relationship between dating status and help-seeking intentions. Findings revealed that adolescents not currently in a dating relationship were more likely than those currently in a dating relationship to belong to the high informal/high professional help-seeking group. This finding suggests that addressing the role of dating status on help-seeking intentions may be crucial to ensuring that adolescents intend to seek both informal and professional help for dating violence. Perhaps adolescents in a dating relationship are less willing to seek help for dating violence due to feelings of intimacy for their partner or to the importance of the relationship in their lives. It is essential for professionals to better understand the relationship between dating status and help-seeking intentions to effectively promote adolescent help-seeking for dating violence.

Several limitations of this study are relevant to programming aimed at promoting help-seeking intentions for dating violence. One clear limitation of this study concerns the

measurement of help-seeking intentions rather than help-seeking behaviors. Help-seeking intentions are not perfect predictors of help-seeking behaviors, but evidence suggests a number of positive and significant associations between help-seeking intentions and prospective help-seeking behavior for personal and emotional problems (Rickwood et al., 2005). Additionally, it appears there is some overlap between factors influencing informal and professional help-seeking and risk factors for dating violence; thus, a person-centered approach examining whether similar factors predict help-seeking intentions among a sample of adolescents at high risk for dating violence might help to further understand the link between help-seeking intentions and behaviors. Other limitations include a recruitment method which resulted in a sample that was not necessarily representative of the county as a whole, and an inability to generalize findings to adolescents outside of the rural south. Additionally, this study did not explore differences in adolescents' attitudes towards psychological, physical, and sexual dating violence or consider whether or not victims or perpetrators or dating violence had chosen to seek help in the past. Future research should address these issues.

Nevertheless, this study provides many insights for professionals concerned with promoting informal and professional help-seeking for dating violence. Interventions should employ a universal approach to intervention to ensure opportunities for all adolescents, regardless of gender, race, age, or household income. Programming should focus on strengthening relationships among adolescents, family members, and other adults in the community, address adolescent recognition and evaluation of dating violence, and improve adolescent problem-solving competencies. Lastly, further research is needed to examine the relationship between dating status and help-seeking intentions. Implementing programming to foster both informal and professional help-seeking for dating violence will go a long way towards protecting adolescents against future violence and a variety of mental health risks.

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Table 1

Prevalence of Adolescent Dating Violence Victimization and Perpetration

Type of Involvement in Dating Violence	Percentage of Total Sample	Percentage of Females	Percentage of Males
Victim of Psychological/Emotional	30.9	34.2	27.2
Victim of Physical	18.0	19.0	16.7
Victim of Sexual Touching	14.7	19.0	10.2
Victim of Forced Sex	12.2	16.0	7.7
Perpetrator of Psychological/Emotional	19.9	20.4	19.1
Perpetrator of Physical	11.0	13.4	7.7
Perpetrator of Sexual Touching	7.7	9.3	5.7
Perpetrator of Forced Sex	5.4	7.1	3.7

Table 2

Predictor variables for adolescent dating violence help-seeking propensity

Construct	Measure	α	Source
<u>Problem definition and evaluation</u>			
Acceptability of family violence	7-item scale	.874	Earls, Brooks-Gunn, Raudenbush, & Sampson, 2006
Victim or perpetrator of dating violence	8 items	n/a	Constructed for ADVS
Knowing a victim of dating violence	4 items	n/a	Constructed for ADVS
<u>Psychological factors</u>			
Problem-solving competency	13-item scale	.902	McDonell, Kelly, & Sterling, 1994
Self-efficacy	23-item scale	.787	Sherer et al. 1982
Depression (CES-D)	8-item scale	.712	Radloff, 1977
<u>Demographic factors</u>			
Grade level	single item	n/a	n/a
Gender	single item	n/a	n/a
Race	single item	n/a	n/a
Household income	single item	n/a	n/a
<u>Social factors</u>			
Social support (MSPSS)	12-item scale	.948	Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988
Family functioning (McMaster Family Assessment Device)	13-item scale	.793	Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983
Dating someone now	single item	n/a	n/a
Having an adult to talk to	1 item	n/a	n/a

