THE ROLE OF CHILD MALTREATMENT AND FAMILISMO ON TEENAGE DATING VIOLENCE VICTIMIZATION AMONG LATINO BOYS

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ABSTRACT

Teenage dating violence (TDV) is a critical public health issue affecting millions of adolescents in the United States, with Latine adolescents at a possible higher risk than other racial or ethnic groups. However, there is little knowledge on TDV victimization experiences among Latino boys and the factors that may influence these experiences. Research suggests that child maltreatment may be a key risk factor for TDV victimization. On the other hand, the cultural value of familismo (i.e., emphasizing strong family support) could offer protection against TDV victimization, though its impact remains unclear among Latino boys who experienced maltreatment. This study explored whether child maltreatment predicts TDV victimization among Latino boys and whether familismo support moderates this relationship. Data were drawn from the nationally representative DAVILA-I dataset, yielding a final sample of 442 Latino boys. Path analysis revealed no significant associations between child maltreatment, familismo support, or their interaction with any form of TDV victimization. However, strong bidirectional associations were found between TDV perpetration and victimization, specifically for psychological and sexual forms. It may be possible that cultural stigma, underreporting, and measurement limitations influenced results, underscoring the need for more comprehensive assessments of maltreatment and familismo within this population. Ultimately, this study is an important step toward understanding the often-overlooked experiences of Latino boys in the context of TDV victimization.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Teenage Dating Violence Among Latino Boys

Teenage dating violence (TDV) victimization, which consists of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse or stalking, is a significant public health issue that affects millions of adolescents in the United States. For instance, according to recent estimates, 1 in 12 high school students experience physical dating violence, 1 in 12 report sexual dating violence, and 40% endorse experiences of psychological dating violence (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2023; Ybarra et al., 2016). TDV victimization has been linked to various adverse outcomes, such as substance use, suicidality, depression, sexual risk-taking, and unhealthy weight-control practices (Cha et al., 2016; Evans et al., 2022; Exner-Cortens et al., 2013; Vagi et al., 2015).

Research suggests that Latine adolescents may be at a higher risk of experiencing TDV victimization relative to adolescents from other racial or ethnic groups (Caetano et al., 2005; Kast et al., 2016; Reyes et al., 2017). Indeed, Sabina and colleagues (2016) reported that nearly 20% of Latine youth endorsed some form of TDV victimization. However, despite evidence highlighting that Latine youth are particularly vulnerable to TDV victimization, there is limited empirical knowledge on TDV victimization experiences among Latine adolescents. Specifically, one area that has received even less attention is the TDV victimization of Latino boys. Studies on intimate partner violence (IPV) and its effects typically focus on women as victims, giving men's experiences as victims less consideration (Chen & White, 2004). This difference extends to research on

adolescents, with few studies highlighting the TDV victimization experiences of Latino boys. The lack of research on the TDV victimization experiences of Latino boys may be related to various social preconceptions that males are generally the aggressors of IPV and are rarely victims to partner violence, which unfortunately results in male victimization often being taken less seriously than male-perpetrated violence (Hine et al., 2022). However, the limited research that has been conducted on the TDV victimization of Latino boys has indicated that they are at heightened risk of these experiences. For example, the Dating Violence among Latino Adolescents (DAVILA) revealed that 26.3% of Latino boys reported some form of TDV victimization, with 11.8% experiencing physical victimization, 8.8% sexual victimization, and 20.3% psychological victimization (Sabina et al., 2013). Additionally, a study by Reyes et al. (2017) found that Latino boys were at risk of all forms of TDV victimization, with psychological victimization being the most reported event at 49.4%. This burgeoning evidence suggests that Latino boys are vulnerable to TDV victimization and highlights the need for research that focuses on uncovering the mechanisms of risk and resilience that influence TDV victimization among Latino boys.

Maltreatment as a Risk Factor for Teenage Dating Violence

One potential risk factor for TDV victimization among Latino boys worth consideration is child maltreatment. The World Health Organization (WHO) describes child maltreatment as physical, psychological, and emotional abuse, and neglect of a child under 18 years old by their parent. According to the cycle of violence theory (Widom, 1989), children who are maltreated are more likely to suffer from additional

violence as they grow older. Overall, in support of this theory, a wealth of evidence demonstrates that experiences of child maltreatment are predictive of short- and long-term maladaptive outcomes in childhood and adolescence, including additional experiences of victimization (Kaslow & Thompson, 2008; Mehta et al., 2023; Widom, 2014; Zhang et al., 2023). In particular, a recent meta-analysis found a significant effect for the role of various forms of maltreatment (e.g., sexual, psychological, and physical abuse, neglect, and witnessing IPV) on experiencing TDV victimization (Hébert et al., 2019). Notably, empirical work demonstrates that Latino boys are at an increased risk of experiencing child maltreatment (e.g., Alzate & Rosenthal, 2009; Kenny & Wurtele, 2013; Newcomb et al., 2009). For example, a study found that Latino boys were significantly more likely to experience child sexual abuse than non-Hispanic White adolescents (Newcomb et al., 2009). Additionally, leveraging a national sample, Alzate and Rosenthal (2009) indicated that there was a higher likelihood of Latino boys endorsing physical abuse relative to non-Latino boys. All told, these findings point to the elevated and disproportionate risk of maltreatment among Latino boys.

