

VULNERABILITIES AND STRENGTHS OF MEXICAN HOMOSEXUAL ADOLESCENTS FACING THE RISK OF DATING VIOLENCE.

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Abstract

Using data from the Survey on Dating, Empowerment and Sexual and Reproductive Health in Adolescent in High School in Mexico (ENESSAEP 2014 in Spanish) this paper explores dating violence among same-sex adolescent couples and compares the prevalence's of the different expressions of this violence (emotional, physical, and sexual) between heterosexual couples and same-sex couples. Additionally, we identify those characteristics of homosexual adolescents that reduce or increase their vulnerability to dating violence, examining the role played by various elements of empowerment, such as self-esteem, agency, gender role attitudes, social power, and adolescent sexual power.

The results show higher prevalence of emotional and sexual dating violence received by adolescents with same-sex partners while physical dating violence is more prevalent for heterosexual adolescents. The experiences of emotional and physical violence received at home, during childhood and in the present, are more frequent for homosexual adolescents, and are significantly associated with higher risks of dating violence.

Additionally, the results show a negative association of social empowerment with the three types of violence in the case of heterosexual adolescents, but no evidence of significant associations in the case of homosexuals. Similar results are found for the indicator of self-esteem, agency, and egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles.

Introduction

Teen Dating Violence has been associated to multiple short and long emotional and physical consequences (Reuter et al, 2015; Taquette & Maia Monteiro, 2019) that can seriously threaten the well-being of teens; beyond physical injuries teen dating violence might increase the risks of substance abuse, depression, suicidal thoughts, early sexual initiation, sexual risk behaviors, mental problems, and negative educational outcomes (Banyard & Cross, 2008; Exner-Cortens et al, 2013) and may conduce to adult partner violence (Dank et al; 2014; Manchikanti Gómez, 2011)

Research on dating violence, and in general on intimate partner violence, has been mainly and fundamentally focused on heterosexual couples. The main reason for this is that being conceptualized intimate partner violence as gender violence, the focus has been on intimate partner violence perpetrated by men against women. This has meant that other manifestations of intimate partner violence - such as violence by women against their partners and same-sex violence - have long been off the radar and of public interest (Brown, 2008).

The growing openness to the recognition of same-sex couples that has been taking place in Western countries for some decades is manifested in a growing number of adolescents who recognize themselves as having diverse sexual orientations (Mayer et al., 2008). Mexico is no exception and the younger generations have experienced much greater openness to the possibility

of recognizing sexual orientations other than heterosexual norms and of establishing intimate relationships with young people of the same sex.

But very little research, if any, has been done on the problem of dating violence in same-sex adolescent couples in Mexico. A major difficulty is the scarcity of data on the subject in the surveys that have been conducted on intimate partner violence in Mexico. La Encuesta Nacional sobre la Dinámica de las Relaciones en los Hogares, ENDIREH 2016 (National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships (*Encuesta Nacional sobre las Relaciones en los Hogares*, ENDIREH) is a national survey on violence against women that has been conducted periodically in Mexico since 2003, but only in its 2016 edition it included for the first time a question about the sex of the partner of the woman interviewed; for that year only 0.3% of women reported that their partner was a woman. In another survey raised in 2018 among more than 17 thousand students (male and female) from UNAM high schools, only 1% of females and 2.8% of males identified themselves as lesbian or gay (Lozano Espinoza et al, 2019). This reflects the difficulties and fears that persist to openly expose alternative sexual orientations.

Sexual minority youths are more vulnerable than their heterosexual peers to many expressions of violence, like sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation (Wurtele, 2017). In the face of the recognition of vulnerabilities of certain groups, empowerment has been put forward as a central strategy to transform these disadvantaged situations (Craig et al, 2016; Matthews & Salazar, 2012; Wagaman, 2016). Empowerment is particularly relevant and necessary for any vulnerable social group whose specific characteristics -such as age, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity- have been socially transformed or interpreted as limitations, preventing them from developing with the same possibilities as other groups. And from this notion we pose empowerment as a process that can provide all adolescents, and particularly homosexual adolescents, with tools that facilitate a fuller social inclusion, greater control of their own lives and the prevention of violent relationships (Casique, 2018; Craig et al, 2016; Mallon, 1997; Matthews & Salazar, 2012; Russell et al, 2009).

The aim of this paper is, first, to make visible dating victimization among same-sex adolescent couples in Mexico and to compare the prevalence's of the different expressions of this violence (emotional, physical, and sexual) between heterosexual couples and same-sex couples. On the other hand, we seek to identify those characteristics of homosexual adolescents that reduce or increase their vulnerability to dating victimization, incorporating several measures of empowerment in the analysis.

