



THE INFLUENCE OF MORALITY AND PARTNER CONFLICT ON INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN ADOLESCENCE

A cross-sectional study of Intimate partner violence among adolescents in Sweden using a Situational action theory approach.

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Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a problem of global proportions that affect men and women worldwide. It is a problem that occurs in all stages of life where we have intimate partners, starting in adolescence. Previous research show that the prevalence of IPV in adolescence is high, around 30% in most parts of Europe and North America. In Scandinavia the levels are a bit lower with previous research showing rates from approximately 10 to 20%, although the research in the Scandinavian context is scarce. The effects of morality on IPV perpetration is even less studied, with previous research showing that there is a significant correlation between the personal morality regarding IPV (IPV morality) and IPV perpetration. The aim of the present study is to use a Situational action theory perspective to study the prevalence of physical IPV and to investigate if there are significant associations between IPV perpetration, levels of IPV morality and levels of partner conflict in a sample of Swedish adolescence. The study is cross-sectional and based on self-reported data collected in the Malmö Individual Neighborhood Development Study (MINDS) during 2014 when the participants were between 18-19 years old. The results showed an IPV prevalence around 4-7% and that there were significant associations between morality and IPV perpetration and between IPV morality and IPV perpetration. The association between partner conflict and IPV perpetration was not significant. Also, the results revealed that levels of IPV morality may shift depending on the situation and that girls seem to have lower IPV morality than boys. Furthermore, the results showed that IPV perpetration is bidirectional with boys and girls being as likely to commit acts of IPV.

Keywords: Adolescence, Intimate partner violence, IPV morality, Morality, Partner conflict, Situational action theory

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INTRODUCTION

Historically intimate partner violence has been a matter that occurred behind closed doors and not something the law or society should interfere in. Although, over the course of time it has become acknowledged to be a global issue that occurs across borders, religions, sexuality, genders and social statuses and causes mental and physical suffering among men and women worldwide (World Health Organisation, 2020). It has been recognized as a serious issue that has led to changes in laws and policies to prevent it from happening in many parts of the world. In a report from 2016 the Swedish government wrote that men's violence against women is a serious and widespread societal problem and that it is the ultimate consequence of the power imbalance that exists between men and women (Swedish Government, 2016). Intimate partner violence (IPV) is an umbrella term that includes physical, psychological and sexual abuse from a current or previous romantic partner (Nationellt Centrum för Kvinnofrid, 2020; Ybarra & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2019).

A lot of previous research has been conducted on violence, rather little on violence among adolescence and even less on IPV in adolescence. It is therefore important to increase the knowledge of IPV among adolescents to see if they differ from adults in terms of mechanisms regarding violence and IPV and to develop effective strategies to prevent IPV in this population.

IPV in adolescence

Previous research show that the prevalence of IPV in adolescence is high. When referring to IPV in adolescence it is usually milder forms of violence such as threats and shoving or pushing your partner. Though, more severe and even lethal violence also occurs in this young population (Connolly et al, 2010; Foshee et al, 2016).

North American research show that between 30-50 percent of adolescent's report being victims of physical violence in at least one relationship during this stage in life (Connolly et al, 2010). Turning to Europe the rates of IPV in adolescence are also high, in a Spanish study the results show that over 35 percent of adolescents were IPV perpetrators (Munoz-Rivas et al, 2007). Moreover, in an Italian study the researchers found that almost one third of their sample reported IPV aggression and in a cross-national study in Canada and Italy more than 30 percent of adolescents reported at least one aggressive act towards a current or previous partner (Connolly et al, 2010; Menesini & Nocentini, 2008). In a British study the rates of IPV among adolescents were lower, with 25 percent of the girls and 18 percent of the boys reported being victims of IPV during the last 12 months (Barter et al, 2017).

In the Scandinavian context only a few studies regarding IPV in adolescence have been conducted. A study in Denmark show that 10 percent of the girls and 4 percent of the boys had been victims of sexual and/or physical abuse by a current or previous partner (Schutt, Frederiksen, & Helweg-Larsen, 2008). In a Swedish study where a sample of 3170 adolescent or young adults answered a questionnaire regarding being a victim of any type of violence the results show that approximately 6 percent of the girls in the sample had been victims of sexual abuse in the last 12 months and among them 28 percent had been victimized by a previous partner and 13 percent by their current partner (Blom, 2015). In 2018, the

National Council for Crime Prevention in Sweden did an analysis of data collected within the Swedish crime survey from 2013. The analysis focused on IPV in adolescence and show that almost one in five people aged 16-24 had been victims of IPV during their adolescence, 23 percent of the girls and 14 percent of the boys. The most common type of IPV in the sample was psychological abuse in forms of threats and verbal violations (National Council for Crime Prevention, 2018). Besides showing high rates of IPV in adolescence, previous research also shows that adolescent IPV, in many cases is a bi-directional phenomenon where boys and girls are as likely to be IPV perpetrators (Connolly et al, 2010; Williams et al, 2008)

Even though research regarding IPV in adolescence is scarce in comparison to the amount of IPV research among adults, the studies presented above provide us with evidence that IPV in adolescence is a global problem that needs more attention and research. The fact that there have only been a few studies in this field conducted in the Swedish context is a clear sign that there is a knowledge gap regarding IPV among adolescents in Sweden. A lack of knowledge that the present study aims to reduce.