However, despite the evidence that indicates that experiencing child maltreatment is associated with a heightened risk of TDV victimization and the findings pointing to the disproportionate vulnerability of Latino boys to maltreatment exposure, there is a lack of empirical research that examines the relation between child maltreatment and TDV victimization among Latino boys. In a notable exception, a recent study conducted by Luft et al. (2022) found that among Latino adolescent boys in the Dominican Republic, being a victim of child maltreatment was associated with physical and psychological

TDV victimization. Although these budding results are promising, it is important to note that research to date has not examined the role of child maltreatment as a risk for Latino adolescent boys' experiences of sexual TDV. Consistent with the cycle of violence theory and the scant evidence regarding other types of TDV victimization, it is possible that child maltreatment may also serve as a risk factor for sexual TDV victimization among Latino boys. To address this significant gap, the present study aims to test the impact of child maltreatment on physical, psychological, and sexual TDV victimization among Latino adolescent boys.

Familismo Support's Role as a Protective Factor

In contrast to risk factors, it is equally of importance to investigate certain cultural values from the Latine community that may serve as protective factors against TDV experiences for Latino boys. For instance, familismo, or the prioritization of family welfare over individual needs and a sense of inseparable connection to one's family, is a key cultural value within Latine communities (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Rodriguez et al., 2007). This value encourages Latine individuals to exhibit a strong family orientation and maintain positive familial connections that offer valuable social support (Campos et al., 2014; Katiria Perez & Cruess, 2014). Accordingly, the social support aspect of familismo is considered integral, as perceived support from family has been linked to greater psychological well-being and protection against maladaptive outcomes (Campos et al., 2014; Sabina et al., 2021). Importantly, a promising study showed that familismo support helped mitigate the risk of various forms of TDV victimization (i.e, physical, sexual and psychological) among Latine adolescents (Sabina et al., 2021). This

buffering effect against TDV experiences may be a result of familismo fostering supportive and trusting relationships within the family, which may help build similar expectations for adolescent romantic relationships and shield youth from relationships with potentially harmful significant others (Resnick et al., 2004; Sabina et al., 2021).

However, despite the promise of these findings, there is a lack of research explicitly investigating how familismo support might serve as either a risk or protective factor for TDV victimization among Latino boys who have been maltreated by a parent or caregiver. Given that the perpetrator in these cases is part of or may be considered family, high levels of familismo support may not necessarily protect these youth from TDV experiences. Instead, maltreatment by parents or caregivers, coupled with higher levels of familismo support, may increase the risk of TDV victimization among Latino boys due to the conflicting messages regarding violence in close relationships that the youth is receiving. To further elaborate, adolescents may hold high perceived familismo support levels simply because it is a highly emphasized and ingrained value within the Latine community. However, parents and caregivers who are violent are not fostering a supportive and trusting relationship or setting healthy expectations for a romantic relationship. This dynamic may influence the adolescents' expectations for their romantic relationships, raising the level of violence they are willing to tolerate and thereby increasing the risk of TDV victimization. To better understand the moderating role of familismo support, this study leverages a nationally representative sample of Latino boys and aimed to examine how different levels of familismo support influence the relations between child maltreatment and the TDV victimization experiences of these youth.

Ultimately, this study may help increase awareness and inform culturally relevant interventions to reduce TDV victimization among Latino boys.

The Current Study

Based on the theoretical and empirical literature, it was hypothesized that: 1) experiencing child maltreatment would be significantly related to all forms of TDV victimization for Latino boys; and 2) the interaction between child maltreatment and familismo support would be significantly related to TDV victimization among Latino boys. Specifically, for Latino boys with no maltreatment, high levels of familismo support would be related to less likelihood of TDV victimization; however, for youth with maltreatment experiences, high levels of familismo support would be related to an increased likelihood of TDV victimization.

CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

Procedures and Participants

The current study involved previously collected data from the DAVILA study part I (Sabina et al., 2013). Access to this restricted data was provided by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. The DAVILA study assessed the TDV experiences of a nationally representative sample of 1,525 Latine adolescents living in the United States. Latine households were eligible to participate in the study if children between 12 and 18 years of age were currently living in the home. Initially, to obtain a nationally representative sample, probability samples of households with telephones were generated from a national random digit dial group of high-density (80% or higher) "Hispanic blocks". This sampling technique yielded 111 interviews. As a secondary sampling technique, telephone numbers were selected at random from a list of Hispanic surnames. This method yielded 1,414 additional interviews. When a household was reached, the interviewer inquired about the total number of age-eligible Latine adolescents in the family. If there was more than one eligible adolescent, the next/more recent birthday method was used to select the participant. When an eligible individual was identified, consent from the primary caregiver and assent from the youth were obtained. Following agreement to participate, youth completed the study instruments in their preferred language (English or Spanish) through a telephone interview from September 2011 through February 2012. English was the preferred language of the interview for the majority of the adolescent participants (70.3%). On average, interviews

lasted about 33 minutes. Adolescents were compensated with ten dollars for their participation. Upon completion of the interview, participants were asked if they felt distressed and were offered a follow-up call for referrals. Every participant was given the contact information for the National Child Abuse Hotline.