Literature Review and Background

Compared to research on intimate partner violence (IPV) in heterosexual couples, the literature on this topic regarding sexual minorities is limited. Several aspects might have been defining this situation. On one hand the interpretation of IPV as gender violence is less evident when the couple is not integrated by a man and a woman, who have been portrayed as the aggressor and the victim in a good portion of the research on this topic. It has been argued too that research on IPV in couples of the same sex might be understood as a questioning of the feminist premise of gender differences and patriarchy as the root of this violence (Costa et al, 2011 cited by Barros et al, 2019). Additionally, it has been pointed the fear among the sexual minorities that opening this

situation might contribute to enlarge the discrimination and prejudice against non-heterosexual persons (Burke & Follingstad, 1999; Holt, 2014).

Previous research conducted mainly in the United States has shown evidence of greater exposure to the risk of dating violence among homosexual adolescents (Brown & Herman, 2015; Messinger, 2011). Data from a study developed by the Urban Institute Justice Policy Center in the United States show that 59% of homosexual youth receive psychological dating violence (versus 46% of heterosexuals), 43% receive physical violence (versus 29% of heterosexuals) and 23% receive sexual violence (versus 12% of heterosexual youth) (Dank et al, 2014). Similarly, a study using data from nationally representative sample of students from 9 to 12 grades in U.S. participating in the 2015 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) found that gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth had greater prevalence and frequency of physical and sexual dating violence compared with heterosexual youths (O'Malley Olsen, Vivolo-Kantor & Kann, 2017). Also, research on 10,500 young respondents from Massachusetts found higher prevalence of dating violence among sexual minority students (Martin-Storey, 2015).

Among the non-heterosexual groups, the bisexual populations have been found to be the most vulnerable to partner abuse. A study developed on a convenience sample of adolescents attending a GLBT rally held in an urban area of the U.S. observed that bisexual males had greater risk of any type of abuse while bisexual females had greater risks of experiencing sexual abuse, compared to heterosexual youths (Freedner et al, 2002; Messinger, 2011).

In Mexico the existing research has been based on small samples of people from the sexual diversity. A study developed with 29 lesbian and gay adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age from the state of Colima shows that dating violence is present and is bidirectional among these youths (Tomero-Méndez et al, 2020). Another qualitative study based on a non-probabilistic convenience sample of 15 non-heterosexual youths (aged 15-27 years) in Veracruz found that all youths had experienced intimate partner violence as well as a close link between that situation and the experiences of violence witnessed and lived in their family environments (Ronzón-Tirado et al, 2017). And similarly, a study with 42 people from the LGBTTT+ community in Nayarit found that 98% of the sample reported having been victims of intimate partner violence and 90% having exercised violence towards their partner. Finally, research developed with a sample of 50 young lesbian and gay students identified that the frequency of the three types of intimate partner violence analyzed (psychological, physical, and sexual violence) is higher among men than among women (Robles and Toribio, 2017).

Some studies have indicated that among same-sex couples, is more frequent the non-identification or recognition of expressions of violence as such than in heterosexual couples (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008; Santaya & Walters, 2011; Walters, 2011). In this sense a recent study conducted in Mexico City among homosexual men over 18 years of age diagnosed with HIV reveals a high prevalence of intimate partner violence received and exercised (83.8% and 74.3%, respectively) but a much lower perception of these behaviors as violence, since only 29.5% considered that they had been victims of intimate partner violence and just 22% considered that they had exercised it (Alderete-Aguilar et al, 2021).

Factors associated to dating violence:

While it has been documented that many of the factors associated with the risk of intimate partner violence are shared by both homosexual and heterosexual couples, such as violence received and witnessed in the family of origin, drug and/or alcohol use and having been sexually initiated, low levels of education, as well as low self-esteem (Barret & St. Pierre, 2013; Cain et al, 2008; Kaukinen, 2014; Kelley et al, 2011; O'Keeffe, 2005), several authors have also emphasized the existence of exclusive factors associated with the risk of violence in same-sex couples (Pierre, 2013; Cain et al, 2008; Kaukinen, 2014; Kelley et al, 2011; O'Keeffe, 2005) as those individuals have experienced circumstances and conditions associated with their sexual orientation, such as fear of disclosure and situations of discrimination based on their sexual identity (Ard and Makadon, 2011 cited by Alderete-Aguilar, et al, 2021; Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Edwards & Sylaska, 2012; Graham et al, 2019).