IPV morality

Morality is a concept that most of us are familiar with but how can it be defined? In the Oxford online dictionary Lexico morality is said to be “principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behaviour” (Lexico, 2020). IPV morality in turn, are moral values and emotions regarding IPV. Having low IPV morality means finding it an option to use IPV towards a current or previous partner whereas high IPV morality means you don't see IPV as an action alternative (Barton-Crosby, 2017).

Research show that having low IPV morality and IPV perpetration is strongly correlated (Capaldi et al, 2012; Ferrer-Pérez et al, 2019; Puente, Ubillos, Echeburúa, & Paez, 2016) Foshee et al (2016) found that having approving attitudes of IPV (low IPV morality) and especially acceptance of sexual violence increased the risk of IPV perpetration in adolescence. A British study (Barton-Crosby, 2017) found that low IPV morality was significantly associated with a prevalence of IPV perpetration, 24 percent of the participant with low IPV morality had perpetrated at least one act of IPV in the last 12 months compared to 7 percent of the participants with high IPV morality (Barton-Crosby, 2017). Another study, Ybarra et al, (2019) found that the relative odds for involvement in any kind of IPV during adolescence was increased by approximately 10 percent if IPV morality decreased by one step on the attitude scale used in the study. Furthermore, the results show that low IPV morality predicted involvement in sexual, physical and psychological abuse in a relationship both as a perpetrator and as a victim (Ybarra et al, 2019).

Although there is some research conducted on IPV morality and IPV perpetration, it is rare. Or to put it in Ybarra et al's words “remarkably understudied” (Ybarra et al, 2019, p 623) and more research needs to be conducted to further examine and understand the correlation between IPV morality and IPV perpetration.

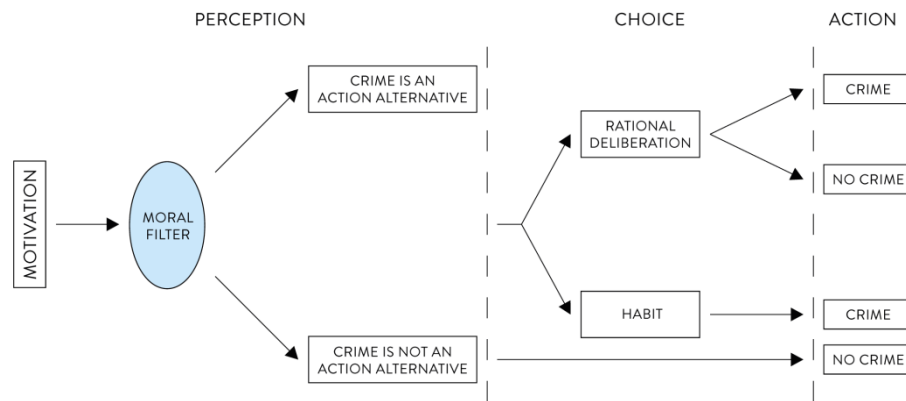
Theoretical framework

There are several criminological theories that try to explain why people commit IPV and what the underlying causes are. Some of the theories, such as *feminist theory* targets the society and systems of power and oppression as the causes. Feminist theory claim that the explanations of IPV lies within patriarchal societies that support male dominance and authority. They state that cultural systems foster IPV and therefore threatens women's rights in society (Kelly, 2011).

Other theories focus on the individual and individual traits such as morality. Morality can be found to play a part in the causes of crime in several criminological theories but it is seldom the main explanatory variable (Barton-Crosby, 2017; Wikström & Svensson, 2010). Historically, when referring to morality in criminological theories the focus is on learned attitudes that support acts of crime or techniques that allows the individual to overrule the conventional moral rules in society in order to commit crime. In both Sutherlands *differential association* theory and Akers *social learning theory* (that builds on Sutherlands theory) a person is more likely to commit acts of crime if he or she has developed definitions (morality) favourable to breaking the law (Akers, 1998; Sutherland, 1947). It is important to note that in social learning theory the morality (definitions) is *not* a necessary contributor to acts of crime (Barton-Crosby, 2017). Another theory that refer to morality is Hirschi's *theory of social bonds*. Hirschi refers to morality as beliefs in the morality of conventional order of society rather than individual morality (Hirschi, 1969). Lastly, Gottfredson and Hirschi stated that self-control and morality are basically the same thing. They claim that morality is the first line in defence against crime and that if one lacks high levels of morality a “calculation of costs and benefits” comes into play. Those committing delinquency and crimes are not controlled by moral beliefs; they therefore lack self-control (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 2019).