The current study utilized data from DAVILA-I, focusing exclusively on Latino boys. This yielded an initial sample of n = 752. Out of the initial sample of n = 752, 35 participants did not meet the criteria based on maltreatment experiences, and 275 did not receive the TDV questionnaire, given their lack of romantic relationships and dating. This resulted in a final sample of n = 442 Latino boys for the present analyses. The average age of the Latino boys in the final sample was 15.46 years (SD = 1.77). The birthplaces of the participants included the United States (76.6%), Mexico (18.8%), and other Latin countries (4.6%). The majority of caregivers were married (68.4%), and 27.1% reported a household income of less than $29,000.

Measures

Child Maltreatment

Three items from the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ; Finkelhor et al., 2005) were used to assess child maltreatment during DAVILA-I. Specifically, experiences of physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect in the last year by an adult who takes care of the adolescent. The item that assessed physical abuse was “Not including spanking on your bottom, in the last year, did a grown-up in your life hit, beat, kick, or physically hurt you in any way?” The item that assessed emotional abuse was “In the last year, did you get scared or feel really bad because grown-ups in your life

called you names, said mean things to you, or said they didn't want you?" The item that assessed neglect was "When someone is neglected, it means that the grown-ups in their life didn't take care of them the way they should. They might not get them enough food, take them to the doctor when they are sick, or make sure they have a safe place to stay. In the last year, did you get neglected?" Items were answered on a "yes" or "no" scale. If the adolescents endorsed experiencing any of the three child maltreatment events, they were asked a follow-up question: "Who did this? How do you know him or her?" to identify their relationship with the perpetrator. For this study, responses were only included when the perpetrator was identified as either a parent or a caregiver living in the same home. This excludes adults who knew the child but do not live with them, such as teachers, coaches, neighbors, or babysitters. Other types of maltreatment that were not caregiver maltreatment were also excluded from the final analysis. The JVQ demonstrates good construct validity, as the measure correlated well with other measures of traumatic experiences in a nationally representative sample of 2,030 children between the ages of 2 and 17 years old (Finkelhor et al., 2005). The proposed study combined all three categories of abuse, considering any endorsement of at least one of the three items as child maltreatment (0 = no, 1 = yes).

Familismo Support

In DAVILA-I, this cultural value was measured using the family support subscale of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al., 1988). The family support subscale, characterized as the familismo construct by DAVILA researchers (Cuevas et al., 2021), consists of four statements that assess social support

from family. For this measure, participants rated their agreement with the four familismo support statements on the MSPSS, using a Likert scale from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). A sample item includes “I get the emotional help and support I need from my family.” This subscale has shown good reliability, with a score of .90 among DAVILA participants (Cuevas et al., 2021). The present study summed the responses to these statements into one total score, where a higher score indicated a stronger endorsement of familismo support.

TDV Victimization

At DAVILA-I, TDV victimization was assessed with items from the Conflict Tactics Scale 2 Short Form (CTS2S; Straus & Douglas, 2004). Participants received these items if they endorsed either having a boyfriend or girlfriend in the last year or having been out on a date in the last year. Participants who were not given the CTS2S were not included in the final analytic sample. Two items assessed TDV psychological victimization. Items included “My partner insulted, swore, or yelled at me” and “My partner destroyed something belonging to me or threatened to hit me.” Two items assessed TDV physical victimization. Items included “My partner pushed, shoved, or slapped me” and “My partner punched or kicked or beat me up.” Two items assessed TDV sexual victimization. Items included “My partner used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make me have sex” and “My partner insisted on sex when I did not want to or insisted on sex without a condom.” Participants indicated the answers to the TDV victimization experiences using the following responses: “1=in the past year,” 2 “before, but not in the past year” and “3=no, this has never happened.”

Correlations with the full CTS2 ranged from .65 to .94 across victimization subscales, supporting the concurrent validity of the CTS2S. Construct validity has also been supported, as associations between the CTS2S and established risk factors for partner violence (e.g., anger management, couple conflict) mirror those of the full measure. However, the authors noted that an alpha score was not appropriate for the CTS2S given that the short form comprised two-item subscales and was not intended to produce an overall total score (CTS2S; Straus & Douglas, 2004). The current study examined each form of TDV victimization separately, classifying participants as having experienced a specific type of TDV victimization if they responded in the affirmative to either of the two items related to the type of TDV victimization experience.

