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Victimization and perpetration in cyber and in-person aggression among young adults in intimate relationship

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THE VICTIMNIZATION AND PERPETRATION IN CYBER AND IN-PERSON AGGRESSION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN INTIMATE RELATIOSHIP

by

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A Thesis

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Dedications

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Mary and Ronald; my grandparents, Margret and Ronald; and my brother, Nicholas.

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I would like to acknowledge my thesis chair, Dr. Carmelo Callueng for his constant support in the completion of this thesis.

Abstract

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AGGRESSION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN INTIMATE RELATIOSHIP
2016-2017
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Our dependence on technology for communication has become normalized by today's society. As this dependence continues to heighten, the risk for negative behaviors increases. The new environment for social interaction has allowed different forms of aggression to occur. Cyber aggression is now showing up in another social context- intimate partner violence. It is now possible for couples to argue over the phone or by text, and to use communication technology to express their aggression towards one another. The study was conducted to determine whether cyber aggression victimization co-occurs with in-person experiences of psychological, physical and sexual partner violence. In addition, the study examined if cyber aggression perpetration co-occur with acts of in-person partner violence. It was hypothesized that victimization and perpetration in one social form (cyber) can likely increase victimization and perpetration in another (in-person) form. Participants were young adult university students in an intimate relationship for at least 6 months. The Revised Conflicts Tactics Scale and the Cyber Aggression in Relationships Scale were used to gather data through an online survey. Hypothesis testing involved the use of correlational analysis. The results indicated that there was higher incidence rates of in-person aggression than cyber aggression in young adults. Lastly, there was a significant correlation between cyber and in-person IPA.

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The Problem

Our dependence on technology for communication has become normalized by today's society. As this dependence continues to heighten, the risk for negative behaviors increases. Results from national telephone survey concluded that 75% of teens and 93% of adults ages own a cell phone (Duggan, 2013) The expansion of technology has also lead to a significant increase in social media use; 72% of individuals ranging from 18-29 year olds use social networking websites (Duggan, 2013). This new environment for social interaction has allowed different forms of aggression to occur. Cyber aggression is a term that refers to the use of socially interactive communication technologies such as social networking websites and text messaging to aid repeated harassing behavior by an individual or group with the intention of causing harm to others (Sargent, Krauss, Jouriles, & McDonald, 2016). Cyber aggression has been reviewed as the new form of bullying particularly in teens and young adults (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014; Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002). In their sample of college students, MacDonald & Pittman (2010) reported that 38% of students knew someone who had been cyberbullied, 21.9% had been the victims of cyberbullying, and 8.6% had perpetrated some form of cyberbullying.

Cyber aggression is now showing up in another social context, intimate partner violence. Intimate partner violence (IPV) describes acts of physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological aggression by a current or former intimate partner (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). In a national survey for woman abuse in in university/college setting, 86% of women reported being psychologically

abused by their intimate partner (DeKeseredy, 1996). Intimate partner violence has been thought of as a face-to- face encounter between an offender and a victim but now can consist of aggression through other electronic means.

Current literature has suggested that cyber intimate partner aggression is associated with the other forms of partner abuse and violence. Research has shown that women in domestic violence shelters have reported being harassed through the use of socially interactive technology, in addition to other forms of direct abuse in-person acts (Dimond, Fiesler, & Bruckman, 2011). This new area of study has caused researchers to examine the relation of cyber intimate partner aggression (IPA) and in-person IPA. Research has shown that the highest group of technology users are young adults ranging from ages 18 to 29 (Kohut, Wike, Horowitz, Simmons, Poushter, Barker, Bell, & Gross, 2011). It was also found that young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 are highly at risk for experiencing forms of intimate partner aggression (Sargent et al., 2016). Thus, suggesting there would be a co-occurrence in rates of cyber and in-person IPA among young adults in intimate relationships. Technology has now made it is now possible for couples to argue over the phone and via text. Individuals are using these new socially interactive forms of communication to express their aggression towards one another. Further research is needed to examine the relationship of cyber and intimate partner aggression in young adults.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to explore the relation of cyber and intimate partner aggression (IPA). Specifically, this study aimed to examine the co-

occurrence of cyber IPA and in-person experiences of psychological, physical, and sexual

aggression among young adults.