From this, it is rather clear that morality more often plays a supporting role rather than a leading one when trying to explain why people do or do not commit crime. *Situational action theory* (SAT) on the other hand puts morality at the forefront of the explanation of crime. The key assumption in SAT is that acts of crime are acts that break moral rules stated in law and that a crime occurs when a person perceive crime as an action alternative (Wikström, 2010, 2014, 2019). SAT has conceptualized morality as the main factor that affects whether one commits a crime or not (Barton-Crosby & Hitenlehner, 2020; Svensson, 2015; Wikström & Svensson, 2010). In SAT the process leading to a person committing an act of crime is called the *perception choice process*. To spark the perception choice process there needs to be a motivation. The motivation is the outcome of the person-environment interaction (desires, needs, provocation, sensitivities etc.) The perception choice process then starts with the perception of action alternatives, these are founded in the persons morality and the moral context of the setting they are in – *the moral filter*. If a person has strong morality and/or the moral context in the setting is discouraging of crime, then crime is unlikely to be perceived as an action alternative and a crime will not occur (Barton-Crosby 2017; Wikström, 2010). On the other hand if a person finds moral rule-breaking an action alternative, a process of choice is activated, the choice can be habitual or deliberate depending on the situation. Making a deliberate choice means that there are at least two options to choose from. A habitual choice occurs when the person only sees one action alternative and therefore no deliberation process occurs (a.a). The perception choice process is presented in the figure (figure 1) below:

Figure 1: The perception choice process



Looking at the theory from an IPV perspective SAT has been used to explain why people commit IPV by Barton-Crosby (2017) and she states that partner conflict is a motivator (provocation) that sparks the perception choice process and that “personal morality (i.e. IPV morality) is the key (individual-level) explanatory variable relevant to understanding why a person perpetrates acts of moral rule-breaking, such as IPV” (Barton-Crosby, 2017, p 165).

The SAT perspective with morality at the forefront is the best suited for this study where the aim is to look at IPV morality and IPV prevalence in a Swedish context. By using SAT there is a possibility to build upon Barton-Crosby’s study and examine if IPV morality plays as an important part in a Swedish context.

Aim and research questions

The overall aim of this paper is to study the prevalence of physical IPV perpetration and victimization and the relations between IPV perpetration and morality, IPV morality and partner conflict respectively, using a Situational action theory perspective. Increased knowledge regarding IPV perpetration, morality, IPV morality and partner conflict and whether they correlate or not, in the adolescent population creates opportunities to find new ways of working preventative at an early stage in life before people enter into adulthood. More specifically, the study aims at answering the following questions:

- Is there an association between morality and IPV perpetration?
- Is there an association between IPV morality and IPV perpetration?
- Is there an association between level of partner conflict and IPV perpetration?

Based on Wikströms Situational action theory and Barton-Crosby’s dissertation three hypothesizes were made:

Hypothesis one: Low morality increase the likelihood of IPV perpetration.

Hypothesis two: Low levels of IPV morality increase the likelihood of IPV perpetration.

Hypothesis three: High levels of partner conflict increase the likelihood of IPV perpetration.

MATERIAL & METHOD

Data

The data used in this study was collected in *Malmö Individual and Neighbourhood Development Study* (MINDS). MINDS is a longitudinal study being conducted by researchers at the department of criminology at Malmö University. Since September 2007 MINDS has followed a randomized sample of 525 individuals born in 1995 and living in Malmö on the 1st of September 2007. Compared to the birth cohort of the sample, the MINDS sample is representative except for an underrepresentation of adolescents from economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Engström, 2018). The aim of MINDS is to broaden the knowledge regarding causes of crime and other related problems and therefore the focus lies on the interaction between the social environment and individual characteristics (Chrysoulakis, 2020; Ivert, Andersson, Svensson, Pauwels, & Torstensson Levander, 2018; Malmö Univeristy, 2020). MINDS is modelled after the Peterborough Adolescent and Young Adult Development Study conducted at University of Cambridge (Wikström, Treiber, & Hardie, 2012). The data in MINDS is collected through self-reported questionnaires, space time budgets and interviews (Chrysoulakis, 2020; Ivert et al, 2018; Malmö Universitet, 2020) Since the first wave of data collection in 2007 data has been collected in 2011, 2012 and 2014 (a.a).