Control Variables

Youth reported their age in years, and the model controlled for this variable as it could influence results because it is probable that older adolescents have different exposure levels to TDV risk compared to younger teens. Parents reported their household income, and the model also controlled for this because varying levels of income affect family stress and family conflict, all of which could increase the risk of both child maltreatment and exposure to TDV victimization. Additionally, income may influence the parents' ability to foster supportive relationships, affecting familismo support levels. Additionally, parental immigrant status was assessed with the question, "What country were you born in?" Responses indicating birth outside the U.S. were coded as 1= immigrant and U.S. birth as 0 = non-immigrant. This is of importance to control because immigrant families often experience unique challenges, such as acculturation stress, that

could influence both parenting practices and family dynamics, which could then have an effect on the likelihood of child maltreatment and familismo, ultimately influencing TDV victimization outcomes. Lastly, TDV perpetration was controlled to account for potential bidirectionality between perpetration and victimization in dating relationships. Three perpetration variables mirrored the victimization variables (i.e., sexual, physical, psychological), with identical items reworded using 'I' statements (e.g., "I pushed, shoved, or slapped my partner") with the same answer responses as the victimization items. The analysis controlled for each form of perpetration separately, classifying participants as having experienced a specific type of TDV perpetration if they responded affirmatively to either of the two items related to that type of TDV perpetration experience. Overall, by including these control variables, the study aimed to mitigate confounding factors and provide a clearer understanding of how child maltreatment and familismo support are associated with experiencing TDV victimization among Latino boys.

Data Analysis

Planned analyses involving the DAVILA-I data were conducted using SPSS version 29 and Mplus version 8.10 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). Prior to conducting the main statistical analyses, the subsample was selected, and a bias analysis, including chi-square tests and independent sample t-tests, was conducted. Subsequently, familismo support was inspected for normality, homoscedasticity, and potential outliers. Other variables were not inspected, given that they are non-normal (i.e., categorical). Missingness levels were determined. Descriptive statistics were calculated to provide an

overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants and the study variables. Additionally, Spearman correlations were computed to assess associations among the key study variables.

Path analysis within a structural equation framework was used to examine the direct and moderated relations among the variables of interest. Child maltreatment was treated as an observed binary predictor variable, TDV victimization forms were treated as observed binary outcomes, and familismo support levels were treated as an observed moderator. Thus, in addition to the direct effects of maltreatment and familismo support on TDV victimization experiences, the analysis included an interaction term between child maltreatment and familismo support. Path coefficients were estimated while controlling for potential covariates, including binary TDV perpetration forms.

To address the non-normality of categorical data, the maximum likelihood robust (MLR; Lai, 2018) estimator was used, which was accompanied by the LOGIT link function to estimate binary outcomes more reliably. As the analyses involve the MLR estimator, common fit indices (e.g., Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) were not provided. The statistical significance of the individual paths, including direct and interaction effects, was evaluated using a p-value of less than .05 and 95% confidence intervals (CI).

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

Sample Retention and Bias Analysis

To assess potential sample bias in the retention of only participants who received the CTS2S, chi-square tests were conducted for child maltreatment and immigration status, and independent samples t-tests were used for the continuous variables of income, age, and familismo support. Results from the chi-square tests indicated no significant differences between those who received the CTS2S and those who did not for both child maltreatment, $\chi^2(1) = 2.77$, $p = .096$, and immigration status, $\chi^2(1) = .31$, $p = .577$. Similarly, the independent t-test revealed no significant differences in income between the two groups, $t(595) = .69$, $p=.488$.

However, age was significantly different between the groups, $t(715) = -10.99$, $p <.001$, with participants who received the CTS2S being older on average ($M = 15.46$, $SD = 1.77$) than those who did not receive the measure ($M = 14.00$, $SD = 1.73$). This result aligns with the expectation that older adolescents have more opportunities to engage in dating than younger adolescents. Additionally, familismo support was significantly different between the two groups, $t(706) = 2.71$, $p = .005$, with participants who received the CTS2S endorsing less familismo support on average ($M = 6.04$, $SD = 1.23$) than those who did not receive the CTS2S ($M = 6.30$, $SD = 1.09$). This difference may reflect that Latino boys retained in the CTS2S sample have an increased risk for experiencing or perpetrating dating violence, which could influence their perceived familismo support.

Normality and Missingness

Income had the highest missingness at 17.4%, whereas the other variables had minimal missing data (.2-2.3%), except for the three TDV victimization types, which had no missing data. Given that the highest missingness was not in any primary independent or dependent variable and all other variables had less than 10% missingness, no missing data pattern analysis was conducted in SPSS. However, Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimation was used in Mplus to handle missing data and maximize the sample size.

