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Intimate partner violence among young people: a systematic review of recent evidence

Violencia de pareja en jóvenes: una revisión sistemática de la evidencia reciente

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Abstract

Intimate partner violence among young people (IPV), also known as dating violence or courtship violence, represents a public health problem owing to its frequency and its cumulative effects on the mental health, well-being, and relational trajectories of young people. This systematic review synthesizes the evidence published between 2022 and 2025 along three axes: (i) prevalence and forms of IPV (including cyber dating abuse, *cyber dating abuse* [CDA]), (ii) psychosocial consequences, and (iii) the effectiveness of preventive interventions. The PRISMA 2020 guidelines were followed for the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies, and searches were conducted in Scopus and complementary high-visibility databases. After completing the PRISMA process, 24 articles were included in the qualitative synthesis. The findings reveal substantial prevalence rates of both victimization and perpetration, a high co-occurrence between *offline* violence and cyber dating abuse, and consistent associations with internalizing symptoms, risk behaviors, and revictimization processes. In the area of prevention, programs targeting at-risk adolescents and structured school-based interventions addressing relational skills, gender norms, and digital safety report small-to-moderate effects; methodological gaps in outcome measurement and follow-up nonetheless persist. Taken together, IPV calls for comprehensive approaches that combine social-emotional education, a gender perspective, digital literacy, and early detection within educational and healthcare settings.

Keywords: intimate partner violence, dating violence, youth, cyberviolence.

Resumen

La violencia de pareja en jóvenes (VPJ), también conocida como violencia en el noviazgo, representa un problema de salud pública debido a su frecuencia y a sus efectos acumulativos en la salud mental, el bienestar y la trayectoria relacional de las personas jóvenes. Esta revisión sistemática sintetiza la evidencia publicada entre 2022 y 2025 sobre tres ejes: (i) prevalencia y formas de VPJ (incluida la ciberviolencia en el noviazgo, cyber dating abuse [CDA]), (ii) consecuencias psicosociales y (iii) efectividad de las intervenciones preventivas. Se siguieron los lineamientos PRISMA 2020 para la identificación, selección, elegibilidad e inclusión de estudios, y se realizaron búsquedas en Scopus y en bases complementarias de alta visibilidad. Tras aplicar el proceso PRISMA, se incluyeron 24 artículos en la síntesis cualitativa. Los hallazgos revelan prevalencias relevantes tanto de victimización como de perpetración, una alta co-ocurrencia entre violencia offline y ciberacoso en el noviazgo, y asociaciones consistentes con síntomas internalizantes, conductas de riesgo y procesos de revictimización. En el ámbito de la prevención, los programas focalizados en adolescentes en riesgo y las intervenciones escolares estructuradas que trabajan habilidades relacionales, normas de género y seguridad digital reportan efectos pequeños a moderados; no obstante, persisten brechas metodológicas en la medición y el seguimiento de los resultados. En conjunto, la VPJ exige enfoques integrales que articulen educación socioemocional, perspectiva de género, alfabetización digital y detección temprana en contextos educativos y sanitarios.

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Palabras clave: violencia de pareja, violencia en el noviazgo, jóvenes, ciberviolencia.

Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) among young people is a public health concern that encompasses various forms of physical, psychological, and sexual aggression, as well as controlling behaviors that arise within romantic relationships during adolescence and young adulthood. Interest in this phenomenon has grown considerably, since these developmental stages are critical periods for forming interpersonal bonds, building autonomy, and shaping expectations about romantic relationships (Campo-Tena et al., 2024; López-Barranco et al., 2022).

From a developmental standpoint, adolescence and emerging adulthood are periods in which expectations surrounding intimacy, reciprocity, autonomy, and the exercise of power within romantic relationships become consolidated. At the same time, socialization processes involving family, peers, schools, and other social settings help shape beliefs and norms concerning gender, jealousy, control, and couple relationships. For this reason, a number of studies have examined social power asymmetries and the descriptive and injunctive norms surrounding romantic relationships and violence, treating them as key elements for understanding the context in which IPV develops (Exner-Cortens et al., 2023; Meiksin et al., 2024).

