Love, Sex and Smartphones: Developing a conceptual model of dating violence among young people in India

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Dating violence is a form of Intimate Partner Violence that occurs between two people in a close relationship and includes emotional abuse, controlling behaviours and threats, physical violence, coerced and non-consensual sexual activities, and sexual abuse.

Physical health consequences include STIs and injuries.

Mental health consequences include common mental disorders, substance use, eating disorders and suicidal behavior.
Dating violence in India

1. Dating behaviours among young people
2. Dating violence and crime
3. Gaps in evidence
Objectives

01 Develop a contextual understanding of dating relationships and dating violence among young people in India.

02 Examine the relationship between dating violence and mental health, including substance use and suicide risk.

03 Create a conceptual framework that outlines potential mechanisms and processes that could prevent dating violence and improve associated mental health effects among young people in India.
Research methods

In-depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions
To examine the ways in which young people, college teachers and counsellors experience, understand, and cope with violence in their dating relationships.

Systematic Review
To examine and synthesise the evidence base about the prevalence and correlates of dating violence among young people in low-and-middle-income countries.

Cross-sectional survey
To understand the prevalence, nature and mental health correlates of dating violence among young people through a pan-Indian online health survey.
Topics explored in the interviews

- Reasons for dating and expectations from partners
- Experiences of dating relationships and conflicts
- Experiences of physical, sexual and emotional dating violence occurring online and in person
- Role of parents, teachers, friends and counsellors in supporting help-seeking
Sample

**Young People**
In-depth interviews with 45 young people (27 female, 18 male)
Average age = 19.5 years
Average relationship duration = 1.5 years
Average age at first relationship = 15 years

**Teachers**
In-depth interviews and 1 focus group discussion with 21 teachers (19 female, 2 male)
Average age = 38.8 years
Average work experience = 12.7 years

**Counsellors**
In-depth interviews and 1 focus group discussion with 12 teachers (10 female, 2 male)
Average age = 27.5 years
Average work experience = 4.4 years
Results: Dating relationships
Motivation to be in dating relationships

- Based on appearance and material goods
- Peer pressure and conformity
- Looking for love outside family
- Hormones and curiosity

“
They don't understand what is love...they get eh eh... carried away
Counsellor, Female, 26
Conflict in dating relationships

Caused by jealousy, insecurity, infidelity, not sharing time & attention with partner, partner's Substance Use

Resolved by communication & compromise

Coping by crying, sharing with friends, alcohol

“If fights are not there than they will say, "You don't care for me"
Student, Male, 22
Results:
Dating violence
Precursors of dating violence

“...so when there is doubt (about infidelity)... then violence take place.
Student, Male, 20
Emotional violence & control

“And he broke up with her saying that you gotten fat [..] Like you are not pretty any more.

Student, Female, 19
Sexual violence & control

“my first boyfriend forced me to kiss him. We would say, I had like no other option but to do it.
Student, Female, 22
Physical violence

“...I see it very hardly in... in homosexual relationships...It is because maybe a person is hurting or something, you know, out of anger...
Student, Male, 20
Cyber violence

the girl's (instagram) account was logged into her boyfriend's phone, so he could check what she was doing
Student, Female, 20

Monitoring online activity
Sharing passwords
Blackmailing using intimate/nude pictures
Coping & help seeking after violence

“Mostly it is just remained in our friend circle only. We never spoke to anybody older than us.”
Student, Female, 19

Drinking alcohol & smoking
Isolating from friends and family
Fear of being judged & discussed
Looking for solutions online
Conclusions

- Dating among young people includes distressing experiences
- These relationships are misunderstood by teachers, parents & counsellors
- Young people might miss the warning signs of violence, or downplay their experience of violence
- They hesitate to access support because of a lack of confidentiality and trust
- Educational institutions and services responding to violence lack a nuanced understanding of dating and dating violence
Thank you!