Research Questions

    1. Does cyber IPA victimization co-occur with experiences of in-person IPA?

    2. Does cyber IPA perpetration co-occur with acts of in-person IPA?

Hypotheses

       It was predicted that victims of cyber IPA were more likely to report in-person

IPA victimization in terms of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse. To clarify,

victimization in one social form (cyber) can likely increase the prevalence of in-person

IPA. It was also predicted that perpetrators of cyber IPA were more likely to be

perpetrators of in-person IPA.

Significance of the Study

       The research study can add to the current empirical data on victimization and

perpetration rates of cyber and in-person aggression in intimate relationships. Findings of

the study can be utilized in program development and prevention on relationship

violence. In addition, this research can help increase awareness of cyber aggression

within intimate partners.

Limitations

       There were several limitations within this study. Results were restricted to only

one university setting and those results can only be applicable to the sample of university

students in the study. Data collection for this study used self-report measures and biased

may be present as participants may had over or under reported their experiences on

intimate partner violence. This study may be limited in terms of scope and definition of

cyber and intimate partner aggression. In this study, cyber and intimate partner aggression only consisted of abuse only associated with sexual, physical and psychological.

Assumptions

In investigating intimate partner aggression, it was assumed that data were credible and accurately represented current literature on this topic. It was assumed that an intimate partner aggression not only occurs within the marital setting but exists within dating relationships. It was assumed that in both cases of cyber and in-person aggression, victims suffer some type of adverse effect.

Definition of Terms

Bullying. Refers to repeated and deliberate harassment directed by a person in a position of power toward one or more persons. It can involve physical threats or behaviors, including assault, or indirect and subtle forms of aggression, including gossip and rumor spreading (Hinduja & Patchin, 2014).

Cyber aggression. Refers to the use of socially interactive communication technologies such as social networking websites and text messaging to aid repeated harassing behavior by an individual or group with the intention of causing harm to others. It is often interchanged with the term cyberbullying (Sargent, Krauss, Jouriles, & McDonald, 2016).

Cyber victimization. A term that is typically conceptualized as a person experiencing intentional interpersonal aggression perpetrated via technology (Sargent, Krauss, Joules, & McDonald, 2016).

Intimate partner. An individual to whom someone feels a close personal relationship that is commonly characterized with emotional connectedness, regular communication, physical and sexual contact, or identifying as a couple (CDC, 2015).

Intimate partner violence. A term that is often described as referring to physical violence, sexual violence, stalking and psychological aggression by a current or former intimate partner (CDC, 2015).

Social networking sites. Online services that bring together people by organizing them around a common interest and providing an interactive environment of photos, blogs, user profiles, and messaging systems. Examples include Facebook and Instagram (Hinduja & Patchin, 2014).

Overview of the Study

Chapter 2 provides a review of literature relevant to the relationship among cyber and in-person aggression. It provides current evidences supporting the correlation among cyber and in-person IPA. It includes the basic background knowledge of intimate partner violence.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology and procedures used in this study in terms of the sample of participants, procedure of the study, measures used, and statistical strategies implemented for data analysis.

Chapter 4 reports the statistical findings of the study presented in tables and their explanations.

Finally, Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the salient findings, implications, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

As time advances, our understanding of a problem continues to grow and change. Violence within a relationship was first examined in the heterosexual, martial setting (McHugh & Frieze, 2006). Terms such as domestic violence and wife battering were understood as major issues that troubled society. Allowing the problem of battering to be recognized gave other individuals the ability to speak out about their relationship experiences. It was recognized that violence was not only prevalent among the marital setting but also existed in unmarried cohabiting or dating partners (McHugh & Frieze, 2006). Violence and abuse is not only profound in heterosexual couples but is frequent in homosexual relationships (Nicholls & Hamel, 2015).

More recent studies have introduced the term intimate partner violence (IPV). As stated by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2015), IPV refers to: "physical violence, sexual violence, stalking and psychological aggression by a current or former intimate partner." The American Psychological Association (APA: 2002) established that relationship violence includes physical, sexual, psychological abuse and stalking that one partner perpetrates against the other in a relationship.

As can be evinced from the literature above, IPV involves three main types of abuse; physical, sexual, and psychological. Physical abuse can be defined as behaviors that threaten, attempt, or actually inflict harm (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Physical abuse can include acts such as hitting, slapping, kicking, punching, or choking (APA,

2002). Psychological abuse can include acts such as degradation, humiliation, intimidation and threats of harm (APA, 2002).

