



Editorial Introduction

Technology is the most common means of perpetrating dating abuse among young people. However, less is known about adolescent digital dating abuse victimisation in Australia and Brazil. This brief provides definitions and highlights three main adolescent digital dating abuse categories: monitoring and control, humiliation and threats, and sexual coercion. Understanding digital dating abuse as a multidimensional and gendered phenomenon is crucial for policymakers, schools and universities to recognise and address this social and health problem.

About the Authors

Gisella Lopes Gomes Pinto Ferreira is currently completing her PhD at QUT on Adolescent girls' victimisation of digital dating abuse in Australia and Brazil.

Understanding adolescent digital dating abuse victimisation in Australia and Brazil

Gisella Lopes Pinto Ferreira

Dating abuse starts early. The World Health Organization (2021) estimates that, globally, almost 1 in 4 adolescent girls aged 15-19 who ever had a partner have been subjected to physical or sexual forms of abuse. Recent studies from Australia and Brazil show that technology is the most common means of perpetrating abuse among young people (Campeiz et al., 2020; Mackenzie & Mackay, 2019). However, less is known about adolescents' victimisation of digital dating abuse (DDA) in these countries compared to North America and Europe. Digital dating abuse refers to a wide range of digitally harmful behaviours in intimate relationships, including controlling, monitoring, threatening, humiliating and sexual behaviours (Brown et al., 2020). DDA has not always been understood as a multifaceted phenomenon. As a result, some forms of DDA may have been overlooked. DDA is gendered because young women are disproportionately impacted by technology-facilitated gender-based violence compared to their male counterparts (UN Population Fund, 2021). Defining DDA as a wide range of harmful digital behaviours and using a gender perspective – acknowledging unequal gender dynamics shape DDA, is fundamental to explain how adolescents in Australia and Brazil have experienced DDA. Understanding DDA in Australia and Brazil is crucial to recognise and address this social and health issue.

What is digital dating abuse?

DDA refers to a wide range of digitally harmful behaviours that can occur in intimate relationships. This definition's "digital" aspect refers to the means used by perpetrators encompassing different forms of technology, like mobile phones, social media, computers, GPS, apps. Perpetrators might use these various forms of technology to make victim-survivors feel uneasy, uncomfortable, unsafe, afraid or worried. Thus, multiple means can be used to perpetrate DDA, and crucial attention is needed to the context in which DDA occurs because perpetrators' intent and victim-survivors' impacts matter. "Dating" describes different forms of intimate relationships, including casual or serious, short or long-term, hooking up or unofficially dating (Brown & Hegarty, 2021). Brown and Hegarty (2021) identify four DDA categories: monitoring and control, humiliation, threats and sexual coercion.

Guided by this classification and a gender perspective, I reviewed the literature from Australia and Brazil to demonstrate how young people in these countries have experienced different forms of DDA. I used Google Scholar, QUT Library, and Scielo to identify studies exploring adolescents' experiences of DDA published in English, Portuguese or Spanish. I used various terms, including adolescents/young people/teenagers; intimate partner violence/dating violence/dating abuse; digital/online/technology-facilitated abuse; sexting; revenge porn; cyberstalking. This review focused on mapping the literature on adolescent DDA, as a multidimensional phenomenon. Thus, the central inclusion criterion was publications discussing at least one category of DDA related to adolescents' experiences (12-19 years). Full details about the methodology and a complete list of references can be found in the original article (Lopes Gomes Pinto Ferreira, 2023).

Monitoring and control

Controlling and monitoring behaviours are the most reported form of adolescent DDA within Australia and Brazil (Lopes Gomes Pinto Ferreira, 2023). Monitoring partners' whereabouts and activities through repeated or excessive calls and texts (Campeiz, 2020; Chung, 2007; Hobbs, 2022; Oliveira et al., 2011), checking partner's mobile and digital accounts, such as emails, social media and apps (Brown et al., 2020, 2021; Campeiz et al., 2020; Instituto Avon/Data Popular, 2014; Mackenzie & Mackay, 2019; Taylor et al., 2017) are the most commonly reported behaviours. These studies highlight that young people have controlled their partner's digital interactions by asking them to delete photos and posts and block or delete friends from their social media, particularly those of the opposite sex.

Demanding partner's passwords for their partners' mobile and digital accounts have also been reported (Brown et al., 2020, 2021; Campeiz et al., 2020; Hobbs, 2022; Instituto Avon/Data Popular, 2014; Mackenzie & Mackay, 2019).

While mixed findings are found in the literature about young people's engagement in controlling and monitoring behaviours, there is evidence that young women experience these behaviours at higher levels than young men. Research from several countries have outlined that controlling behaviours enacted by young men are pervasive and frequently more severe than those mentioned about young women (Flach & Deslandes, 2017; Hobbs, 2022). Unequal dynamics have also been documented in Australia and Brazil, as young women report that their male partner checked their mobile phones and asked for their passwords without providing access to their own (Mackenzie & Mackay, 2019; Taylor et al., 2017). These experiences raise essential questions about how unequal gendered dynamics shape DDA.