The experience of heteronormative social pressures appears as a consistent and significant factor that increases the risk of IPV among men who have sex with men in six different countries: United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Brazil (Finneran et al, 2012). Nonconformity with heterosexual norms frequently leads to exposure to teasing, discrimination and bullying and can favor the development of internalized homophobia, which in turn has been linked to a greater risk of intimate partner violence (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005 cited by Gillum & DiFulvio, 2012; Carvalho et al, 2011; Martin-Storey & Fromme, 2021). On the other hand, social homophobia (or homophobic context) also introduces pressure in the dating relationship between young people of sexual diversity, who experience it as societal homophobia or/and internalized homophobia (Marrow, 2004; Gillum & DiFulvio, 2012; Pepper & Sand, 2015), which leads to a higher risk of violence and greater difficulty, when it occurs, to report it to family, friends or, even more difficult, to authorities (Walters, 2011; Santoniccolo et al, 2021).

Another factor associated with the risk of partner violence in same-sex couples is the negotiation of socially prescribed gender roles, such as the dominance of the male figure in the couple or the expectation, among couples composed of two women, that between them there should be an almost natural mutual understanding, because of the supposed shared connection between two women who share the same feminine condition (Gilles & DiFulvio, 2012).

Finally, even though some empirical evidences have been documented about adolescent's empowerment and the protective role it may play regarding the risk of dating violence among heterosexual youths (Bandiera et al, 2013 and Sarnquist et al., 2014 cited by Ellsberg et al, 2018; Casique, 2018), to our knowledge the existing research on dating violence among adolescents of sexual diversity has not addressed the role that diverse elements of adolescent's empowerment, like autonomy, self-esteem, gender-role attitudes or agency might play in the risk of dating violence for these populations.

Methodology

Data

The analysis is based on data from the Survey on Dating, Empowerment and Sexual Health of Adolescent High School Students (ENESSAEP, 2014), applied to 13,427 high school students

between 15 and 20 years old in three Mexican states: Morelos, Jalisco, and Puebla. The schools and the students were randomly selected, and the questionnaire was self-filled.

In this paper we focus on the subsample of adolescents who indicated that they had a same-sex partner (n=279; 159 males and 120 females).

Methods

Using descriptive analysis techniques (chi-square and t-test) we explored the differences in sociodemographic characteristics between the sample of homosexual and heterosexual adolescents, as well as in the levels of empowerment of both groups and the prevalence of different types of dating violence. Factor analysis was used to estimate the different empowerment indexes, as well as the indexes of Support from partner and Approval of adolescent sex.

Given the small sample size, we refrained from performing multivariate regressions with all the independent variables at the same time; therefore, to examine the associations of the various sociodemographic variables analyzed with the risk of dating violence, we relied only on bivariate regressions. For the analysis of the associations between the five estimated empowerment indicators and the risk of intimate partner violence we did develop multivariate models but including only these five continuous variables. All models distinguish by sexual orientation but group men and women together to preserve sample size.

Dependent Variables

Three different expressions of dating violence (emotional, physical, and sexual violence) are assessed using the revised version of the Straus Tactical Conflict Scale, widely used in studies on intimate partner violence (Straus et al, 1996).

a) Independent variables

Diverse sociodemographic variables as age, socioeconomic status, lives with both parents, emotional and physical violence received at home during childhood, emotional and physical violence currently received at home, age at first sex, number of sexual partners, length of courtship (months), support from partner (Index 0 -1), approval of adolescent sex (index 0 -1), sex with partner and victim of attempted forced sex ever were included in the bivariate regression models to explore their associations with emotional, physical and dating violence.

Additionally, we explored the association between each of the five indicators of adolescent empowerment estimated and the three types of dating violence:

- a) Social Power Index, which accounts for the attachment or sense of belonging of young people to their community and for the confidence they have in their own capacity and ability to do things to improve it (Peterson et al, 2008; Oliva et al, 2012). This index is based on ten items like "I feel a member of my community", "I think I could work with other young people and adults in my town to make things better" and "I feel proud to

be part of my colony or community”, with four possible answers ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.”