The current study

This study uses data from wave 4 (2014) when the participants were 18-19 years old. The reason for this is that it is the only data collection wave that collected data regarding IPV. Therefore, the present study has a cross-sectional design. The data from 2014 was collected only through self-reported questionnaires (Chrysoulakis, 2020; Ivert et al, 2018; Malmö Universitet, 2020).

Out of the 525 original participants 114 did not answer the questionnaire in 2014, leaving a sample of 411 adolescents. Out of these 188 (45,7%) were boys and 216 (52,5%) were girls, 7 participants (1,7%) did not state their biological gender. Approximately 57 percent (N=235) reported having had one or more romantic partners during the previous year (2013).

Out of the excluded participants (n=114) 65 percent were boys and 35 percent were girls. This may have influence on the results but the included individuals are still rather equally distributed in regards of gender (45,7% boys and 52,5% girls) . The original sample had a 50/50 distribution of boys and girls (Ivert et al., 2018).

The non-response rate for individual items in the data set is low, with approximately 1-6% of the sample not answering all the questions they could (depending on having had romantic partners or not) in the questionnaire (for count for each variable, see summary table 1 in appendix 1).

Measurements

To make the analyses relevant to this study a number of variables and indexes created from the MINDS data were used, they are described in the section below.

Dependent variable

IPV perpetration

The first variable consists of one of the items in the MINDS data regarding if the person ever had beaten or in any other way intentionally harmed a partner during 2013. The answer alternatives were on a 4-point scale ranging from “No, never” to “Yes, 4 or more times”. This variable was dummy coded into 1 = having beaten (or in other ways intentionally harmed) your partner one or more times and 0 = not having beaten a partner.

Independent variables

IPV victim

The IPV victim variable consists of one item in the MINDS data regarding being beaten or in any other way intentionally harmed by a partner in 2013. The answer alternatives were on 4-point scale and ranged from “No, never” to “Yes, 4 or more times”. A high value indicated having been beaten (or in other ways intentionally harmed) by a partner one or more times. This variable was only used in the univariate analyses to study the prevalence of IPV in the sample.

Partner conflict

The partner conflict variable consists of one item in the MINDS data regarding how many times the participants had had conflicts with a partner in 2013. The answers were on a 6-point scale ranging from 0 to more than 20 times. This variable was recoded to a 3 point scale where 0 = low (0 times), 1= medium (1-10 times) and 2= high (11 or more times).

IPV morality general and IPV morality cheating

There are two items in the data set that measure IPV morality. One regarding how important the participant find it to not hit a partner (boy- or girlfriend). This variable is called *IPV morality general* in this study and the answer alternatives range from “very important” to “unimportant”, a high value indicating finding not hitting a partner as unimportant.

The second IPV morality variable is an item that measures how serious the respondent find it to hit a partner that has cheated on them. This variable is called *IPV morality cheating* in this study with answer alternatives on a 3-point scale ranging from “very serious” to “not serious”, a high value indicating not finding it serious to hit a partner that has cheated.

Morality

The morality variable is an additive index created from a morality scale consisting from 16 items regarding moral values:

1. Steal a pencil from a classmate
2. Skip doing homework for school
3. Ride a bike through a red light
4. Go skateboarding in a place where skateboarding is not allowed
5. Hit another adolescent who makes a rude comment
6. Lie, disobey or talk back to teachers
7. Get drunk with friends on a Friday evening
8. Smoke cigarettes

9. Skip school without an excuse
10. Tease a classmate because of the way he/she dresses
11. Smash a street light for fun
12. Paint graffiti on a house wall
13. Steal a mp3-player from a shop
14. Smoke cannabis
15. Break into or try to break into a building to steal something
16. Use a weapon or force to get money or things from another young person

This is the same morality measurement as the ones frequently used to measure morality when testing SAT (Ivert et al 2018; Wikström et al., 2012). The participants were asked to rate how wrong they thought above mentioned scenarios were on a 4-point scale ranging from “very wrong” to “not wrong at all”. High values indicating low morality (not wrong at all). The index Cronbach’s Alpha was .834. After creating the index, it was recoded into low, medium and high levels of morality based on the mean value of 25.637 and the Std value of 6.959. Values 1-20 was coded high morality, 21-32 was coded medium and 33-44 low morality.

Analytical strategy

Due to limitations in the data such as the small and young sample with low numbers of observations in some of the variables the author chose to use descriptive analyses in the present study. To use more advanced analyses would have been inappropriate.

Univariate analyses

Univariate analyses were used to understand and explore the data in the study (Djurfeldt, 2010). Furthermore, univariate analyses were used to study prevalence of IPV perpetration, IPV victimization and partner conflict. Also, univariate analyses were used to examine where the levels of IPV morality was in the sample.