Individuals who endure sexual abuse are forced into sexual activity acts against their own will. Examples of sexual abuse can include unwanted kissing or touching, rape, sexual degradation, intentionally hurting someone during sex, or refusal to wear a condom (APA, 2002). An estimated 8.8% of females and .5% of males had reported being raped by an intimate partner at some point during their lifetime. During their lifetime, approximately 15.8% of females and 9.5% of males had experienced other forms of sexual violence by an intimate partner (Breiding, 2015).

Within the context of IPV, it is important to understand the characteristics of an intimate partner. An intimate partner is an individual to whom a person feels a close, personal relationship with and thus, can be characterized through several traits (CDC, 2015). Some characteristics that allow individuals to identify someone as their intimate partner include emotional connectedness, regular communication, physical and sexual contact, or identifying as a couple. Intimate partners can be considered as cohabiting but it is not necessary in the identity of the relationship. Therefore, an intimate partner can vary in terms of a spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend, dating partner, or even sexual partner (CDC, 2015).

Prevalence of IPV. There is a general agreement that IPV is a highly prevalent issue among societies (Nicholls & Hamel, 2015; Straus & Gelles, 1986; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Prevalence rates vary in range, which is can be associated by different socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.

Data collected from a national telephone survey that included 8,000 males and females attempted to compare the prevalence of violence among men and women in heterosexual marital and cohabiting relationships (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). It was concluded that 20.4% of women and 7% men had reported being physically assaulted by their partner. Moreover, 4.1% of women and .5% of men were stalked by a former or current partner at some time during their lifetime.

In a study of college students on courtship violence experiences, Makepeace (1986) reported that females experienced courtship violence almost twice as often as males. A higher rate of victimization was reported by Neufeld, McNamara, and Ertl (1999) who found that over 90% of college women experienced some form of psychological abuse from an intimate partner. On the other hand, 26.8% of males and 8.6% of females reported being perpetrators of the violence (Makepeace, 1986). An estimated 9.2% of females and 2.4% of males reported stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Breiding, 2015). In their review of the literature, Murray and Kardatzke (2007) concluded that approximately one-third of females and one-tenth of males in college fall victimization to sexual dating violence.

Overall, the literature presents intimate partner violence as a profound, existing problem in society. The prevalence of violence differs across the variation of factors. Rates have shown to be different when looking at the type of relationship, length, and type of abuse.

Gender differences. Although there is great deal of research that examines gender differences in relation to dating aggression, findings have been proven to be inconsistent and unsolved (Shorey, Cornelius, & Bell, 2008). In a study conducted by

Sharpe and Taylor (1999) males were more likely to report receiving physical violence from their dating partners while females were more likely to report inflicting violence. Similar findings of males reporting higher rates of victimization in dating violence then females were found in Gray and Foshee (1997); 26% of males compared to 8% reported being victims of dating violence. There was also a higher proportion of females (29%) than males (4%) who reported being the perpetrators of dating violence (Gray & Foshee, 1997). In Zweig, Dank, Yahner, and Lachman (2013) sample, male teens were more likely to be the victims of physical dating violence when compared to females.

Contradicting evidence shows victimization is more prevalent in females with regard to partner aggression and reported perpetration is more frequent in males (Follettee & Alexander, 1992). It was concluded that individuals who were physically assaulted by their partner, that the average frequency of victimization was significantly higher in women then men (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Results also showed that when compared 4.5% of women and only .2% of men reported being raped by a current or former partner sometime within their lifetime (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

There are also studies that reported similar rates of intimate partner violence within both genders. Almost one-third of females as well as males students reported physically assaulting a dating partner within the past year (Straus, 2008). In a study by White and Koss (1991), similar results of physical aggression were found in both males and females. Results showed that approximately 37% of the males and 35% of the females inflicted some form of physical aggression while, about 39% of the males and 32% of the females endured some form physical aggression. (White & Koss, 1991). (Straus & Gelles, 1986)

Cyber Aggression

In today's society, technological advancements have allowed individuals to express new methods of interaction. Individuals are now able to communicate through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices. In a national telephone survey, results indicated that approximately 91% of American adults own a cell phone (Duggan, 2013). It was also reported that 90% of young adults use social media (Duggan, 2013). This new environment for social interaction has heightened the risk for negative behaviors and can breed a new form of aggression. Cyber aggression is described as intentional behavior aimed at harming another person or persons through the use of technology (Schoffstall & Cohen, 2011). Aggressive behaviors are perpetrated through various communication technologies, including social networking sites, email, chat programs, text messages, and gaming consoles (Wright, 2015). The term cyberstalking has been describe as repeated behaviors, such as threats or harassment that would cause an individual to be concerned for his/her own safety through the use of technology (Southworth, Finn, Dawson, Fraser, & Tucker, 2007).