Defining IPV conceptually is further complicated by the wide range of behaviors it can involve. The literature distinguishes psychological, physical, and sexual manifestations, along with various forms of control and coercion. This diversity has encouraged the use of methodological approaches aimed at identifying specific patterns of victimization and perpetration, including person-centered designs and latent class analyses (Bellemare-Lepage et al., 2025; López-Barranco et al., 2022; Paradis et al., 2024). Alongside these offline manifestations, research has increasingly incorporated the study of *cyber dating abuse* (CDA). This concept encompasses a range of technology-mediated behaviors, including monitoring a partner, surveilling their activities, disseminating or misusing personal information, issuing threats, humiliating, coercing, and exerting various forms of control through social media, mobile devices, and messaging services. The growing presence of digital technologies in youth relationships has thus given rise to a distinct line of research aimed at estimating the prevalence of these behaviors and clarifying their different dimensions (Li et al., 2023; Martínez-Soto & Ibabe, 2024).

The conceptualization and measurement of CDA has likewise generated a distinct area of inquiry devoted to clarifying its dimensions and examining the instruments available for its assessment. Other studies have jointly examined technology-facilitated violence and offline manifestations within couple relationships, broadening the conceptual framework used to study violence among young people (Martínez Soto & Ibabe, 2022; Kim & Ferraresso, 2023; Rodríguez-deArriba et al., 2024; Torp Løkkeberg et al., 2024).

Research on digital violence has also broadened the analysis of individual and relational factors linked to IPV. Recent studies have examined variables such as prior exposure to violence, emotional regulation, experiential avoidance, self-compassion, interpersonal flexibility, and other psychosocial characteristics that may play a role in victimization or perpetration dynamics. This expansion of the field situates the digital phenomenon within an analytic framework that considers personal, interpersonal, and contextual factors simultaneously (Wang et al., 2023; Erbiçer et al., 2025).

Another important line of research concerns the consequences of IPV for mental health and psychosocial functioning. Several studies have examined its association with indicators of psychological well-being, internalizing and externalizing problems, substance use, and various expressions of emotional distress. Population-based and longitudinal studies have drawn particular interest, as they allow researchers to examine the association between exposure to violence in youth relationships and a range of health and psychosocial adjustment outcomes (Ackard & Eisenberg, 2024; Campo-Tena et al., 2024). These studies have considered variables such as depression, anxiety, posttraumatic symptoms, suicidal ideation, substance use, and the continuity of adverse experiences into later life stages. The field has also begun to pay closer attention to youth populations with specific characteristics and contexts, including sexual and gender minority youth, in an effort to understand the particular ways in which these young people may experience, disclose, and address intimate partner violence (Malherbe et al., 2023; Piolanti et al., 2023; Price et al., 2023).

Alongside research on the prevalence, associated factors, and consequences of IPV, interest in prevention and intervention strategies has grown considerably. This line of work includes both systematic reviews and meta-analyses of preventive programs and specific evaluations of interventions targeting cyberviolence among adolescent couples (Arrojo et al., 2024; Jaureguizar et al., 2024). The field has also expanded to include research tracking intervention outcomes over time and prevention strategies aimed at adolescents with risk factors or prior exposure to violence (Baumler et al., 2023; Camacho et al., 2024; Cohen et al., 2025).

Despite this growing body of scientific output, the literature remains marked by considerable conceptual and methodological diversity. Studies rely on different definitions of intimate partner violence, assessment

instruments, age groups, reference periods, and forms of violence. This is compounded by the relatively recent emergence of CDA research and by the coexistence of studies that focus exclusively on offline violence, digital violence, associated factors, consequences, or interventions. Such diversity underscores the need for a review that integrates the main lines of research and characterizes the current state of knowledge on IPV (Afrouz & Vassos, 2024; Bellemare-Lepage et al., 2025).

The growing recognition of technology-facilitated violence has likewise prompted a more integrated study of experiences occurring across offline and digital settings. Recent scientific output includes studies on social norms, gender relations, adverse digital experiences, and the individual and relational factors linked to these forms of violence. However, these dimensions are typically examined along separate lines of inquiry, which justifies a review capable of systematically organizing and comparing the available evidence within a common framework (Meiksin et al., 2024; Torp Løkkeberg et al., 2024; Erbiçer et al., 2025).

Accordingly, the aim of this systematic review is to synthesize the scientific evidence published between 2022 and 2025 on intimate partner violence among young people, considering its prevalence and manifestations, associated factors and psychosocial consequences, and the preventive interventions studied to date, through a systematic review process grounded in the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Afrouz & Vassos, 2024; Bellemare-Lepage et al., 2025).