Table 3
Descriptive statistics of informal and professional help-seeking intentions by group

	n	Help-Seeking Type	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Low Informal/Low Professional	96	Informal	13.24	3.27	9.00	18.00
		Professional	14.33	3.72	4.00	24.00
High Informal/Low Professional	159	Informal	25.40	4.51	19.00	36.00
		Professional	18.12	4.52	12.00	24.00
High Informal/High Professional	255	Informal	30.16	4.91	19.00	36.00
		Professional	36.77	7.54	12.00	24.00

Table 4
Multinomial Logistic Regression of Adolescent Help-Seeking Intentions (Initial Model)

Help-Seeking Intentions*	Predictor	B	SE	Wald	df	Exp(B)
High Informal Low Professional	Intercept	-4.23*	1.84	5.44	1	.000
	Acceptability of family violence	0.30***	0.07	19.45	1	1.34
	Problem-Solving	0.20	0.22	0.84	1	1.22
	Self-Efficacy	-0.10	0.39	0.07	1	0.90
	Depression	-0.28	0.31	0.83	1	0.75
	Grade	0.13	0.14	0.87	1	1.14
	Income	0.05	0.14	0.12	1	1.05
	Social Support	0.05	0.13	0.15	1	1.05
	Family Functioning	0.57	0.40	2.00	1	1.76
	Victim/Perpetrator	-0.72	0.44	0.03	1	0.93
	Not Dating Now	-0.02	0.30	0.01	1	0.98
	Know Victim/Perpetrator	-0.19	0.36	0.27	1	0.83
	Female	0.78*	0.31	6.17	1	2.18
	White	-0.25	0.31	0.66	1	0.78
High Informal High Professional	Have an Adult to Talk to	0.85*	0.39	4.78	1	2.33
	Intercept	-3.64*	1.71	4.54	1	.000
	Acceptability of family violence	0.18**	0.06	9.70	1	1.20
	Problem-Solving	0.34	0.20	2.99	1	1.41
	Self-Efficacy	-0.01	0.36	0.00	1	0.99
	Depression	-0.14	0.29	0.21	1	0.87
	Grade	-0.17	0.13	1.84	1	0.84
	Income	0.19	0.13	2.09	1	1.21
	Social Support	0.15	0.13	1.40	1	1.16
	Family Functioning	0.74*	0.38	3.90	1	2.10
	Victim/Perpetrator	0.17	0.42	0.17	1	1.19
	Not Dating Now	0.51	0.28	3.30	1	1.66

Help-Seeking Intentions ^a	Predictor	B	SE	Wald	df	Exp(B)
	Know Victim/Perpetrator	−0.61	0.34	3.25	1	0.54
	Female	0.77**	0.29	6.89	1	2.15
	White	−0.04	0.29	0.02	1	0.96
	Have an Adult to Talk to	0.42	0.36	1.54	1	1.52

^aThe reference category is low informal/low professional

* p < .05,
** p < .01,
*** p < .001

Table 5
Multinomial Logistic Regression of Adolescent Help-Seeking Intentions (Final Model)

Help-Seeking Intentions ^a	Predictor	B	SE	Wald	df	Exp(B)
High Informal Low Professional	Intercept	-4.34***	0.99	19.64	1	.000
	Acceptability of family violence	0.30***	0.07	21.20	1	1.34
	Problem Solving	0.23	0.19	1.42	1	1.25
	Family Functioning	0.63*	0.31	4.05	1	1.87
	Not Dating Now	0.05	0.29	0.03	1	1.05
	Female	0.69*	0.29	5.57	1	1.99
	Have an Adult to Talk to	0.83*	0.36	5.37	1	2.30
	Intercept	-5.15***	0.94	30.12	1	.000
	Acceptability of family violence	0.20***	0.06	12.04	1	1.22
	Problem Solving	0.42*	0.17	5.70	1	1.52
High Informal High Professional	Family Functioning	0.89**	0.30	8.99	1	2.42
	Not Dating Now	0.53*	0.27	3.84	1	1.70
	Female	0.83**	0.28	9.02	1	2.29
	Have an Adult to Talk to	0.59	0.32	3.36	1	1.80

^aThe reference category is low informal/low professional

* p < .05,

** p < .01,

*** p < .001