Willard (2007) mentioned that cyberbullying can take on various forms of social aggression. The main forms of cyberbullying include flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, trickery, exclusion, and cyberstalking (Willard, 2007). Flaming is described as the vulgar use of electronic messaging for means of online fighting. Harassment is described as the receptive nature of threatening or sending insulting messages to another individual. Denigration is a term that describes "dissing" another individual over the internet; a perpetrator of this act might post gossip or rumors about another individual with the intent of damaging their reputation or other friendships.

Impersonation is when an individual pretends to be someone else, and may include acts such as posting or sending personal material in order to get the other person in trouble or damage a current relationship. The term outing refers to display someone's personal information, secrets, or images over the internet. Trickery is when an individual persuades someone into revealing their secrets or other personal information; they then post or send out the information with the intent of embarrassing the other individual. Exclusion refers to an intentional act of leaving someone out of an online group. Lastly, cyberstalking refers to repeated acts of harassment and denigration, and often these acts are perpetrated to produce fear in the victim (Willard, 2007).

Prevalence. There is a growing concern regarding technology as a new means for which people display aggression towards one another (Beran & Li, 2005). This new form of aggression is found to be common around certain groups. Cyber aggression is prevalent among youth and adolescents (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014). Similar rates of cyber perpetration and victimization were reported by adolescents, with 15.5% reporting being the perpetrator and 15.2% as victim of cyber aggression (Modecki, Minchin, Harbaugh, Guerra, & Ruinons, 2014). Higher rate (38%) of adolescents experiencing some form of cyber victimization was reported by Gámez-Guadix, Gini, & Calvete (2015).

Kowalski and Limber (2007) indicated that electronic bullying was a prevalent problem among middle school students. They found that within the past two months, 4%, 11%, and 7% of students have been perpetrators, victims, and both perpetrators and victims of electronic bullying, respectively (Kowalski & Limber, 2007).

Cyber bullying is also frequent among the college students, with approximately 33% of this group reporting some form computer-based aggression (Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002). In their sample of college students, MacDonald & Pittman (2010) reported that 38% of students knew someone who had been cyber-bullied, 21.9% had been the victims of cyberbullying, and 8.6% had perpetrated some form of cyberbullying. In Sontag, Clemans, Graber, & Lyndon (2011) victims of cyber aggression were also found to perpetrators of cyber abuse acts.

Gender differences. Cyber aggression is more likely to consist of relational aggressive based behaviors. Relational aggression is described as any behavior that is intended to harm someone by damaging or manipulating relationships with others (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Such behaviors might include spreading rumors or purposely excluding others with the intent of making another person feel bad (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Crick and Grotpeter (1995) proposed the idea that women were more likely to perpetrate cyber aggression than men because women are more commonly known to inflict relational aggression.

Through their literature review Swan, Gambone, Caldwell, Sullivan, & Snow (2008) wanted to support the notion that perpetration of physiological and physical violence between men and women were equivalent. However, they expressed that women were more likely to perpetrate these acts because they were using violence to defend themselves (Swan et al., 2008). In their conclusion of the literature, they explained how men were more likely to engage in acts of stalking and coercion (Swan et al., 2008). It was proven in multiple studies that women were more likely to use violence in self-defense (Swan et al., 2008). Thus, suggesting that males are more likely engage in

cyber aggression t because they present the greater likelihood to perpetrate acts of stalking and violent behavior (Swan et al., 2008).

In Zweig et al (2013), females reported greater acts of non-sexual cyber abuse perpetration than males. In contrast, males were more likely to report acts of sexual cyber abuse perpetration (Zweig et al., 2013). Overall, females reported greater levels of cyber victimization at 29% than compared to the 23% of males (Zweig et al., 2013).