Methodology

A systematic literature review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 principles to ensure transparency and traceability at every stage of the process. The flow of records was documented through a PRISMA 2020 diagram, and the tracking criteria recommended for this type of review were applied (Lee & Koo, 2022; Rethlefsen & Page, 2022).

The primary search was conducted in Scopus and supplemented with other high-visibility databases, including PubMed, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and ScienceDirect, in order to broaden coverage and improve sensitivity, consistent with the accompanying PRISMA diagram. To capture the greatest possible amount of relevant evidence, Boolean combinations of synonymous terms were used: ("*dating violence*" *OR* "*teen dating violence*" *OR* "*dating abuse*" *OR* "*partner violence*" *OR* "*intimate partner violence*") *AND* (*adolescent* OR youth OR* "*young adult**") *AND* (*prevalence OR correlates OR outcomes OR intervention OR program*). For the digital component, additional specific terms were added: ("*cyber dating abuse*" *OR* "*digital dating abuse*" *OR* "*online dating violence*") (Arrojo et al., 2024; Afrouz & Vassos, 2024).

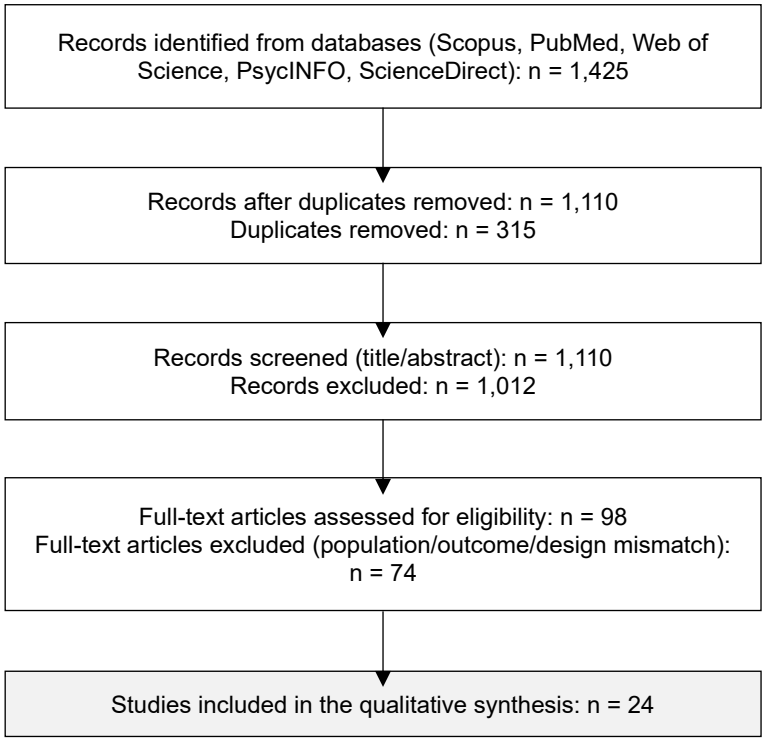
Regarding eligibility criteria, the review included peer-reviewed articles published between 2022 and 2025, in English and Spanish, focusing on adolescents and young people between 10 and 25 years of age. Only studies that explicitly measured intimate partner violence among young people were selected, whether in its *offline* or cyberviolence form, and that reported findings on prevalence, associated factors, consequences, or intervention effectiveness. Studies involving populations outside this age range, those focused on domestic violence without a youth-specific focus, non-peer-reviewed gray literature, and articles lacking full text for critical appraisal were excluded (Campo-Tena et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023). This selection process helped ensure that the evidence reviewed was relevant, current, and methodologically sound, consistent with the aims of the review.

Following the accompanying PRISMA 2020 diagram, 1,425 records were initially identified. After removing 315 duplicates, 1,110 records remained for title and abstract screening, at which stage 1,012 were excluded for thematic irrelevance. Of the 98 full-text articles assessed, 74 were excluded, mainly for failing to meet the population, outcome, or design criteria (Rethlefsen & Page, 2022; Lee & Koo, 2022).