Regarding the normality testing for familismo, the skewness value was -1.73, which falls within conventional limits and indicates a moderate negative skew, whereas the kurtosis value was 2.95, which exceeds conventional thresholds and suggests some peakedness in the distribution. This suggests that participants generally reported high levels of familismo support. However, a box-plot analysis revealed no extreme outliers in the data. Although a few cases fell toward the lower end of the distribution, these values remained within acceptable ranges and did not satisfy the criteria for extreme outliers, which are defined as values exceeding three times the interquartile range (IQR) beyond the first or third quartile, typically marked with an asterisk. Given these results, there was no need for data transformation or outlier removal within the familismo support variable.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Among the sample, 9.3% (n = 41) reported experiencing maltreatment by a caregiver. Regarding TDV victimization, 32.1% (n = 142) reported experiencing at least one form, with psychological TDV being the most common (26.5%, n = 117), followed

by physical (12.2%, n = 54) and then sexual (8.4%, n = 37). Regarding TDV perpetration, 21.5% (n = 95) reported engaging in some form of violence, with psychological perpetration being the most common (18.8%, n = 83), followed by sexual (4.0%, n = 18) and physical (2.7%, n = 12). The mean familismo support score was relatively high (M = 6.04, SD = 1.23), with scores ranging from 1 to 7, where 7 indicated the highest perceived familismo support. Most parents reported being immigrants (80.8%), and the majority (85.8%) had an income over $9,999, with the most frequently reported income ranging from $10,000 to $19,999 (22.4%). The income range extended from under $9,999 to $80,000 or more.

Spearman correlations among study variables are displayed in Table 1. Spearman correlations revealed several significant associations among key study variables. Child maltreatment was negatively correlated with familismo support ($r = -.21$, $p < .001$), suggesting that experiencing child maltreatment was associated with lower levels of familismo support. Additionally, child maltreatment was positively correlated with physical TDV victimization ($r = .10$, $p < .005$), but not psychological or sexual TDV, suggesting that experiencing child maltreatment was associated with being a victim of physical TDV victimization and not other forms. Familismo support was negatively correlated with physical ($r = -.13$, $p < .001$), psychological ($r = -.20$, $p < .01$), and sexual ($r = -.12$, $p < .05$) TDV victimization, indicating that experiencing any of these three TDV victimization types was associated with lower levels of familismo support. Psychological TDV victimization was positively correlated with psychological TDV perpetration ($r = .59$, $p < .01$), physical TDV perpetration ($r = .22$, $p < .01$), and sexual TDV perpetration

(r = .19, p < .01). Similarly, sexual TDV victimization was positively correlated with sexual TDV perpetration (r = .48, p < .01), physical TDV perpetration (r = .15, p < .001), and psychological TDV perpetration (r = .17, p < .01). Physical TDV victimization was positively correlated with physical TDV perpetration (r = .32, p < .01), sexual TDV perpetration (r = .10, p < .05) and psychological TDV perpetration (r = .26, p < .01). These results indicate a bidirectional association between victimization and perpetration across TDV types. Additionally, psychological TDV victimization was positively associated with sexual (r = .30, p < .01) and physical TDV victimization (r = .40, p < .01), whereas sexual TDV victimization was positively associated with physical TDV victimization (r = .11, p <.05). These results indicate that TDV victimization experiences may accumulate among Latino boys.

Path Analysis

For the path analysis, the final analytic sample consisted of n = 432 participants, with 10 cases being excluded due to missing data on income despite the use of FIML. The detailed results of the path analysis, including the direct and moderated relations among variables of interest, are included in Table 2. See Figure 1 for a path illustration of the model with only significant paths included. Inconsistent with the hypotheses, results indicated that child maltreatment was not significantly associated with any of the TDV victimization types (all p-values > .05). Similarly, findings showed that familismo support was not significantly associated with any of the TDV victimization types (all p-values > .05). Further, no significant interaction effects were found (all p-values >.05), indicating that familismo support did not moderate the associations among child

maltreatment and TDV victimization forms. Regarding the TDV perpetration variables, psychological TDV perpetration was significantly associated with psychological TDV victimization ($\beta = .51$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.418, .599]) and physical TDV victimization ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.151, .410]), but not sexual victimization ($p = .373$). Sexual TDV perpetration was associated with sexual TDV victimization ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.177, .395]), but not physical or psychological TDV victimization (all p-values >.05). Physical TDV perpetration was not associated with any TDV victimization type (all p-values >.05). Among the other control variables, age was significantly related to psychological ($\beta = .20$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [.074, .330]) and sexual ($\beta = 0.49$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.284, .686]) TDV victimization, but not physical TDV victimization ($p = .550$). Income and immigrant status were not associated with any of the TDV victimization types (all p- values > .05).

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

TDV victimization is a critical public health concern with serious consequences for adolescent well-being (Exner-Cortens et al., 2013; Vagi et al., 2015). Research indicates that Latine youth, in particular, face heightened risk for TDV victimization (Caetano et al., 2005; Kast et al., 2016). Research has supported that Latino boys are vulnerable to experiencing TDV victimization (Sabina et al., 2013; Reyes et al., 2013). Yet, despite this evidence, Latino boys remain an underexamined group in TDV research, as most studies continue to focus on female victims. This gap in the literature underscores the importance of investigating the factors that contribute to TDV victimization among Latino boys. Guided by the cycle of violence theory, limited research suggests an association between child maltreatment and TDV victimization among Latino boys (Luft et al., 2021); however, little is known about how child maltreatment relates to sexual TDV victimization in this population. On the other hand, the cultural value of familismo support (i.e., emphasizing strong family support) could offer protection against TDV victimization (Campos et al., 2014; Sabina et al., 2021). Yet, its impact remains unclear, particularly among Latino boys who have experienced maltreatment. To address these gaps, the present study examined the impact of child maltreatment on physical, psychological, and sexual TDV victimization among Latino adolescent boys. Additionally, the study explored the moderating effect of familismo support to examine how different levels of familismo support influence the relations between child maltreatment and TDV victimization experiences of these youth.