A study was conducted to examine school bullying behaviors among adolescents in the United States (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Researchers measured perpetration and victimization rates among physical, verbal, relational, and cyber acts of aggression (Wang et al., 2009). Date gathered from this study concluded that males were more likely to be the perpetrators of cyber-bullying acts while females were more likely to suffer from cyber-victimization (Wang et al., 2009).

Similar to the findings of in-person aggression, gender differences in cyber aggressions vary by study. From the current literature, it can be proven that cyber IPA can be perpetrated by both males and females; both genders can also fall victims of these acts. Research does not conclude that one gender is more prevalent in cyber IPA perpetration and victimization.

Intimate relationships. Cyber aggression can be committed by partners in intimate relationship. In cyber bullying, aggression is carried out repeatedly by electronic means and involves an imbalance of power (Dempsey, Sulkowski; Dempsey & Storch, 2011). In contrast Watkins, Maldonado, and DeLillo (2016) explained that cyber intimate partner aggression occurs among known intimate partners and may or may not occur repeatedly. In a study by Draucker and Martsolf (2010), adolescents claimed that

the use of technology for communication can aid in the escalation of conflict, can provide a way to monitor their partners, and can generally increase the use for aggression. In another study by Zweig et al., (2013), over a quarter of youth in a recent or current intimate relationship reported having experienced some form of cyber dating aggression. In Draucker and Martsolf (2010), their sample of adolescents proclaimed that the use of technology for communication can aid in the escalation of conflict, provide a way to monitor their partners and overall increase the use for aggression. In a study on cyber victimization in friendships and dating relationships, Guran, Ramos, and Margolin (2011), found that more then 66% of the sample reported to have experienced some form of hostility, intrusiveness, humiliation in relation to electronic victimization.

In a study that explored the role of technology among college partner violence, Melander (2010) identified four prominent themes in aggression. First theme is situational couple violence, which was a type of aggression displayed within a particular situation. This type of aggression is generally not connected with the power of control. Second theme is intimate terrorism, which is characterized when one partner displays various forms of violent and controlling behaviors towards his/her partner. For example, an individual can use intimate terrorism to constantly monitor his/her partner's location; thus, exerting his/her control over his/her partner. Third theme is mutual violent control, which is characterized when both partners are displaying aggressive and controlling behaviors towards one another. Fourth theme is violent resistance is characterized when one individual display aggressive or controlling behavior towards his/her partner and the partner displays the same type of behavior but as a means of self-defense.

Cyber IPA is reported to be prevalent among college students, with 93% rates of perpetration and victimization (Leisring & Giumetti, 2014). Additionally, one in every three dating college students has given a dating partner their computer, email or social network passwords and these students are more likely to experience digital dating abuse (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2010). Melander (2010) asked her sample of college students to discuss the role of technology in partner violence. The group interviews revealed that technology is used to produce psychologically aggressive behaviors against another partner (Melander, 2010). Participants also discussed two important themes of cyber aggression in intimate relationships; this form of conflict is quick and easy for individuals and the significance of exposing private events to constitute emotional violence (Melander, 2010).

Cyber IPA was proven prevalent among an adult sample in Watkins et al. (2016). The highest reported rates of cyber IPA were found in cyber stalking victimization and perpetration; 55% of individuals reported perpetrating at least one cyber-stalking act while 45% reported being victims of cyber stalking (Watkins et al., 2016). It was also concluded that 34% of sample reported perpetration rates of psychological cyber IPA and 29% of individuals reported rates of victimization (Watkins et al., 2016).

The prevalence of cyber aggression within intimate relationships is still a fairly new area of research being studied. Prevalence rates vary across studies as emerging researchers try to close the gaps within the subject matter. The reviewed literature has shown that cyber aggression in intimate relationships is a prevalent problem.

Cyber and In-Person Aggression

It seems that many cyber aggression incidents are related to face-to-face acts of aggression (Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009). A study revealed that there was a significance of roles displayed in traditional (in-person) and cyber aggression among adolescents. (Raskauskas & Stoltz 2007) Particularly findings showed that if an adolescent was a traditional aggressor, they were also likely to be a cyber aggressor. In their literature review Modecki et al., (2014) reexamined 80 studies that reported correlated prevalence rates among cyber and in-person bullying/aggression. They concluded that prevalence rates for cyber bullying were found to be lower when compared to in-person bullying (Modecki et al., 2014). Particularly, in-person bullying was found to be twice as more common than cyber bullying. Although these differences were calculated, it was also found that in-person and cyber bullying were highly correlated (Modecki et al., 2014). Further their findings suggested that; "cyber and traditional measures may reflect different methods of enacting a similar behavior and the form (online vs. offline) of bullying may be less important than the conduct" (Modecki et al., 2014).