For each article, we extracted author and year, country or context, design, population or sample, form of violence, variables or dimensions assessed, and main findings. The synthesis was exclusively qualitative; no original meta-analysis was conducted. Published meta-analyses are reported as secondary evidence drawn from the included studies. The synthesis was organized around three thematic areas: (i) prevalence and manifestations of IPV, (ii) associated factors and psychosocial consequences, and (iii) prevention and intervention. These categories served as an integrative structure for the evidence rather than as mutually exclusive groupings.

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Figure 1
PRISMA diagram



Note. Flow diagram prepared by the authors of this article and used to support the PRISMA 2020 study selection process (Rethlefsen & Page, 2022)

Results

The 24 included studies were integrated through a qualitative synthesis. The findings converge on three thematic areas: (i) prevalence and manifestations of intimate partner violence among young people (IPV), (ii) associated factors and psychosocial consequences, and (iii) prevention and intervention (Ackard & Eisenberg, 2024; Li et al., 2023; Arrojo et al., 2024).

Table 1
Subset of studies indexed in Scopus and main findings (n = 24)

No.	Reference	Design	Sample	Modality	Main Findings
1	López-Barranco et al. (2022b)	Systematic review and meta-analysis	12 studies; N = 47,104	Psychological, physical, and sexual violence	High heterogeneity; findings differentiated by sex/gender.
2	Campo-Tena et al. (2024)	Longitudinal systematic review	14 prospective publications	Victimization	Associations with internalizing/externalizing problems, substance use, poorer well-being, and revictimization.
3	Campo-Tena et al. (2024)	Longitudinal systematic review	14 prospective publications	Victimization	Associations with internalizing/externalizing problems, substance use, poorer well-being, and revictimization.

4	Arrojo et al. (2024)	Systematic review and meta-analysis	17 studies; 11 in meta-analysis	Interventions	Programs for at-risk adolescents reduce composite violence indicators; clearer effects on physical/sexual perpetration and overall violence.
5	Bellemare-Lepage et al. (2025)	Person-centered systematic review	22 studies	Multiple forms	Identifies typologies/classes; higher-risk profiles accumulate multiple forms of violence and greater psychosocial burden.
6	Ackard & Eisenberg (2024)	Population-based cross-sectional	N = 71,635	Verbal, physical, and sexual	Associated with poorer mental health even after controlling for violence in the home.
7	Li et al. (2023)	Meta-analysis	69 publications; 74 samples; N = 62,376	Cyberviolence	Prevalence rates differ by age and dimension; digital control stands out.
8	Martínez-Soto & Ibabe (2024)	Systematic review and meta-analysis	16 studies; N = 14,235	CDA victimization	Approximate global prevalence of 47%; digital control and psychological aggression are the most frequent dimensions.
9	Afrouz & Vassos (2024)	Scoping review	23 qualitative studies	CDA	Surveillance, control, and humiliation; gender and public exposure are salient.
10	Exner-Cortens et al. (2023)	Observational study	Canadian adolescents	Intimate partner violence	Social power imbalances are associated with experiences of dating violence.
11	Meiksin et al. (2024)	Systematic review	Social norms measures	Gender norms and violence	Descriptive and injunctive norms are relevant targets for prevention.
12	Paradis et al. (2024)	Latent class analysis	Adolescents	Victimization/perpetration	Identifies differentiated patterns and associations with everyday conflict management.
13	Malherbe et al. (2023)	Review	Adolescents	Intimate partner violence	Links IPV to depression, anxiety, posttraumatic symptoms, suicidality, and substance use.
14	Piolanti et al. (2023)	Systematic review	Longitudinal studies	Intimate partner violence	Associations with long-term adverse outcomes.
15	Price et al. (2023)	Observational study	LGBTQ youth	Physical violence	Victimization associated with poorer mental health and distinctive disclosure patterns.
16	Wang et al. (2023)	Observational study	Chinese female adolescents	CDA	Examines victimization, experiential avoidance, self-compassion, and interpersonal flexibility.
17	Martínez Soto et al. (2024)	Observational study	Adolescents	CDA	Links CDA to romantic love myths, sexting, and bullying.
18	Ramírez-Carrasco et al. (2023)	Observational study	Young people	Online violence	Jealousy, sexism, and romantic love myths are related to digital violence.