In the present study, after controlling for other relevant factors, child maltreatment was not significantly related to any of the three TDV victimization types among Latino boys, suggesting no link between experiencing maltreatment and TDV victimization risk and disconfirming the study hypotheses. These findings are contrary to the cycle of violence theory (Widom, 1989) and the established literature on the link between child maltreatment and experiencing TDV victimization (Hébert et al., 2019; Luft et al., 2022), which indicates that maltreated youth are significantly more likely to experience TDV victimization, making the lack of associations across all three TDV victimization types particularly surprising. Although these results were unexpected, there are several possible explanations for the non-significant findings.

First, there was a low base rate of child maltreatment observed in the current study, which may have limited the detection of significant effects. The low base rate of child maltreatment may be a result of these experiences being generally underreported among Latino boys. Indeed, research has highlighted that cultural stigma, familismo (e.g., prioritization of family welfare and perception), and traditional gender norms such as machismo (e.g., emphasis on strong masculine pride and dominance) may discourage Latino boys from disclosing victimization experiences (Fontes & Plummer, 2010; Fontes, 2007). For instance, boys may feel shame (vergüenza) or fear of violating family loyalty and respect (respeto), especially when the perpetrator is a caregiver (Fontes & Plummer, 2010). The low base rate may also be related to the measure of child maltreatment in this study being restricted to caregiver-perpetrated maltreatment and excluding maltreatment experiences involving non-caregiver perpetrators. Consequently, additional instances of

maltreatment were omitted, which may have reduced the likelihood of detecting significant effects by restricting variability in the measure.

Second, the measure was further restricted by not including sexual abuse, another pervasive form of abuse. Furthermore, the three abuse types that were included were collapsed and measured into a single yes/no indicator of maltreatment. This restrictiveness did not allow for the examination of potential associations between particular types of maltreatment and corresponding forms of TDV victimization. Thus, the absence of effects could reflect the loss of nuance when maltreatment types were collapsed. Another important consideration for the null findings is that the present study controlled for other relevant factors that many previous studies did not. In particular, including TDV perpetration in the model accounted for the bidirectional nature of TDV.

Regarding the bidirectional effects of TDV, the findings revealed a reciprocity, in which particular forms of victimization (e.g., sexual, psychological) were significantly associated with perpetration of the same type. These significant associations point to a cycle of violence unfolding within this sample of Latino boys, though one different from what was originally hypothesized. In other words, whereas child maltreatment was not significantly related to TDV victimization in this sample, the results still provide evidence of a cycle of violence. Notably, the absence of a significant association between physical TDV victimization may be due to the low base rates of physical perpetration, compared to the other two abuse perpetration types. Indeed, similar patterns have been found across other studies (Reyes et al., 2017; Villanueva-Blasco et al., 2025) and may reflect cultural values that influence how Latino males perceive and report TDV

behaviors, which is an avenue to explore in future empirical work. Social desirability bias may also be a contributor, where participants may underreport physical abuse perpetration to appear more positively.

The bidirectional pattern of TDV not only reflects behavioral reciprocity on the surface, but may also be shaped by broader cultural and gender norms that influence how Latino boys experience and respond to violence in relationships. For example, traditional gender roles may encourage the idea that aggression is an acceptable way to assert control or resolve relationship conflicts, and that boys are more likely than girls to see aggressive dating behavior as socially acceptable (Ulloa et al., 2008). Moreover, a study found that boys who were victims of abuse by their female partner were perceived as "weak" and shamed by their teen counterparts, as male victimization is seen as a direct contradiction to the idea of Latino masculinity (Jaycox et al., 2008). Due to this perception, it is possible that boys who have experienced victimization might engage in perpetration as a form of retaliation, self-defense, or to reestablish dominance in a relationship, especially if they have internalized messages that link emotional vulnerability with weakness (Haglund et al., 2019).

Further, in the present study, once other key factors were accounted for, familismo support was not significantly related to any form of TDV victimization. The interaction between child maltreatment and familismo support was also not significantly related to TDV victimization among Latino boys. These findings contradict the moderation hypothesis that familismo would serve as a protective role against TDV in the absence of maltreatment, as suggested by cultural frameworks highlighting familismo as

a protective factor (e.g., Campos et al., 2014) and the limited prior research suggesting that familismo support specifically serves as a mitigating factor to Latine adolescents' experiences of TDV (Sabina et al., 2021). Additionally, the non-significant interaction is contrary to the moderation rationale that, in the context of caregiver maltreatment, familismo support may exacerbate the risk of experiencing TDV, as the family provides a negative model of supportive or trusting relationships. As with previous results, these non-significant findings may have several possible explanations. The focus on familismo support, rather than the full multidimensional conceptualization of familismo, may have limited these findings. For example, a significant aspect of familismo not captured in this study is the prioritization of family welfare and the preservation of one's image to others (Campos et al., 2014). It is possible that these Latino boys have high internalized loyalty or conflict avoidance, coupled with higher levels of machismo, which could make it harder for them to report abusive dynamics in dating relationships or abuse from caregivers.