Bivariate analyses

Bivariate analyses in the form of crosstabulations were run to examine potential correlations between morality and IPV perpetration, IPV morality and IPV perpetration and partner conflict and IPV perpetration. This was done to establish potential correlations and their strengths between the variables and to see if they were in line with the hypothesized stated above.

Ethical considerations

MINDS got ethical approval from the Regional Ethics Board in Lund in 2007 before the first wave of data collection and in 2014 before the fourth wave of data collection (reference number: 201/2007 and reference number 2014/826). All participation in MINDS is based upon informed consent from the participants at each data collection wave but also from their parents at the start of the study (2007) when the participants were younger than 15. This was done to inform the participants about the purpose of the study and that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. By using data from an already ethically approved study there is no need for the present study to be presented to the ethics committee at Malmö university

Ethics in regards to this study

In the present study only the variables necessary to conduct the analyses were provided from the MINDS study. All the data was decoded before provided to the author. By doing this, the possibility to identify participants were eliminated. The data has been stored safely and will

be removed from the authors possession once the project is finished. Even so, some of the variables used are to be considered sensitive. When asking the participants sensitive questions, one need to reflect on the necessity of the questions and whether they can do more harm than good. On one hand, asking someone about being a victim of IPV may cause psychological suffering within the participant when remembering these events. On the other hand, it does not have to cause psychological suffering and the benefits may out way the possible costs when the integrity of the participants is respected. The researcher needs to way the benefits and the possible costs before asking sensitive questions. Previous research show that young men and women find it important that the knowledge about their population and the problems they suffer is built on their actual reflections, feelings and experiences (Blom, 2015).

Due to the lack of research in Sweden on adolescents and IPV and IPV morality the benefits of this study do out way the costs. Though, it is very important to note that results from studies like the present, need to be presented in ways where they don't reproduce stereotyped images of groups or victims.

RESULTS

In this section the results from the univariate and bivariate analyses are presented. The results are presented without decimals because of the small sample size used in this study.

Univariate analyses

IPV prevalence

The results from the univariate analyses show that just above half of the participants (57%, n=235) had had one or more romantic partners during 2013. Those who had not had any partners in 2013 were not able to answer questions regarding being an IPV perpetrator or IPV victim during that time. Out of the 235 that had been in a relationship 10 participants (4%) answered that they had beaten (or in any other way intentionally harmed) their partner in 2013 - *IPV perpetration* prevalence. 96 percent of the participants answered that they had not. Out of the IPV perpetrators 6 were girls and 4 were boys. When looking at the prevalence of *IPV victim* 7 percent (n=17) of the 235 that had been in a relationship answered that they had been beaten (or in other ways intentionally harmed) by a partner in 2013, 9 victims were girls and 8 were boys. This indicates that girls are slightly more likely to be IPV perpetrators and that IPV in adolescence is bidirectional also in the Swedish context.

Partner conflict

Out of the 235 that reported having had one or more partners in 2013 a majority (n=233) answered questions regarding partner conflict. One in five (20%) reported low levels of partner conflict during 2013, 54,9 percent had medium levels of partner conflict and approximately one fourth of the participants (25%) reported high levels of partner conflict during 2013. The most common reason for partner conflict was that the respondent or their partner said something that annoyed the other person, between 8-9 percent of the participants reported it happening every week, 11-17 percent every month and 43-47 percent reported it happening sometimes during 2013. Other reasons for partner conflict was wanting to do an activity that the other person didn't want to do and spending too much time with friends. The participant or their partner drinking too much alcohol was also a rather common source of partner conflicts, almost 20 percent reported that this was a source of partner conflict sometimes and approximately 6-8 percent reported it happening every month or week. That the participant's partner wanted to have sex and the participant didn't was reported being the

source of conflict sometimes during 2013 by 20,2 percent. It being the reason for conflict often or very often was rare (4% and 0.4%).

Morality

The results show that the majority of the sample (59%) had medium levels of morality (general moral values). One fifth of the sample reported high levels of morality (20%) and approximately 15 percent reported low levels of morality. A larger proportion of those who had high morality were girls (68%) rather than boys (33%). Almost the same distribution was found in the share of participants with low morality although reversed, with 63 percent being boys and 37 percent being girls. For those with medium levels of morality half of the participants were boys and half were girls.

IPV morality

For the first of the IPV morality measures *IPV morality general*, the vast majority (97%) of the whole sample (97% and 98% of the girls and boys respectively) thought it was very important not to hit your partner – *IPV morality general*, 2,2 percent found it rather important (3% of the girls and 2% of the boys) and only one participant found it not important to not hit your partner. Due to the skewness of this variable it was excluded from the bivariate and multivariate analysis.

