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Controlling Behaviors via Social Networking: Associations with HIV Risk Behaviors among Adolescent Girls

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BACKGROUND

- Researchers are beginning to explore the impact of information technologies (IT; e.g., mobile phones) and social networking (SN; e.g., Facebook) on adolescent dating violence (DV) behaviors.
- Cyber DV:
 - Occurs in 26% of currently-dating adolescents' relationships
 - Is associated with other forms of DV
 - Is more common among female adolescents
 - Zweig, Lachman, Yahner, & Dank, 2014
- DV victimization has been associated with HIV risk behaviors, including condom non-use, having multiple partners, and alcohol use prior to sexual encounters
 - Teitelman, Cederbaum & Campbell, 2007
- Little is known about DV-involved adolescent girls' victimization and perpetration experiences with SN/IT-based controlling behaviors, or how these behaviors may relate to HIV risk.
- The present study examined associations between SN/IT controlling behaviors and HIV risk behaviors in a sample of predominantly ethnic minority, economically disadvantaged adolescent girls with a history of DV involvement.

METHODS

- Data are from the baseline assessment of a randomized controlled trial of a group CBT-based intervention to reduce HIV and DV risk among DV-involved adolescent girls
- 109 girls (ages 14-17; $M = 15.75$) in a medium-sized New England city
- Endorsed a history of DV in a confidential school-based screening
- Racial/ethnic distribution of the sample:
 - 50% Hispanic
 - 35% African American
 - 22% White
 - 8% American Indian
 - 3% Asian
- 82% qualified for free or reduced-price lunch

MEASURES

- **AIDS Risk Behavior Assessment (ARBA;** Donenberg et al., 2001)
- Assessed nine sexual, testing, and substance use-related behaviors associated with HIV risk.

SN/IT Victimization Predicting HIV Risk Behaviors

| Outcome: HIV Risk Behavior | B | 95% CI for B | Wald χ^2 |
|--------------------------------------|------|--------------|---------------|
| Ever had vaginal sex | .89 | .36, 1.42 | 10.78** |
| Ever had anal sex | .74 | -.20, 1.68 | 2.40 |
| #lifetime male vaginal/anal partners | .48 | .26, .70 | 19.00*** |
| # partners past 90 days | -.33 | -.37, -.29 | 302.34*** |
| Condom use at last sex (y/n) | -.44 | -1.22, .35 | 1.19 |
| Alcohol use at last sex | .83 | -1.28, 2.95 | .60 |
| Drug use at last sex | .65 | .14, 1.17 | 6.15* |
| Ever had an HIV test | 1.25 | .56, 1.94 | 12.50*** |
| Had HIV test in past 3 months | .95 | -.35, 2.25 | 2.05 |

SN/IT Perpetration Predicting HIV Risk Behaviors

| Outcome: HIV Risk Behavior | B | 95% CI for B | Wald χ^2 |
|--------------------------------------|------|--------------|---------------|
| Ever had vaginal sex | .25 | -.33, .82 | .71 |
| Ever had anal sex | -.16 | -1.20, .88 | .09 |
| #lifetime male vaginal/anal partners | -.21 | -.45, .04 | 2.74 |
| # partners past 90 days | -.14 | -.18, -.10 | 43.07*** |
| Condom use at last sex (y/n) | .23 | -.60, 1.07 | .30 |
| Alcohol use at last sex | 1.58 | -.60, 3.75 | 2.02 |
| Drug use at last sex | .27 | -.30, .84 | .86 |
| Ever had an HIV test | .04 | -.69, .76 | .01 |
| Had HIV test in past 3 months | 1.80 | .30, 3.31 | 5.54* |

- **Social Networking and Controlling Behaviors**
 - Unpublished measure developed for this study
 - Composite scores for cyber controlling behavior perpetration and victimization created by averaging three variables: checking cell phone calls, checking text messages, and checking social networking profile for signs of flirting.

RESULTS

- **SN/IT Controlling Behavior Frequency**
 - Checking social media for evidence of flirting: 54% reported they did this, and 66% reported their partner did this.
 - Checking cell phone call log: 30% reported they did this, and 43% had a partner do this.
 - Checking text messages: 33% of participants and 44% of partners reportedly did this.
 - Partner controlling behavior via SNIT was reported more frequently than participant perpetration.
- **SN/IT and HIV Risk Behaviors**
 - Results from generalized linear models (GLM) suggested that SN/IT **victimization** experiences were related to HIV risk behaviors:
 - Greater likelihood of ever having had sex
 - More vaginal/anal sex partners in one's lifetime, but fewer partners in the past 90 days
 - Greater likelihood of drug use at last sex
 - Greater likelihood of past HIV testing.
 - SN/IT **perpetration** was related to
 - Fewer sexual partners in the past 90 days
 - Greater likelihood of past HIV testing.

CONCLUSIONS

- Controlling behavior victimization and perpetration via IT/SN is common among adolescent girls with histories of DV involvement, and associated with both increased and decreased HIV risk behaviors depending on the behavior in question.
- Prevention interventions should address SN/IT situations, for example, by including role-play exercises to build SN/IT communication skills.
- Future research should examine:
 - How teens communicate about risk behaviors via SN/IT
 - Targeting HIV prevention messages to DV-involved teens via SN/IT platforms
 - Potential third variable explanations for mixed findings, such as relationship length and current relationship status