- b) The Self-Steem Index refers to the level of approval or disapproval that the adolescents have of themselves and their worth as individuals (Zimmerman 1997, Bednar 1991). This index uses the answers to nine questions on this regard, as “I am generally satisfied with myself”, “Sometimes I think I'm no good at all”, and “I feel at ease with my body”.
- c) The Agency Index, a measure of the ability of people to act on the things they value and the goals that are important to them (Malhotra, 2003; Sen,1999), which we measured through nine questions like “I do what I think is best for me no matter what others think”, “It is difficult for me to publicly express my opinion” and “I feel that I control my life. The four possible answers ranged from “never” to “always” and the resulting additive index shows a good consistency.
- d) The Index of Egalitarian Gender Roles Attitudes, which characterizes young people in terms of their egalitarian gender attitudes. Estimates are based on a set of 14 statements such as: “it is the woman’s responsibility to prevent pregnancy;” “the man should always have the last word;” “men need to have more sex than women;” and “women should not be the ones to initiate sex.” There were four possible answers on the Likert-type scale range from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.”
- e) The Index of Sexual Power permits us to estimate the capacity of everyone to act in an independent way vis-à-vis her/his sexual partner (Pulerwitz et al., 2000; Peterson, 2010; Tolman, 2005). The calculation for this indicator was based on the answers to nine items like “you have sex without protection because your partner prefers it that way;” “you feel secure and in control during sex;” and “you make sure to buy condoms”. The possible answers were a five-points Likert scale that ranges from “always” to “never”.

Results

Sociodemographic characteristics of adolescents in the sample.

Table 1 present the sample characteristics of the 13,557 adolescents who satisfactorily completed the survey. Only 2% declared having a same sex partner. According to the distribution of these sociodemographic characteristics, several variables suggest a greater vulnerability of gay and lesbian adolescents, like an earlier age of sexual debut (14.9 vs 15.3 years), a greater number of sexual partners (3.9 vs 2.7), and a larger proportion of older boyfriend/girlfriend factors that have shown positive associations with the risk of dating violence in previous research (Birkett et al, 2009; Dank et al, 2014).

Table 1. Differences in sociodemographic characteristics between heterosexual and homosexual/lesbian adolescents

Mean values of continuous variables			
	Heterosexual (n= 13,278)	Gay & Lesb (n=279)	t-test Sig.
Age (years)	16.50	16.62	n.s.
Age at first sex (years)	15.25	14.93	0.014
Number of sexual partners	2.66	3.95	0.000
Length of current courtship (months)	5.39	5.19	n.s.
Index of Support from partner (0 -1)	0.79	0.88	0.000
Index of Approval of adolescent sex (0-1)	0.54	0.60	0.000
Distribution of categorical variables			
	Heterosexual (n=13,278)	Gay & Lesb (n=279)	Chi ² Sig.
Lives with both parents			
No	30.49	27.86	
Yes	69.51	72.14	0.000
Emotional violence at home (EV)			
No	56.66	55.1	
Yes	43.34	44.9	0.002
Physical violence at home (PV)			
No	91.42	94.02	
Yes	8.58	5.98	0.000
Received EV at home during childhood			
No	77.78	72.50	
Yes	22.22	27.50	0.000
Received PV at home during childhood			
No	72.20	74.72	
Yes	27.80	25.28	0.000
Currently receiving EV at home			
No	82.17	79.88	
Yes	17.83	20.12	0.000
Currently receiving PV at home			
No	94.88	94.66	
Yes	5.12	5.34	n.s.
Socioeconomic stratus			
High	22.92	18.04	
Medium	27.15	28.79	
Low	25.61	36.98	
Very low	24.32	16.19	0.000

Age difference with partner			
Younger boyfriend/girlfriend	22.66	15.71	
Same age	34.32	26.38	
Older boyfriend/girlfriend	43.02	57.91	0.000
Educational level of partner			
Middle school or less	33.27	31.31	
Highschool	62.74	60.28	
Bachelor's degree or more	4.00	8.41	0.000
Sex with current partner			
No	42.08	43.27	
Yes	57.92	56.73	n.s
Victim of attempted forced sex			
No	94.00	84.01	
Yes	6.00	15.99	0.000

Source: Own calculations based on ENESSAEP 2014.

Additionally, in the sample of adolescents with same-sex partners the percentages of having witnessed emotional violence at home (44.9%), of having received emotional violence at home during childhood (27.5%) and currently (20.1%), are significantly higher than for heterosexual adolescents. Moreover, the percentage of homosexual adolescents who had an experience of attempted forced sex prior to their current dating relationship is almost three times higher than the percentage for heterosexual adolescents (16% vs 6%).