Humiliation and threats

Humiliation involves actions that make victims feel embarrassed, diminished or degraded (Brown et al., 2021). In the context of DDA, humiliation behaviours include using text messages or digital devices to issue threats, put-downs and insults (Brown et al., 2021). Some examples of humiliation behaviours in the context of DDA include using a digital device to threaten to distribute intimate images, physically hurting the victim, or instructing their partner to hurt themselves (Brown & Hegarty, 2021). Threats comprise behaviours like using a digital device to threaten to emotionally hurt the victim or damage things that are important to them, to threaten to physically hurt

themselves if the victim does not do what the partner wants, and make the victim feel threatened if they ignore their partners' calls or messages (Brown & Hegarty, 2021).

The threat of sharing intimate images without consent, a form of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA), is commonly discussed in Australian and Brazilian scholarship (Brown et al., 2020; Henry et al., 2019; UNICEF, 2019). This behaviour refers to threats enacted by a present or past partner to distribute intimate photos or videos often received or taken during the relationship. The scholarship from Australia and Brazil demonstrates that adolescent girls have received death threats and other threats via phone calls and texts (Chung, 2007; Hobbs, 2022; Instituto Avon/Data Popular, 2014; Oliveira et al., 2011). The threats discussed in this section often occur in the context of separation.

The threat of sharing intimate images is shaped by gender norms focused on policing women's sexuality and may lead to the fear of public humiliation (França et al., 2020; UNICEF, 2019). This threat places young women in a vulnerable position as they may experience self-blame and can fear being ashamed and scrutinised by friends, family and the public (Flach & Deslandes, 2021; UNICEF, 2019). Brazilian studies suggest that threats to share images are used to force adolescent girls to remain or engage in a relationship with young men (Instituto Avon/Data Popular, 2014; Oliveira et al., 2011), leading to ongoing abuse and fear (Montenegro et al., 2019; UNICEF, 2019). Similarly, in Australia, young women reported significantly more fear and distress than young men when experiencing the threat of having their intimate images distributed without consent (Brown et al., 2021).

Sexual coercion

Sexual coercion refers to pressuring partners to send nude images and sexually explicit messages or engaging in sexual acts and sexual discussions via digital devices or live video (Brown & Hegarty, 2021). It also encompasses distributing nude photos without permission (a type of IBSA) and receiving unwelcome nude images from current or former partners. Distributing intimate images without consent is the most documented form of DDA sexual coercion among young people in Australia and Brazil (see Lopes Gomes Pinto Ferreira, 2023). In Brazil, the Instituto Avon/Data Popular (2014) found that 32% of young women and 41% of young men aged 16–24 years have received nude images of a woman they knew. In Australia, Henry and colleagues (2017) demonstrated that 30.9% of young people aged 16–19 had been victims of IBSA (Henry et al., 2017). Another recent Australian study highlights that the distribution without permission via Snapchat of intimate images of adolescent girls as young as 12–14 years was common and devastating (Hobbs, 2022).

Research into IBSA in Brazil and Australia suggests that the distribution of these images often occurs after the end or attempt to end a relationship (França et al., 2020; Henry et al., 2017; Hobbs, 2022). This brings attention to the escalation and further occurrence of digital abuse during this critical time. While some studies found mixed findings on the gendered nature of these forms of abuse, there is a growing body of evidence from Brazil and Australia that suggests IBSA is gendered, as young women are overrepresented as victims of these behaviours (Brown et al., 2021; Taylor et al., 2017). This overrepresentation needs to be understood in the context of gendered inequality, in which gendered double standards interweave the dynamics of IBSA.

Conclusion

This paper provides an overview of adolescent DDA in Australia and Brazil according to the extant literature of these countries. It highlights the importance of understanding adolescent DDA as a multidimensional and gendered phenomenon. As technology has been identified in Australia and Brazil as the most common means of perpetrating abuse in youth relationships, it is fundamental to understand how this phenomenon manifests. To this end, this paper defines DDA and synthesises the Australian and Brazilian literature on adolescent victimisation experiences of DDA in these countries. Using Brown and Hegarty's (2021) categorisation of DDA, it outlines how this multidimensional phenomenon can occur through monitoring and controlling behaviours, humiliation and threats, and sexual coercion. It demonstrates that young women in both countries have been disproportionately and severely impacted by different forms of DDA, particularly regarding controlling behaviours and access to devices, and threats of sharing or actual distribution of intimate images without consent. Understanding that DDA is gendered and impacts adolescent boys and girls differently is important to understand its nuances, contexts and provide better responses to this phenomenon.

By providing several examples of how adolescents in Australia and Brazil have experienced DDA, this paper aims to assist educational institutions and policymakers to identify and address this social and health issue. This review highlights that in order to better understand and identify DDA, and consequently develop educational initiatives to raise awareness, prevent and respond to this issue policymakers, schools and universities should first recognise DDA is a complex gendered phenomenon which involves a multi-dimensional set of behaviours that takes many forms. Secondly, they should develop prevention initiatives tailored to young people and focused on how to use technology in a safe, respectful and ethical way.

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