In their research, Salmivalli, Savinio, & Hodges (2013) studied the existence of electronic-only, in-person only, and the co-occurrence of electronic and in-person bullying victimization. One major finding from this study revealed that the victims of electronic bullying were usually also victims of in-person bullying (Salmivalli et al., 2013). It was concluded that electronic victimization was uncommon alone; only .5% of the participants admitted to falling victim of electronic bullying (Salmivalli et al., 2013).

In most cases, electronic victimization was always accompanied by in-person victimization (Salmivalli et al., 2013).

Youths from grades 5, 8, and 11 were asked to fill out questionnaires pertaining to verbal, physical, and internet bullying (Williams & Guerra, 2007). Results from this particular stated that verbal bullying was found the most prevalent followed by physical and internet bullying (Williams & Guerra, 2007). Researchers also concluded that the three types of perpetration were related to one another (Williams & Guerra, 2007). Specifically an ordinal association of .87 was found between verbal and internet bullying and thus proving a positive relationship (Williams & Guerra, 2007). There was also an ordinal association of .66 found between physical and internet bullying (Williams & Guerra, 2007).

In Dempsey et al., (2011) researchers conducted their study around the question whether cyber technology had formed a new group of peer aggressors or simply had given aggressive peers new tools to perpetrate others. Students were asked to fill out self-report questionaries' which asked participants to rate how often they performed various acts of overt, relational, and cyber aggression (Dempsey et al., 2011). From the sample it was concluded that students who often engaged in peer aggressive behaviors were more likely to engage in all three forms of aggression (Dempsey et al., 2011). Therefore adding to the research that suggests a relationship between cyber and in-person forms of aggression (Dempsey et al., 2011).

Given this significance, it is predicted that similar rates of cyber and in-person IPA will co-occur. In their study, Schnurr, Mahatma, and Basche (2013) examined the effects of cyber aggression perpetration in intimate relationships with in-person acts of

psychological and physical violence. One of the findings concluded that female cyber IPA perpetration was significant with the in-person acts of physical violence (Schnurr, Mahatma, & Basche, 2013). Another study that included a sample of adolescents showed perpetrators of non-sexual acts of cyber abuse were more likely to report other forms of in-person perpetration (Zwieg et al., 2013).

One study's aim was to examine the prevalence of harassment from high school and through the college university setting (Beran, Rinaldi, Bickham, & Rich, 2012). From this sample, 33.6% of students said they had been the victims of cyber harassment and 28.4% of those individuals reported being victims of "off-line harassment" in high school (Beran et al., 2012). When in the university setting, 8.6% of students had reported being cyber-harassed and 6.4% of that sample reported being harassed offline (Beran et al., 2012).

Overall, there has been limited research that examines the rates of cyber and in-person aggression in intimate relationships. Previous studies have indicated that individuals who perpetrate cyber aggression are more likely to perpetrate forms of in-person aggression. In regard, researchers have predicted that similar findings should be proven in cyber and in-person IPA.

Differences in cyber and in-person aggression. In their study Gámez-Guadix, Gini, & Calvete, (2015) expressed that cyberbullying is considered an "easier" form of bullying because the perpetrators of these acts do not have to deal with the immediate emotional effects of their victims. Online bullies do not necessarily have to see their victims; there is no physical confrontation between the bully and victim (Gámez-Guadix et al., 2015).

Smith (2012) had explained that cyberbullying presents distinct characteristics; these seven characteristics expressed the significant difference between cyber and traditional (in-person) bullying. One way in which cyber differs from traditional bullying is the skill required to complete some of these acts (Smith, 2012). Online bullying requires the perpetrator to have some degree of technological specialization; stealing another individual's identity is an example of a more intricate act that exemplifies this thought. Second, this form of bullying favors indirect aggression; the preferred condition to remain unidentified or invisible. Third, the bully does not witness the immediate reaction of the client. This allows the bully to feel less remorse and empathy towards its victim. Fourth, there is more complexity within the roles of a witness. Fifth, the cyber-bullying tends to lose the support of its peers. A traditional bully is reinforced by other individuals before the act takes place, thus exemplifying their control over the victim. Sixth, the prospective audience in cyberbullying can appear to be much larger than in traditional. Lastly, a cyber perpetrator has 24/7 access to its victims; they do not need to wait to see the victim in person to perform these acts (Smith, 2012).