In regards to the second measure of IPV morality, *IPV morality cheating* the results show that 81 percent of the sample considered it a serious matter to hit a partner that has cheated on you (59% very serious, 22% serious) and 11 percent considered hitting a partner that has cheated on you rather serious and 8 percent of the sample found it not at all serious. Out of the participants who found hitting a partner that has cheated on you rather serious 51 percent were girls and 49 percent were boys. For those who found it not at all serious two thirds (67%) were girls and one third (33%) were boys. This indicates that hitting a partner that has cheated on you is not considered as serious or wrong as hitting a partner “in general” among adolescents and that girls may have lower IPV morality than boys, especially in regards to cheating.

A summary table with mean, std dev, min and max values for the variables used in the descriptive analyses can be found in appendix 1.

Bivariate analyses

The variables IPV perpetration, morality, IPV morality and partner conflict were entered into crosstabulations to examine the strengths of the correlations. The results from the bivariate analyses are presented below.

IPV perpetration and morality

The results from the crosstabulation with IPV perpetration and morality presented in table 1 below, show that there is a correlation between IPV perpetration and low levels of morality. As seen in table 1, none of the IPV perpetrators have high levels of morality and that almost two thirds have low morality (n=3). Furthermore, the correlation is significant.

Table 1: Relations between IPV perpetration and Morality.

		IPV perpetration		Total
		No	Yes	
Morality	Low	35	3	38

	Medium	127	7	134
	High	47	0	47
Total		209	10	219

Kendall's tau-b: .115
Significance: .047*
*p < .05, **p < .001

IPV perpetration and IPV morality (cheating)

When examining the crosstabulation for IPV perpetration and IPV morality cheating the results show that the majority of the non-IPV perpetrators find hitting a partner that has cheated very serious whereas for the IPV perpetrators only one considers it a very serious matter, in fact the majority of the IPV perpetrators find it a rather serious or not at all serious matter (n=3 and n=3). Indicating a positive correlation between IPV perpetration and having low IPV morality and as the results show, the correlation is significant (see table 2 below).

Table 2: Relations between IPV perpetration and IPV morality (cheating)

		IPV perpetration		Total
		No	Yes	
IPV Morality (cheating)	Very serious	138	1	139
	Serious	51	3	54
	Rather serious	19	3	22
	Not at all serious	15	3	18
Total		223	10	233

Kendall's tau-b: .233
Significance: .005**
*p < .05, **p < .001

IPV perpetration and Partner conflict

The crosstabulation run to examine the correlation between IPV perpetration and level of partner conflict are presented in the table 3 below. The results show that the majority of the IPV perpetrators (n=6) also have high levels of partner conflict. Whereas the non IPV perpetrators are more evenly distributed with the majority (57%) having medium levels of partner conflict and 20 percent each reporting low or high levels of partner conflict. This indicates a correlation between having high levels of partner conflicts and IPV perpetration. Though, the correlation is not significant with values just above the significance limit.

Table 3: Relations between IPV perpetration and Partner conflict.

		IPV perpetration		Total
		No	Yes	
Partner conflict	Low	45	1	46
	Medium	126	2	128
	High	51	6	57
Total		222	9	231

Kendall's tau-b: .149

DISCUSSION

The aim of this paper was to study the prevalence of physical IPV and the relations to partner conflict and levels of IPV morality in a sample of adolescents in Sweden and to examine the relations between IPV perpetration and morality, IPV morality and partner conflict respectively, using a Situational action theory approach. All the results from this study should be interpreted with caution.

The results from the univariate analyses regarding IPV prevalence differ from other studies conducted on adolescents in Europe where the prevalence has been around 30 percent (e.g. Connolly et al, 2010; Munoz-Rivas et al, 2007) and in this study it seems to range from approximately 4 to 7 percent which is much lower. The results in the Danish study by Schutt et al, (2008) where 10 percent and 4 percent of the boys had been victims of sexual or physical abuse by a current or previous partner are much more similar to the ones in this study indicating that there may be differences in prevalence of IPV among adolescents in the Scandinavian context and the European context. Although, when comparing the IPV prevalence in this study to the results found in the analysis by the National Council for Crime Prevention (see page 4) there is a big difference. This may be due to the fact that the analysis by the National Council for Crime Prevention includes psychological violence and the MINDS data does not. The results in the National Council for Crime Prevention analysis show that psychological violence was the most common type of IPV that the participants had been victims of. Had questions regarding psychological violence been included in the data collection in MINDS the results may have shown higher levels of IPV among adolescents. Furthermore, in the analysis by the National Council for Crime Prevention a larger age-span was included, 16-24 years, giving room to the participants having had more relationships as they get older and by that increasing the possibilities of IPV.