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19	Rodríguez-deArriba et al. (2024)	Systematic review	Studies on CDA and offline violence	Digital/offline	Finds a relationship between cyberviolence and offline intimate partner violence.
20	Torp Lokkeberg et al. (2024)	Scoping review	Adolescent relationships	Digital violence	Synthesizes adverse experiences of digital violence and abuse in adolescent intimate relationships.
21	Kim & Ferraresso (2023)	Systematic review	Articles on technology-facilitated violence	Digital violence	Technology can facilitate surveillance, control, and other forms of violence in intimate relationships.
22	Jaureguizar et al. (2024)	Program evaluation	Adolescent couples	CDA	Evaluates the CDA-Stop program for cyberviolence prevention.
23	Baumler et al. (2023)	Intervention follow-up	School-based program; 3-year follow-up	Intimate partner violence	Assesses follow-up outcomes of a school-based preventive program.
24	Camacho Soto et al. (2024)	Systematic review	Studies on secondary/tertiary prevention	Intimate partner violence	Highlights the need for early intervention among adolescents with risk factors or prior exposure.

Note. The table integrates the 24 substantive studies included in the manuscript

Discussion

The synthesis of the 24 included studies confirms that intimate partner violence among young people (IPV) is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be reduced to isolated instances of physical aggression. The evidence reviewed shows that psychological violence and coercive control are central components, both offline and online (López-Barranco et al., 2022b; Bellemare-Lepage et al., 2025). Person-centered approaches, such as latent class analyses, have made it possible to identify distinct profiles of involvement in violence, in which the accumulation of multiple forms of abuse is linked to a greater psychosocial burden (Paradis et al., 2024; Bellemare-Lepage et al., 2025). These findings suggest that preventive strategies should target not only the reduction of violent behaviors but also the early identification of high-risk profiles and the associated vulnerabilities that underlie them.

The relationship between offline violence and cyber dating abuse (CDA) emerges as a consistent pattern across the reviewed literature. Surveillance, control, and harassment carried out through digital technologies are not independent phenomena; rather, they are embedded in broader relational dynamics that can include physical, psychological, and sexual violence (Kim & Ferraresso, 2023; Rodríguez-deArriba et al., 2024; Torp Lokkeberg et al., 2024). This continuity between the two modalities carries important implications for prevention, as it suggests that separating interventions by channel (*offline* vs. *online*) could limit program effectiveness. Accordingly, digital literacy, consent, and privacy should be treated as structural components of any preventive strategy, rather than mere add-ons or general recommendations about safe social media use.

CDA prevalence estimates, however, should be interpreted with caution. The meta-analyses included in this review report variable figures that fluctuate depending on participants' age, the dimension being assessed (digital control, direct psychological aggression, sexual coercion), and the reference period considered (Li et al., 2023; Martínez-Soto & Ibabe, 2024). This methodological heterogeneity, far from being a minor detail, represents a significant limitation for direct comparison across studies and for generating stable global estimates. The field should therefore move toward consensus-based operational definitions and validated instruments capable of clearly distinguishing among control, surveillance, direct aggression, and coercion in digital environments (Martínez-Soto & Ibabe, 2024; Afrouz & Vassos, 2024).

With respect to associated factors, the evidence reviewed reinforces the need for explanatory models that integrate individual, relational, and contextual variables. Social power imbalances, gender norms, and beliefs about jealousy, control, and the legitimacy of coercion have been linked to a greater likelihood of both victimization and perpetration (Exner-Cortens et al., 2023; Meiksin et al., 2024; Ramírez-Carrasco et al., 2023). In addition, factors such as self-compassion, interpersonal flexibility, and family support have shown a protective effect against CDA victimization among adolescents (Wang et al., 2023; Martínez Soto et al., 2024). These findings underscore that

preventing IPV cannot be limited to modifying individual behaviors; it must also address the social norms and relational environments that legitimize or tolerate violence.

The consequences of IPV for mental health and psychosocial functioning are consistent across the studies reviewed. Victimization is associated with internalizing symptoms (depression, anxiety) and externalizing symptoms (antisocial behavior), substance use, diminished overall well-being, and revictimization processes (Ackard & Eisenberg, 2024; Campo-Tena et al., 2024; Malherbe et al., 2023; Piolanti et al., 2023). Longitudinal evidence, in particular, supports the notion that exposure to dating violence during adolescence can extend into later life stages, increasing the likelihood of subsequent violent relationships and persistent psychological distress. This finding justifies the implementation of early detection protocols in educational and primary care settings, as well as intersectoral coordination among schools, health services, and families.