All these characteristics profile the group of non-heterosexual adolescents as a population with larger risks for experiencing dating violence, consistent with previous research findings in other contexts (Langenderfer, 2016; Martin-Storey 2015). However, we also observe that a few aspects emerge as potential protective factors to IPV for them: homosexual or lesbian adolescents live with both parents in a larger proportion than heterosexual adolescents (72.14% vs 69.51%), testified to physical violence in their homes to a lesser extent (5.98% vs 8.58%), and similarly received less physical violence at home during childhood (25.28% vs 27.80%)

Prevalence of Different types of Dating Violence by Sexual Orientation.

Table 2. Prevalence of Dating Victimization by sexual orientation and sex (percentages).

	Total			Males			Females		
	Hetero	Gay & Lesb	Chi ² _Sig.	Hetero	Gay	Chi ² _Sig.	Hetero	Lesbian	Chi ² _Sig.
Emotional V.	45.20	55.48	0.000	44.28	54.57	0.000	45.98	56.95	0.000
Physical V.	14.69	13.47	0.001	17.41	13.23 *	0.000	12.41	13.87 *	0.006
Sexual V.	8.68	15.9	0.000	10.27	22.94*	0.000	7.33	4.63*	0.000

Source: Own calculations based on ENESSAEP 2014.

The results indicate significantly higher prevalence of emotional dating violence and sexual dating victimization by adolescents with same-sex partners while physical dating violence is more prevalent for heterosexual adolescents (Table 2). When sex is introduced, the prevalence's of emotional and sexual violence are indeed higher for homosexual males -more than double in the case of sexual violence- that the observed for heterosexual males. For lesbian women, the prevalences of emotional and physical violence are higher than for women in heterosexual couples, but sexual violence is lower for lesbian than for heterosexual women. However, these results considering the sex of the respondents, should be taken with great caution, since distinguishing by sex the sample of homosexual adolescents results in very small subsamples (159 males and 120 females).

Indicators of adolescent empowerment

In this paper we approach adolescent empowerment as a process and strategy that can provide adolescents with attitudes, behaviors, resources, and tools that facilitate a positive social integration, as well as freedom from discrimination and violence. In this sense, we understand it as a particularly relevant resource that can help young people to prevent and resolve violent situations with their romantic partners (Casique, 2018). In the case of adolescents from the sexual diversity, empowerment can also constitute a tool to challenge the prevailing heteronormativity and give them a greater voice against violence and discrimination (Moolman, Essop & Tollap, 2020).

Adolescent empowerment includes different elements or dimensions, such as psychological empowerment (self-esteem, self-confidence), social empowerment (sense of belonging, participation in community activities), attitudes towards gender roles and sexual empowerment (self-efficacy, sense of control during sexual relations) (Peterson, 2010; Wong et al., 2010).

Based on the information available in the survey used for this analysis (ENESSAEP 2014), five indexes were estimated, related to five dimensions of adolescent empowerment: self-esteem, agency, social empowerment, egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles and sexual power. The indicators obtained, through factor analysis, show good or acceptable degrees of consistency (Cronbach alpha coefficients larger than 0.6).

Each of these indexes is based on a different number of questions, and therefore their ranges vary. To establish comparisons between their values for heterosexual and homosexual adolescents, we standardized all of them with values between zero and one.

In general, as a group, homosexual and lesbian adolescents are at a disadvantage with respect to heterosexual adolescents in terms of mean self-esteem and in terms of social empowerment but show significantly higher scores in gender egalitarian attitudes and in sexual power (See Table 3). No significant difference was found regarding agency between the two groups of youths.

By sex the data shows that homosexual adolescents have lower self-esteem mean (0.77 vs 0.79), but more egalitarian attitudes (0.87 vs 0.77) and greater sexual power means (0.46 vs 0.33) than heterosexual males. On the other hand, lesbian female adolescents show less social

empowerment mean (0.78 vs 0.82) but more sexual power mean (0.34 vs 0.23) than heterosexual female adolescents.

Table 3. Mean Values of Adolescents Empowerment Indexes by Sexual Orientation and Sex