Chapter 3

Method

Setting and Participants

Data were collected from young adults enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs at a medium size public university in the northeast region. The primary criterion to qualify as participant in the study was that a young adult should had been or currently in an intimate relationship for at least six months. The sample originally consisted 52 participants but five were eliminated due to significant number of missing responses. Only data from 47 participants were subjected to statistical analysis.

Demographic profile of the sample in Table 1 shows that majority of the participants had ages between 22 and 24 years, females, and Whites. Most of the participants were in college and reported being in their senior year.

Table 1

Demographic of Participants

Variable	f	%
Age (in years)		
18-19	2	4
20-21	4	9
22-24	38	81
25 & above	3	6
Gender		
Male	15	32
Female	32	68
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	2	4
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	4
White	41	88
Multiracial	1	2
Other	1	2
Education Level		
College	34	72
Graduate	13	28

Instrumentation

In this research study, participants were asked to fill out the following three self-report questionnaires via QUALTRICS.

Socio-demographic questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of questions regarding age, sex, ethnicity, education level, length of the relationship, and type of relationship of participants.

Cyber Aggression in Relationships Scale (CARS). In this scale, participants were asked to rate their experiences of psychological aggression, sexual aggression, and stalking behaviors (Watkins, Maldonado, & Dilillo, 2016). They were also asked to rate

the frequency of their own aggressive behavior as well of their partners on scale ranging from 0 to 6; with 0 being this behavior has never happened to 6 being this has happened more than 20 times (Watkins et al., 2016). The CARS Scale comprised of 17 behaviors assessed in both the victimization of perpetration perspective, which provided a total of 34 items (Watkins et al., 2016).

Revised Conflicts Tactics Scale (CTS2). For purposes of this study, participants were asked to complete the psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion scale items of the CTS2 (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). Participants were asked to rate the frequency of their own abuse as well as their partners on a scale ranging from 0 to 6; with 0 referring to behavior never happened and 6 referring to behavior has happened more than 20 times (Straus et al., 1996).

Procedure

Prior to contacting potential participants, a number of steps were accomplished. An electronic IRB application was submitted to the Rowan University Office of Research Compliance and permission to conduct this study was granted. Upon approval, participants were asked to participate in an online study through the use of QUALTRICS. This research study employed a descriptive study design. Victimization and perpetration in intimate partner cyber aggression were measured using the Cyber Aggression in Relationships Scale (CARS). On the other hand, victimization and perpetration in intimate partner in-person aggression were measured using the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2). Ratings of victimization and perpetration in cyber and in-person aggression were compared using statistical procedures in SPSS.

Data Analysis

Preliminary analysis of data included frequency and percentage distribution of demographic characteristics and intimate relationship profile of participants. Descriptive statistics were conducted for perpetration and victimization of cyber and in-person IPA. CARS and CTS2 scores were presented in terms of mean and standard deviation. Skewness and kurtosis were utilized to assess normality of score distributions.

Hypothesis testing involved the use of correlational analysis to determine the relationship between rates cyber and in-person IPA. Specifically, a correlational analysis was used to determine the association between victimization rates of cyber and in-person IPA. It was also used to determine the association between perpetration rates of cyber and in-person IPA. A $p \leq .05$ was employed to determine if the calculated correlation coefficient was significant.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter presents the findings on the online survey. It includes relationship profile of participants, descriptive statistics of intimate partner aggression, and correlation between cyber and in-person aggression.

Intimate Relationship Profile

As presented in Table 2, relationship of the participants was typically heterosexual (92%) and serious (55%). Length of relationship of participants was somewhat spread with 38% between 6-12 months and 30% at least 24 months. Very few participants reported as homosexual (6%), bixesual (2%), or engaged/married (2%).

Table 2

Relationship Profile of Participants

	f	*%*
Type		
Heterosexual	43	92
Homosexual	3	6
Bisexual	1	2
Length		
6-12	18	38
12-18	8	17
18-24	7	15
24 & above	14	30
Nature		
Casual/Open	4	9
Stable	16	34
Serious	26	55
Engaged/married	1	2

Intimate Partner Aggression (IPA)

IPA was described in terms of perpetration and victimization in cyber and in-person aggression. As shown in Table 3, the participants reported higher incidence of in-person perpetration ($M = 8.21$) and victimization ($M = 8.25$) than cyber aggression. Participants reported a relatively lower incidence of cyber perpetration ($M = 6.63$).

