



Policy brief

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Light for Violence Project (L4V) is a project involving experts from six European universities: Alicante University –Spain; LUMSA University, Rome – Italy; Cardiff Metropolitan University - United Kingdom; Instituto de Salud Carlos III, Madrid – Spain; Instituto Universitário da Maia, ISMAI – Portugal; Grigoret Popa, University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Iasi – Romania; Mickiewicz University - Poland.

The aim of the project is to prevent gender violence, especially dating violence, among adolescents (12-19 years) using cinema voice.

This project is based on the model of the “development of positive attitudes in young people” towards family, other individuals and their community. The basic principle of this model is to recognize the potential in each person to improve their own health, well-being and to prevent dysfunctional relationships (Benson et al., 2007).

In each of the six countries participating in the project, the percentage of violent episodes against women or in dating relationships is high. To cite some statistics: 266 teen boys were prosecuted for violent behavior against women in Spain; 14% of junior high and high school students experienced sexual violence in Poland; 76.9% of 15-year-olds have experienced at least one episode of intimate victimization in Portugal; almost 11% of Italian girls have suffered physical or intimate violence before the age of 16; in Romania, a national study showed that in a sample of 3,391 females (15–44 years), almost 30% reported that they had suffered from verbal, physical, or sexual abuse. In a sample of 1,613 males (15–49 years), more than half reported that they conducted such behavior on their partners.

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Teen dating violence

Facts & Figures

Participating countries introduced initiatives dealing with violence in relationships inspired by the [Istanbul Convention \(CoE\)](#) which is aimed at preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women as well as the education and prevention of violence for children and teenagers.

- 01 266 teen boys were prosecuted for violent behavior against women.
- 02 4% of junior high and high school students experienced sexual violence in Poland.
- 03 76.9% of 15-year-olds have experienced at least one episode of intimate victimization in Portugal.
- 04 Almost 30% of a sample of 3,391 women in Romania reported that they had suffered from verbal, physical, or sexual abuse.
- 05 Almost 11% of Italian girls have suffered physical or intimate violence before the age of 16.



Preventing violence

Spain

The Ministry of presidency and the Women's institute for equal opportunities have published free equality promotion programs and educational materials for teachers. In addition, the Spanish government has passed laws against gender and domestic violence. In Italy, the Ministry of Education and the Regional Boards of Education have issued directives to combat bullying and cyberbullying. In addition, the Ministry of Education set the date of November 25th to dedicate to awareness raising against violence against women.

Poland

"Blue Line" workshop is offered to teenagers by the Polish National Emergency Service for victims of domestic violence.

Portugal

In Portugal, the crime of domestic violence – article 152.^o of the Portuguese Penal Code – includes dating violence. In addition, the National Education Strategy for Citizenship has created mandatory teaching areas (e.g., Human Rights) that must be present in the development of Portuguese children and youth. The government created three national Action Plans to combat violence against women and domestic violence. Some measures in these plans deal with preventing dating violence.

United Kingdom

The government has implemented a national strategy as a response to the issues of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. The Welsh government has provided a website with information and advice for those suffering from violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Romania

In 2016, the government ratified the Istanbul Convention for the harmonization of the internal legislation with the provisions of the Convention with the adoption of two important laws: Law no. 178/2018 and Law no. 174/2018, which refer to the gender perspective, and to prevention and combating domestic violence, respectively.

Video Capsule Method

Approach & Findings

Teachers expressed a positive opinion on L4V, greatly appreciating the production of videocapsules, as students were highly motivated and engaged during the activities. The teachers also admitted that they had never thought of presenting the theme of dating violence to their students before.

Method

Randomize control trials were carried out on 1,537 students: 922 females and 615 males for the 6 countries involved in the project. Both the intervention and the control group completed a questionnaire containing measurements of different variables involved in dating violence. The questionnaire consisted of several parts. The first part was aimed at collecting background information anonymously. The other parts of the test included several Likert scales aimed at measuring different aspects of gender violence, i.e. school climate and safety survey, violent thinking, interpersonal assertiveness, sexism, aggressivity, and bullying/cyberbullying. The overall project was conducted over a period of three years while the part of the project involving students lasted roughly one year.

Main Results

Around 17.6% of students reported physical and/or sexual abuse before 15 years of age and the tendency toward "machismo". The same group indicated varying levels of self-esteem present in individuals tending toward violent attitudes. In the participating countries, L4V allowed secondary school students to face the problem of dating violence confidently through didactical activities, very similar to learning games, and through the direct production of videocapsules.

Students' feedback

Students enjoyed creative and interactive activities, i.e.: group work, especially those focused on expressing emotions, creating the script/plot, and acting. As a further result of L4V implementation, the internal cohesion of the intervention school increased, as well as students' sense of belonging. Interpersonal and social assets were developed, enhancing communication among peers and conflict resolution.



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03

Country	Participants	Control Group	Intervention Group	% of Girls	Mean age	SD	Different nationality
	N	N	N	%			%
Spain	255	132	123	51,0	14,1	0,9	11,4
Portugal	260	125	135	48,3	12,9	1,0	0,8
Italy	295	172	123	72,3	14,4	1,1	8,1
Romania	343	206	137	62,4	15,4	0,6	1,5
Poland	192	71	121	71,1	16,1	0,8	1,0
United Kingdom	210	80	130	54,9	13,0	1,2	2,0
total/average	1555	786	769	60,0	14,3	0,9	4,1

Students recognised having learnt

“to respect everyone in the same way”, “what to do in complicated dating relationships”, “not to be jealous in dating” and “that violence is not the answer to problems”.

Relevant students’ quotes:

“The project was useful and stimulating”, “I realize you can solve problems without violence”, “I’ve learnt to control my aggressive instincts and to be in a relationship in a better way”, “At first I didn’t like this project, then I liked doing group work”, “Too many exercises: even though some of them are very interesting”.

Implication

The absence of activities in national curricula like those promoted by L4V was perceived as a drawback in all the participating countries.

Teachers expressed their willingness to spend more time developing a comprehensive program and the need for more training courses to deal with dating violence situations among their students.

The experience was considered valuable by students and teachers alike, however, it was suggested that sessions be carried out over a longer period of time, that there be greater coordination among teachers, researchers and students, and that there be increased teacher participation in the project design.

For some young people, discussing dating violence represented a new opportunity to address this topic with their teachers and classmates.

Recommendations for policy makers

- To provide courses for teachers and administrators on dating violence and on how to prevent this kind of violence among upper secondary school age students.
- To implement activities to foster students’ personal strategies and assets to support the development of social skills such as empathy, authentic dialogue, problem solving and conflict management.
- To promote other complementary activities to reinforce basic values such as gender violence rejection, anti-sexism and gender equality attitudes.
- To leverage the use of technology and innovative teaching and learning strategies for real-time feedback, to create storyboards collaboratively and to produce videocapsules.
- To create a database compiling good practices and L4V outputs.
- To promote content dealing with gender violence in the basic training of future teachers in the different university grades.



Teachers have little or any academic background in socio-emotional skills development, whereas this should be the leading area not only for students support but also as a way to managing and stimulating a positive and open classroom climate.