Dimensión	Group	TOTAL			MALES			FEMALES		
		Obs	Mean	t-test (sig)	Obs	Mean	t-test (sig)	Obs	Mean	t-test (sig)
Social Empowerment	Heterosexuals	13,148	0.81		6,207	0.80		6,941	0.82	
	Gay/Lesbian	279	0.80		159	0.81		120	0.78	
	Difference		0.01	n.s.		-0.01	n.s.		0.03	0.001
Self-Esteem	Heterosexuals	13,148	0.78		6,207	0.79		6,941	0.76	
	Gay/Lesbian	279	0.76		159	0.77		120	0.75	
	Difference		0.02	0.010		0.02	0.004		0.02	n.s.
Agency	Heterosexuals	13,148	0.78		6,207	0.80		6,941	0.76	
	Gay/Lesbian	279	0.78		159	0.80		120	0.76	
	Difference		0.00	n.s.		0.00	n.s.		0.00	n.s.
Egalitarian Gender Roles attitudes	Heterosexuals	13,148	0.80		6,207	0.77		6,941	0.82	
	Gay/Lesbian	279	0.83		159	0.84		120	0.82	
	Difference		-0.03	0.000		-0.07	0.000		0.01	n.s.
Sexual Power	Heterosexuals	13,148	0.27		6,207	0.33		6,941	0.23	
	Gay/Lesbian	279	0.41		159	0.46		120	0.34	
	Difference		-0.14	0.000		-0.13	0.000		-0.12	0.001

Source: Own calculations based on ENESSAEP 2014

These values illustrate that in terms of empowerment there are significant differences between adolescents according to their sexual orientation and gender, and that these differences are complex, as they refer to some dimensions in which heterosexual adolescents have higher levels of empowerment (such as self-esteem in the case of males and social empowerment for females) but, at the same time, the gay and lesbian adolescents are better off in terms of sexual power (both males and females) and more egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles (only lesbian adolescents).

Factors associated with the risk of dating violence. The role of adolescent empowerment.

To review the factors significantly associated with the risk of each type of dating violence, we used first bivariate logistic regressions models to explore the role of each sociodemographic factor (Table 4) and then we estimated multiple logistic regression model incorporating only as independent variables the indicators of adolescent empowerment (Table 5). Given the small sample size in the case of homosexual adolescents (n=279) we do no attempt to perform multivariate regression models with all these variables simultaneously.

In general, we identified the same sociodemographic factors significantly associated with the risk of dating violence for both groups (heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals), although we found a greater number of variables with positive associations with dating violence for the sample of heterosexual adolescents, probably attributable to the limited sample size of gay and lesbians adolescents, which may be limiting the finding of significant relationships in some cases (Table 4). Nevertheless, it is possible to pinpoint some differences that allow us to visualize some aspects in which homosexual adolescents appear more vulnerable to dating violence than the heterosexual ones.

For example, experiences of emotional violence and physical violence received at home, both during childhood and in the present, are significantly associated with higher risks of dating violence for both heterosexual and homosexual adolescents, but they are particularly relevant in the case of homosexual adolescents, since the impact of these factors is bigger for them, as it is evidenced by the larger odds ratios (see Table 4).

For homosexual or lesbian adolescents, belonging to a middle socioeconomic stratum (compared to belonging to a very low stratum) multiplies the risk of physical violence 2.49 times, while for heterosexual adolescents no significant association is evident. And, interestingly, belonging to the same middle socioeconomic stratum significantly reduces the risk of sexual violence 15% and 66% respectively, for heterosexuals and homosexual's youths.

A surprising finding is that a larger partner support represents, for homosexual adolescents, a protective factor against the risk of physical and sexual dating violence (as will be expected). But amazingly, that greater partner support means, for heterosexual adolescents, a greater risk of all three types of dating violence.

Living with both parents appears, for all adolescents, as a factor that reduces the risk of the three types of dating violence, except in the case of sexual violence for homosexual adolescents, where no significant association is found with the condition of living with both parents.

Most indicators of empowerment show significant associations with the risk of the three types of dating violence analyzed for heterosexual adolescents, except for agency that has no significant association with sexual violence (Table 5). In the case of homosexual or lesbian adolescents some empowerment dimensions show no associations with any type of violence, like social empowerment and agency; other dimensions show association with just one type of violence: self-esteem is significantly associated with emotional violence, agency is only marginally associated with physical violence and egalitarian gender roles attitudes are significantly associated with sexual violence; only sexual empowerment shows significant association with the risk of the three types of violence (emotional, physical and sexual) for homosexual or lesbian adolescents.

It is important to clarify that these results do not mean that the empowerment process offers more beneficial results for heterosexual than for homosexual adolescents; only that we have better evidence in this case for the former, very possibly due to the larger sample size of heterosexual adolescents.

It is significant to notice that while most dimensions of empowerment play a protective role reducing the relative risks of dating violence, sexual empowerment appears as a factor that increases the risks of emotional violence (4.7 and 2.3 times larger for each unitary increment for

hetero and homosexuals respectively), of physical violence (3.1 and 2.3 times larger for each unitary increment for hetero and homosexuals respectively) and of sexual violence (4.0 and 4.1 times larger for each unitary increment for hetero and homosexuals respectively) (Table 5).