Lastly, regarding control variables, age was significantly associated with psychological and sexual TDV victimization, but interestingly, it was not associated with physical TDV victimization. One possibility is that cultural and gendered reporting patterns may make Latino boys less likely to disclose physical victimization as they get older. In contrast, income and parental immigrant status were not significantly related to any form of TDV victimization. These findings suggest that, within this nationally representative sample of Latino boys, socioeconomic background and parental nativity are not major indicators of vulnerability to TDV. It is possible that cultural or

developmental factors play a more direct role in shaping risk, whereas the effects of income and immigrant status may be more indirect, operating through family conflict, acculturation stress, or parenting practices, which were not assessed in the current study.

Future Directions

The findings of this study highlight several promising avenues for future research. Given the non-significant results, future studies should aim to expand their construct of maltreatment by including experiences perpetrated by individuals beyond primary caregivers, such as siblings, babysitters, or other trusted adults who may be in caregiving roles to youth. This expansion of maltreatment would likely increase the base rate of endorsement, enhancing statistical power. Moreover, capturing a wider range of sources of perpetrators of abuse, would allow for a more nuanced understanding of how different perpetrator relationships may relate differently to TDV victimization. It would also be important to research experiences beyond maltreatment, such as domestic violence exposure and interpersonal traumatic events, that may contribute to experiences of TDV among this population.

Further, future studies should utilize multidimensional measures of familismo that go beyond perceived family support to better capture its complexity. This would include measures of family loyalty and adherence to family morals and values. More comprehensive measures would help clarify which specific dimensions of familismo function as protective versus risk factors in the context of child maltreatment and subsequent TDV experiences. Additionally, studies should explore how certain masculine roles, such as machismo, combined with familismo values, may influence Latino boys'

barriers to reporting maltreatment and TDV experiences. The examination of other cultural values not included in this study, such as religion or respeto, will also be imperative in order to further understand how distinct Latine values may influence the experiences of Latino boys in the context of maltreatment and TDV. Lastly, given the strong bidirectional associations between TDV perpetration and victimization, future research should prioritize longitudinal approaches to clarify the temporal order between victimization and perpetration. Future studies would benefit from testing whether reciprocity reflects retaliation, escalation, or other dynamics. Additionally, future research should consider how cultural and gender norms influence reciprocity, as this would provide more insight into the underlying mechanisms surrounding bidirectional perpetration and victimization among Latino boys.

Clinical Implications

The findings of the present study suggest several clinical implications. Although no significant effects were found for familismo support, it is important for clinicians supporting Latino adolescents mental health to be aware of how familismo, combined with gender norms, may operate simultaneously as both protective and constraining factors for boys. Due to boys potentially internalizing messages about emotional suppression, family loyalty, and masculinity inhibiting their disclosure of both family abuse and dating violence, prevention and intervention programs should integrate culturally sensitive psychoeducation that validates familismo and also promotes healthy expressions of vulnerability and emotional regulation. For youth with histories of maltreatment, interventions need to carefully tackle the conflicting feelings that may

emerge from valuing family and also experiencing harm within it. Culturally appropriate programs that engage family members, when safe and suitable, can strengthen supportive family dynamics while also confronting damaging norms. Lastly, due to the strong bidirectional TDV victimization and perpetration experiences, clinicians should also target cognitions of acceptance of violence within Latino boys, in order to identify unhealthy behaviors and manage conflict without violence. Given that TDV victimization was present among Latino boys, screening Latino boys for TDV victimization and engaging them in dating violence programs would be imperative. Additionally, given the bidirectional nature of TDV victimization and perpetration, the screening and programming would also need to target perpetration.

Strengths and Limitations

The present study has several strengths. First, this study greatly contributes to the literature as it is, to our knowledge, one of the first to explore the relations between child maltreatment and TDV victimization among Latino boys. Moreover, examining the cultural value of familismo support contributes to the limited research on this topic among Latino boys. Additionally, this study utilized data from a nationally representative sample, which enhances the generalizability of the findings to the Latino boy population in the United States. Furthermore, examining TDV perpetration allowed for a deeper understanding of the bidirectionality that occurs within TDV among Latino boys, a dynamic that is often overlooked in male-focused dating violence research.