The magnitude of this impact is not uniform across all groups of young people. Among LGBTQ populations, physical victimization within romantic relationships has been associated with particularly unfavorable mental health outcomes, as well as with disclosure patterns that can shape access to support (Price et al., 2023). This finding underscores the need for prevention and care services that are sensitive to sexual and gender diversity, that reduce barriers to disclosure, and that avoid standardized responses which render specific experiences of vulnerability invisible.

In terms of prevention, structured and targeted programs have shown promising results. Interventions aimed at at-risk adolescents that incorporate active components such as socioemotional skills training, gender norm change, and digital safety education have succeeded in reducing composite indicators of dating violence, with clearer effects on physical and sexual perpetration (Arrojo et al., 2024; Jaureguizar et al., 2024). Follow-up evaluations of school-based programs, such as the study by Baumler et al. (2023), suggest that some of these benefits may persist for several years after the intervention, which supports continued investment in sustained preventive strategies. Secondary and tertiary prevention likewise become particularly relevant when prior exposure, accumulated risk factors, or early episodes of violence are already present (Camacho et al., 2024).

The evidence reviewed supports a multilevel preventive approach combining: (a) at the individual level, the development of emotional regulation skills, assertive communication, coping strategies, and help-seeking behavior; (b) at the relational level, work on consent, conflict resolution, and the recognition of coercive control; (c) at the school and community level, the modification of social norms that legitimize violence and the implementation of clear detection and referral mechanisms; and (d) in the digital environment, literacy focused on privacy, surveillance, coercion, and safety (Meiksin et al., 2024; Torp Lokkeberg et al., 2024; Camacho et al., 2024).

Conclusions

Intimate partner violence among young people is a prevalent phenomenon that combines psychological violence, control, and, in a substantial proportion of cases, digital components. The co-occurrence between *offline* violence and CDA suggests that prevention must encompass the entire relational ecosystem, including communication, consent, and digital safety (Li et al., 2023; Afrouz & Vassos, 2024).

The consequences for mental health and relational trajectories are significant and are supported by longitudinal evidence and large-scale population studies; early detection and an intersectoral response (school-health-family) should therefore be considered priorities for policy and practice (Ackard & Eisenberg, 2024; Campo-Tena et al., 2024).

Interventions show clear potential, particularly when they target at-risk adolescents or include components specifically addressing CDA; however, designs with longer follow-up periods, standardized measures, and cultural adaptation are still needed. Integrating profile-based approaches could help optimize targeting and increase impact among the most vulnerable groups (Arrojo et al., 2024; Bellemare-Lepage et al., 2025).

Based on the gaps identified in the evidence reviewed, the following priority directions for future research are suggested:

Developing consensus-based concepts of psychological violence, control, physical and sexual violence, and cyber dating abuse is recommended, together with the integrated use of measurement instruments capable of clearly differentiating these dimensions, their frequency by age group, and their prevalence at both the local and international comparative levels.

Conducting more longitudinal and follow-up studies is likewise needed, given that most existing research relies on cross-sectional designs or short follow-up periods. Longitudinal studies would make it possible to establish the temporal relationships underlying the causal mechanisms of IPV, as well as to determine its effects on intervention programs.

With regard to the development of preventive programs, strengthening program evaluations is recommended, since understanding the factors that facilitate or hinder program adoption in real-world settings, as

well as the adaptations required for different populations and contexts, is just as important as the outcomes of the programs themselves, ultimately contributing to greater effectiveness in their implementation.

Research conducted from a gender and sexual diversity perspective should also be expanded, as most existing studies focus predominantly on heterosexual populations. Future researchers should examine how patterns of violence vary according to gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Research should likewise be extended to different ethnic groups and socioeconomic statuses, given that IPV does not discriminate according to any of these sociodemographic variables. An intersectional approach would allow for a more nuanced understanding of both vulnerabilities and protective resources.

Digital and online interventions warrant further evaluation. Given the growing prevalence of cyberviolence, more studies are needed to assess interventions designed specifically for digital environments, including applications, online platforms, and digital literacy strategies that address control, surveillance, and coercion on social media and messaging services.

Finally, early detection indicators grounded in adversity and trauma should be developed. The evidence reviewed suggests that certain high-risk profiles can be identified from a history of family violence, hostility, and other trauma-related indicators. Future research should investigate the predictive value of these indicators and their integration into detection protocols within school and healthcare settings.

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