At the same time, some other findings point out some characteristics that particularly might protect the homosexuals and lesbians' adolescents from dating violence. On one hand the larger egalitarian attitudes to gender roles reduces the risk of sexual violence for all adolescents, but the decline, for every unitary increment in the corresponding index, is larger for homosexual/lesbian adolescents than for heterosexual ones (98% vs 90%).

Also, we identify some aspects that seem to pose larger vulnerability for dating violence among heterosexual adolescents than among homosexual/lesbian adolescents, like the approval of sexual relationships among adolescents; this factor increases the risk of all three types of dating violence for all adolescents, however, the increased risk is of greater magnitude for heterosexual adolescents.

Discussion and Conclusions

When contrasting the sociodemographic characteristics of gay or lesbian adolescents with those of heterosexual adolescents, some indicators of more adverse conditions emerge for non-heterosexual youth, such as a more frequent experience of emotional violence in the home of origin (direct and indirect) during childhood and in the present, as well as a greater frequency of risky sexual behaviors, which may have an impact on a greater vulnerability to victimization in dating relationships.

In fact, the findings of this research confirm that the prevalence's of the three types of dating violence (emotional, physical, and sexual) are significantly higher for adolescents with same-sex partners than for heterosexual adolescents, a result that is in line with previous research findings in several countries (Brown & Herman, 2010; Dank et al, 2014; Freedner et al, 2002; McKay et al, 2019; Martin-Storey, 2015).

Several factors converge in this situation. First, experiences of emotional violence received and witnessed in the home are more frequent in the lives of gay and lesbian adolescents, and these experiences in turn show a significant association with risk for all three types of dating violence. This finding confirms the results of another previous study in Mexico with sexually diverse youth between the ages of 15 and 27, which identifies the close link between intimate partner violence experienced by youth and violence witnessed or received in their homes of origin (Ronzón-Tirado et al, 2017) and of similar findings in other contexts (Friedman et al; 2011; Lichter & McCloskey, 2004). Also, gay and lesbian adolescents show lower self-esteem than heterosexual youths, and the result corroborate that higher self- esteem significantly reduces the risk of emotional, physical and sexual dating violence, similarly to previous findings in Belgium (Van Ouytsel et al, 2017)

Compared to heterosexual adolescents, gay and lesbian youth have greater sexual experience (earlier sexual onset and higher average number of sexual partners), greater acceptance of sexual relationships among youth their age, and higher levels of sexual empowerment. In previous research earlier sexual initiation and larger number of sexual partners have shown significant and

positive associations with risk of dating victimization (Silverman et al, 2001) but no previous research has revised the associations of sexual empowerment and acceptance of sexual activity among youths their age and victimization.

Although greater sexual empowerment may give adolescents greater experience and control over their sexual lives, it is evident that this also implies potential conflict and greater risk of intimate partner violence, according to the results of the bivariate regressions. This raises a complex meaning of sexual empowerment and of each aspect analyzed in relation to sexual activity. These results reflect how sexuality constitutes a dimension of human life about which innumerable taboos and prejudices persist, elaborating around it ambivalent social responses that sometimes reward and sometimes punish its expressions, in a clearly differentiated manner according to sex and age.

At the same time, the finding that the experience of having been victims of some attempt at forced sex (prior to the current dating relationship) is almost three times higher for lesbian and gay adolescents than for heterosexual adolescents confirms for Mexican adolescents what previous research has pointed out in other countries: that sexually diverse youth are particularly vulnerable to experiences of early sexual violence (Atteberry-Ash et al, 2020; Friedaman et al, 2011; Kann et al, 2016).

Several important limitations are present in this research. The first one is the reduced sample of homosexual and lesbian adolescents, that limits the possibilities of the statistical analysis developed. Also, the adolescents included in this study were young High School students, which excludes the most vulnerable ones, those who are not enrolled in school, from this analysis. Additionally, the sample of adolescents analyzed is representative only for three Mexican states, not the whole country.

As well, some relevant explanatory variables for dating violence among sexual diversity that has been documented in the literature, like experiences of discrimination due to their sexual orientation, minority stress, or internalized homophobia (Ard and Makadon, 2011; Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Brown, 2008; Martin-Storey & Fromme, 2021) are not available in the data used and should be examined in future research in Mexico on this topic to confirm or compare their role on the risk of dating violence.