Table 3 also reports the normality of data distribution with skewness and kurtosis of cyber perpetration, cyber victimization, and in-person victimization as within the limits of symmetry at -2 to +2 (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2017). Skewness and kurtosis of in-person aggression were somewhat violating symmetry.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Intimate Partner Aggression

IPA	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Cyber perpetration	6.63	9.22	1.50	1.45
Cyber victimization	8.12	12.50	1.60	1.72
In-person perpetration	8.21	10.74	2.09	5.26
In-person victimization	8.25	9.95	1.28	.79

Correlation Between IPA Forms

Zero-order correlations were calculated between cyber and in-person aggression. It is predicted that IPA forms are positively correlated. That is, victims of cyber IPA are more likely to be victims in-person IPA in terms of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse. Similarly, perpetrators of cyber IPA are more likely to be perpetrators of in-person IPA.

Pearson correlation matrix shown in Table 4 suggests that IPA roles (i.e., victimization and perpetration) in cyber and in-person IPA were all positively and significantly correlated. In the interest of the hypotheses advanced in this study, there was a high and positive a correlation between cyber and in-person victimization, $r(45) = .76$, $p \leq .01$. Similarly, there was a moderate and positive correlation between cyber and in-person perpetration, $r(45) = .50$, $p \leq .05$. These findings confirmed both hypotheses that victims of cyber IPA were more likely to report in-person IPA victimization. In like manner, perpetrators of cyber IPA were more likely to be perpetrators of in-person IPA.

Table 4

Correlation Between Cyber and In-Person Aggression

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*
1.Cyber perpetration	-	.71**	.50*	.57**
2.Cyber victimization		-	.48**	.76**
3.In-person perpetration			-	.83**
4.In-person victimization				-

Note* p≤05; **p≤01

Chapter 5

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The current study's aim was to determine whether cyber aggression victimization co-occurs with in-person experiences of psychological, physical and sexual partner violence. In addition, the study examined if cyber aggression perpetration co-occurs with acts of in-person aggression. It was found that participants had been involved with their current intimate partner for at least one year and characterized their relationship as being serious. Participants reported higher incidence rates of in-person aggression when compared to cyber aggression. The results indicated that there was a significant correlation between cyber and in-person IPA. Similarly, current literature presented that women in domestic violence shelters reported being harassed by socially interactive technology, in addition to other forms of direct abuse in-person acts (Dimond, Fiesler, & Bruckman, 2011).

It was hypothesized that victims of cyber IPA were more likely to report in-person IPA victimization. Similarly, it was hypothesized that perpetrator of cyber IPA were more likely to report in-person IPA perpetration. The results from this current study confirmed both hypotheses. Victims of cyber IPA are more likely to be victims in-person IPA in terms of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse. Perpetrators of cyber IPA are more likely to be perpetrators of in-person IPA. Thus, confirming past research that exemplified the significance found in cyber IPA perpetration and in-person acts of physical violence (Schnurr, Mahatma, & Basche, 2013).

In-person roles (i.e., victimization and perpetration) were reported more prevalent in intimate relationships than cyber roles. Validating the high incidence rates of physical

abuse committed by intimate partners on college campuses (Neufeld, McNamara, & Ertl, 1999) However, there was a higher correlation found in IPA victimization forms (i.e. cyber and in-person). These findings can add to current empirical evidence on cyber and in-person IPA. In their research, Salmivalli, Savinio, & Hodges (2013) concluded that electronic victimization was always accompanied by in-person victimization.

Conclusion

It was concluded in this study young adults in a university campus who perpetrate cyber aggression are more likely to perpetrate forms of in-person aggression. This study provided support to previous scholarship on relationship violence that in-person acts of aggression and cyber bullying were highly associated.

Recommendations

Future research can include a larger and more diverse sample. The current study had restricted access to the sample and prospective participants resulting to limited variability within the sample.

The current study exemplified a broader approach in terms of research findings. Future research can focus within the characteristics of the relationship profile. For example, future studies can aim to find prevalence rates of cyber and in-person IPA one specified type of relationship (i.e. heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual).

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