The results from the univariate analysis regarding IPV prevalence also show that IPV among adolescents in Sweden is bidirectional with girls showing higher levels of IPV perpetration than boys though the difference is marginal. That the results in this study show that IPV in adolescence is bidirectional is in line with previous research conducted outside of Sweden (i.e. Barton-Crosby, 2017; Connolly et al, 2010; Williams et al, 2008) and indicates that IPV in adolescence seems to be a bidirectional phenomenon rather than one gender being more prone to being IPV perpetrators than the other also in the Swedish context.

The prevalence of partner conflict was higher than the prevalence of IPV, as to be expected since most people fight or argue with their partner every once in a while. The most common reasons for partner conflict were that something annoyed the other person or he/she wanted to do activities that the other part didn't want to do. Drinking too much or arguing about having sex may be considered more serious sources for conflict, something for future research to look into and see if maybe specific types of partner conflicts correlate with IPV perpetration. Unfortunately based on the timeframe for this study such analyses were not possible.

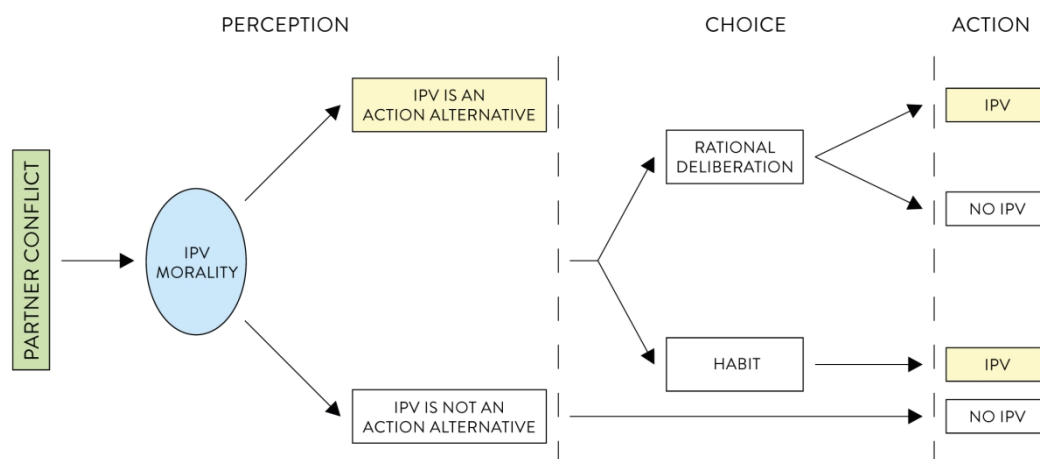
Regarding IPV morality, overall the IPV morality in the sample must be regarded as high with the majority of participants finding hitting your partner a serious matter. However, the results show that there are far more adolescents that find it not at all serious to hit a partner that has

cheated on you than to hit a partner “in general” (8% vs 0,5%). This indicates that there are different moral rules regarding IPV when it comes to cheating, or that it might not be considered IPV if you hit a partner that has cheated on you to the same extent as hitting your partner “in general”. That there potentially are different moral rules regarding IPV due to situation among adolescents is an interesting finding that should be given more attention in research. Furthermore, the results indicate that girls may have lower IPV morality than boys especially in regards to cheating. The fact that girls have lower levels of IPV morality than boys in adolescence was also found in Barton-Crosby’s thesis (2017) where 32 percent of the boys had low IPV morality compared with 66 percent of the girls. This may be due to her sample being older than the one used in this study, or due to her IPV morality variable including three items rather than just one as done here. It may also be that there are larger gender differences in IPV morality in the UK than in Sweden. Furthermore, Barton-Crosby (2017) also found a significant correlation between IPV morality and gender where girls were significantly more likely to have low IPV morality than boys.

The results from the bivariate analyses show that there is a significant correlation between IPV perpetration and morality and a significant correlation between IPV perpetration and IPV morality. These significant correlations are in line with hypothesis one and two tested in this study. The correlation between IPV perpetration and partner conflict was not significant in the crosstabulation but almost, with a significance value just above the significance limit. This may be a true result or due to the skewness in the data. Either way, this result is not in line with the third hypothesis tested in this study - that high levels of partner conflict increase the risk of IPV perpetration. Since this result also differs from previous research, level of partner conflict in relation to IPV perpetration should get more attention in future research on IPV in adolescence in the Swedish context.

Two of the results from the bivariate analyses are results that were also found by Barton-Crosby (2017). Although unlike the present study, Barton-Crosby found a significant correlation between IPV perpetration and partner conflict and argues that partner conflict is a motivator that triggers the perception choice process where the morality comes into play, that decides whether a person commits an act of IPV or not and that the personal morality (IPV morality) and not the general moral values, is the key to understanding why someone perpetrates an act of IPV (Barton-Crosby, 2017). See figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Partner conflict and IPV morality put into the perception choice process according to Barton-Crosby (2017) .