Our findings show the extent of dating violence among adolescents of sexual diversity and the relevance of making this problem visible, as well as the factors that increase or reduce the risk of this victimization experience, and to that extent raise possible routes of prevention and intervention. Also, it is necessary further research on the path of adolescent's empowerment as a relevant process to prevent dating violence and to provide young people with key resources to identify and deal with violent relationships, and particularly in the case of youth from the sexual diversity groups.

Table 4. Factors associated to the risk of Dating Violence by sexual orientation. Bivariate logistic regressions.

Variables	EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE				PHYSICAL VIOLENCE				SEXUAL VIOLENCE			
	Heterosexuals		Gay/Lesbian		Heterosexuals		Gay/Lesbian		Heterosexuals		Gay/Lesbian	
	O.R.	Sig.	O.R.	Sig.	O.R.	Sig.	O.R.	Sig.	O.R.	Sig.	O.R.	Sig.
Socioeconomic stratus												
Very Low (ref)	1		1		1		1		1		1	
Low	1.1683	**	0.5824	n.s.	1.2195	**	1.3107	n.s.	0.9905	n.s.	0.4577	n.s.
Medium	1.0654	n.s.	0.6279	n.s.	1.0572	n.s.	2.4857	†	0.8494	†	0.3390	*
High	0.9124	†	0.6214	n.s.	0.9365	n.s.	1.8125	n.s.	0.6816	***	0.6405	n.s.
Lives with both parents	0.7793	***	0.5979	*	0.7907	***	0.5195	†	0.8522	*	1.1805	n.s.
Received emotional Violence during childhood	1.5427	***	1.7177	*	1.9121	***	2.5060	**	2.0066	***	1.1624	n.s.
Received Physical Violence during childhood	1.4790	***	1.9452	*	1.6870	***	5.6131	***	1.5896	***	2.0483	†
Currently receives emotional violence at home	1.4698	***	2.3381	**	1.8806	***	3.9481	***	1.7272	***	1.2515	n.s.
Currently receives physical violence at home	1.5046	***	0.8750	n.s.	2.0327	***	2.0278	n.s.	1.8969	***	0.7475	n.s.
Age at first sex	0.9420	**	1.1191	n.s.	0.8971	***	0.9445	n.s.	0.9048	***	0.9002	n.s.
Number of sexual partners	1.0165	n.s.	1.0085	n.s.	1.0227	*	1.0305	n.s.	1.0581	***	1.0812	*
Sex with current partner	2.1863	***	2.1667	*	1.3794	***	1.2267	n.s.	1.2347	*	0.7209	n.s.
Aproval of adolescent sex (Index)	4.4133	***	3.9293	*	4.8048	***	1.8002	n.s.	8.9951	***	6.3833	*
Someone ever tried to force you to have sex	0.9306	†	0.7582	n.s.	0.9518	n.s.	0.9445	n.s.	0.8933	**	0.7964	n.s.
Duration of current relationship	1.0576	***	1.0189	n.s.	1.0326	***	1.0266	†	1.0159	***	0.9545	n.s.
Support from partner (Index)	19.1619	***	0.3256	n.s.	4.4482	***	0.0007	***	2.8167	***	0.0016	**

Source: ENESSAEP 2014.

† p<0.10 * p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Table 5. Empowerment Indicators associated to the risk of Dating Violence by sexual orientation. Multiple logistic regressions.

Variables	EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE				PHYSICAL VIOLENCE				SEXUAL VIOLENCE			
	Heterosexuals		Gay/Lesbian		Heterosexuals		Gay/Lesbian		Heterosexuals		Gay/Lesbian	
	O.R.	Sig.	O.R.	Sig.	O.R.	Sig.	O.R.	Sig.	O.R.	Sig.	O.R.	Sig.
Social Empowerment	0.7121	*	0.2256	n.s.	0.518	**	0.984	n.s.	0.537	*	1.494	n.s.
Self-esteem	0.5225	**	0.1273	*	0.432	**	0.807	n.s.	0.302	***	0.067	n.s.
Agency	0.6012	*	0.7906	n.s.	0.574	*	0.048	†	0.743	n.s.	5.362	n.s.
Egalitarian Gender Roles Attitudes	0.1419	***	0.9268	n.s.	0.174	***	1.060	n.s.	0.098	***	0.018	*
Sexual Power	4.6654	***	2.3483	*	3.134	***	2.317	†	4.032	***	4.124	**

Source: ENESSAEP 2014.

† p<0.10 * p<0.05 **p<0.01

***p<0.001

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