As shown in the figure above Barton-Crosby found that partner conflict and IPV morality mediates the effects of morality on IPV perpetration (Barton-Crosby, 2017). That there is a significant correlation between IPV perpetration and morality and between IPV perpetration and IPV morality in the present study just as in Barton-Crosby (2017) is an important finding, indicating similar mechanisms among adolescents in Sweden as in the UK. Although, due to the small and skewed sample we need more research with larger samples to be able to determine whether the same mechanisms found in Barton-Crosby (2017) can explain why individuals commits acts of IPV in the Swedish context.

Even if the results in the present study are to be interpreted with caution they are to be taken into consideration when working preventative with IPV perpetration among adolescents. IPV morality is significantly correlated with IPV perpetration, therefore targeting IPV morality among adolescents is important and may prevent IPV perpetration in the future. The results from Barton-Crosby (2017) show that those with low IPV morality are significantly more likely to perpetrate acts of IPV than those with high IPV morality, results that were also found in this study. Wikström argues that in order prevent crime effectively, we need to find the variables that are most causally relevant (Wikström, 2007). Even if it's not possible to determine causality in this study the results found here alongside previous research (i.e. Barton-Crosby, 2017; Ybarra et al, 2019) indicate that an important variable to tackle when trying to prevent IPV in adolescence, is IPV morality.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations in this study. First, there were some limitations due to the small and young sample only 57 percent had been in a relationship in 2013 which is a limitation when researching IPV. Had the sample been a few years older, as they were in Barton-Crosby (2017) and in the analysis from the National Council for Crime Prevention (2018), this would with great likelihood increase the proportion in the sample that had been in a relationship and therefore increasing the possibilities of IPV. Also, that the sample suffers from underrepresentation of adolescents from economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods may have resulted in a loss of potential participants that could have had an effect on the results one way or another. Furthermore, the loss of 114 original participants may be regarded a limitation, had they answered the questionnaire in the fourth wave of data collection the results might have been different.

Second, the low number of IPV perpetrators in the sample made it inappropriate to run more advanced analyses to further understand and investigate the correlations found in the bivariate analyses. To be able to do so, would have made further comparisons to other studies such as Barton-Crosby (2017) possible and also to investigate if IPV morality and partner conflict mediates the effects of morality on IPV perpetration in the Swedish context.

Third, the design of this study is cross sectional which results in it not being able to study causality. Though, the data being pulled from the longitudinal MINDS study increases the possibilities of researching IPV perpetration longitudinally in the future if more data regarding IPV is collected in the next wave of data collection.

Fourth and lastly, having more items measuring IPV morality in the data would have made it possible to create a better IPV morality measurement (index) that could have provided important and better information. Furthermore, it would have made it possible to further investigate if IPV morality changes due to situation or circumstance.

Recommendations for future research

For future research the author recommends a sample of late adolescents or young adults, that would increase the possibility that the sample have experienced relationships and therefore increase the prevalence of IPV. Furthermore, including items regarding psychological IPV would increase the analytical possibilities since it seems to be the most common kind of IPV in adolescence and it would add more knowledge to the field. To add more measures for IPV morality would strengthen the ability to further examine its effect on IPV perpetration beyond what was possible in the present study and also open up to further investigation concerning if there are different moral rules regarding IPV depending on situational aspects.

CONCLUSIONS

The results from the present study show lower levels of IPV in adolescence than other European studies. They also show that IPV is a bidirectional phenomenon with both boys and girls being perpetrators and victims. Furthermore, the results show that levels of IPV morality may depend on situational and circumstantial aspects and that girls seem to have lower IPV morality than boys.

Two out of three hypotheses were confirmed in this study with both morality and IPV morality showing significant correlations with IPV perpetration. Similar to the results found in Barton-Crosby (2017) and in line with Situational action theory, the results in this study show that IPV morality is an important factor that should be given more attention in future research and preventative work. Furthermore, the results of this study were not in line with the third hypothesis and did not show a significant correlation between IPV perpetration and partner conflict.

Lastly, the results from the present study should be interpreted with caution. Even so they are to be taken into consideration when working preventative with IPV in adolescence. Strengthening IPV morality in young people may prevent IPV perpetration in adulthood, something for future research to investigate. Furthermore, the results add value to a limited field in research that deserve more research attention in the future.

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APPENDIX 1.

Summary table 1:

Descriptive statistics

Variable	Count	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
IPV perpetration	234	0.0427	0.20269	0.00	1.00
IPV victim	234	0.12	0.488	0.00	3.00
Partner conflict	233	1.0472	0.67108	0.00	2.00
Morality	386	1.9534	0.60979	1.00	3.00
IPV morality general	408	0.03	0.202	0.00	2.00
IPV morality cheating	409	0.67	0.960	0.00	3.00