However, despite these strengths, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study's cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish causal

relationships among maltreatment, familismo support, and TDV perpetration and victimization. Longitudinal studies would help determine the temporal precedence of the associations among these variables. Second, the measurement of child maltreatment was limited to self-reported caregiver-perpetrated abuse in the past year, which restricted our ability to capture the broader range and cumulative nature of maltreatment experiences. Additionally, TDV victimization was analyzed separately, with endorsement of any of the three types counted as victimization, without considering the cumulative nature of these experiences. Future research should examine the cumulative impact of each victimization type, which may provide a richer understanding of TDV victimization. All variables used in this study were self-reported measures, so the results are susceptible to mono-informant and mono-method biases. Future research would benefit from incorporating multiple sources of information, such as official abuse reports, when available. Moreover, except for familismo support, all key variables were categorical, which limited the depth and richness of insights that could be gained from analyzing these factors. Importantly, as noted earlier, familismo support is not a comprehensive measure of familismo. Future studies should utilize multidimensional assessments that go beyond perceived family support to better capture its complexity. Another limitation is that a considerable number of participants were excluded either because they did not meet the maltreatment criteria or were not involved in a romantic relationship. As a result, those who received the CTS2S were older on average than those who did not, limiting the generalizability of the findings to older Latino boys. Furthermore, those who received the CTS2S endorsed significantly less perceived familismo support than those

who did not receive the CTS2S, which may have contributed to the null familismo support findings and may limit findings to youth with lower levels of familismo only.

Conclusion

Despite hypotheses informed by the cycle of violence theory and cultural models, results did not support a direct or moderated association between child maltreatment, familismo support, and TDV victimization among Latino boys. These null findings may have been shaped by methodological constraints, such as restrictive measures and underreporting as a result of cultural stigma, or by the inclusion of other relevant factors, particularly TDV perpetration, which had not been accounted for in previous empirical work. Nonetheless, the bidirectional associations between sexual and psychological TDV victimization and perpetration highlight TDV's pervasive impact on relationships. All in all, this study is an important step toward understanding the often-overlooked experiences of Latino boys in the context of TDV victimization.

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APPENDIX

Table 1

Spearman Correlations of Key Study Variables

	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.	Maltreatment	—										
2.	Fam support	−.21**	—									
3.	Phys vict	.10*	−.13**	—								
4.	Sex vict	.04	−.12*	.11*	—							
5.	Psych vict	.09	−.20**	.40**	.30**	—						
6.	Phys perp	−.005	−.08	.32**	.15***	.22**	—					
7.	Sex perp	−.03	−.14**	.10*	.48**	.19**	.25**	—				
8.	Psych perp	.05	−.20**	.26**	.17**	.59**	.21**	.19**	—			
9.	Age	−.05	−.06	.05	.23**	.22**	.06	.11*	.18**	—		
10.	Immigrant stat	−.06	−.06	−.04	.05	−.04	.08	.03	−.04	.06	—	
11.	Income	.07	−.07	.03	.07	.07	−.06	.09	.06	−.09	−.20**	—

Notes: Fam support= familismo support; Phys vict= physical victimization; Sex vict= sexual victimization; Psych vict= Psychological victimization; Phys perp=Physical perpetration; Sex perp= Sexual perpetration; Psych perp= Psychological perpetration; Immigrant stat=Immigrant status * p<.05. ** p<.01. *** p<.001

Table 2

Standardized Estimates, Standard Errors, p Values, and 95% Confidence Intervals for Path Analyses

Variable	β	*SE*	*p*	95% CI of β
Psych vict				
Maltreatment	.119	.177	.501	[-1.817, 3.716]
Fam support	-.067	.071	.344	[-.388, .136]
Maltreatment x Fam support	-.056	.163	.729	[-.549, .384]
Income	.105	.074	.157	[-.043, .261]
Age	.202	.065	<.01	[.088, .438]
Immigrant stat	-.027	.064	.674	[-.931, .602]
Psych perp	.508	.046	<.001	[2.335, 3.714]
Sex perp	.071	.063	.260	[-.620, 2.266]
Phys perp	.086	.056	.123	[-.256, 2.086]
Phys vict				
Maltreatment	.118	.208	.571	[-1.977, 3.584]
Fam support	-.053	.080	.508	[-.341, .170]
Maltreatment x Fam support	-.044	.220	.842	[-.594, .484]
Income	.069	.088	.431	[-.092, .215]
Age	.055	.091	.550	[-.139, .261]
Immigrant stat	-.043	.086	.618	[-1.107, .660]
Psych perp	.281	.066	<.001	[.749, 2.110]
Sex perp	.004	.065	.950	[-1.212, 1.292]
Phys perp	.183	.122	.132	[-.575, 3.909]
Sex vict				
Maltreatment	-.038	.225	.864	[-3.895, 3.270]
Fam support	-.124	.089	.166	[-.569, .093]
Maltreatment x Fam support	.118	.228	.606	[-.494, .845]
Income	.178	.106	.093	[-.045, .423]
Age	.485	.102	<.001	[.278, 1.013]
Immigrant stat	.114	.127	.370	[-.907, 2.321]
Psych perp	.069	.078	.373	[-.500, 1.341]
Sex perp	.286	.056	<.001	[1.972, 4.780]
Phys perp	.052	.055	.345	[-.610, 1.731]

Table 2 Continued

Notes. *SE*= standard error; CI=confidence interval; Fam support= familismo support; Phys vict= physical victimization; Sex vict= sexual victimization; Psych vict= Psychological victimization; Immigrant stat= immigration status; Psych perp= psychological perpetration; Sex perp= sexual perpetration; Phys perp= physical perpetration.

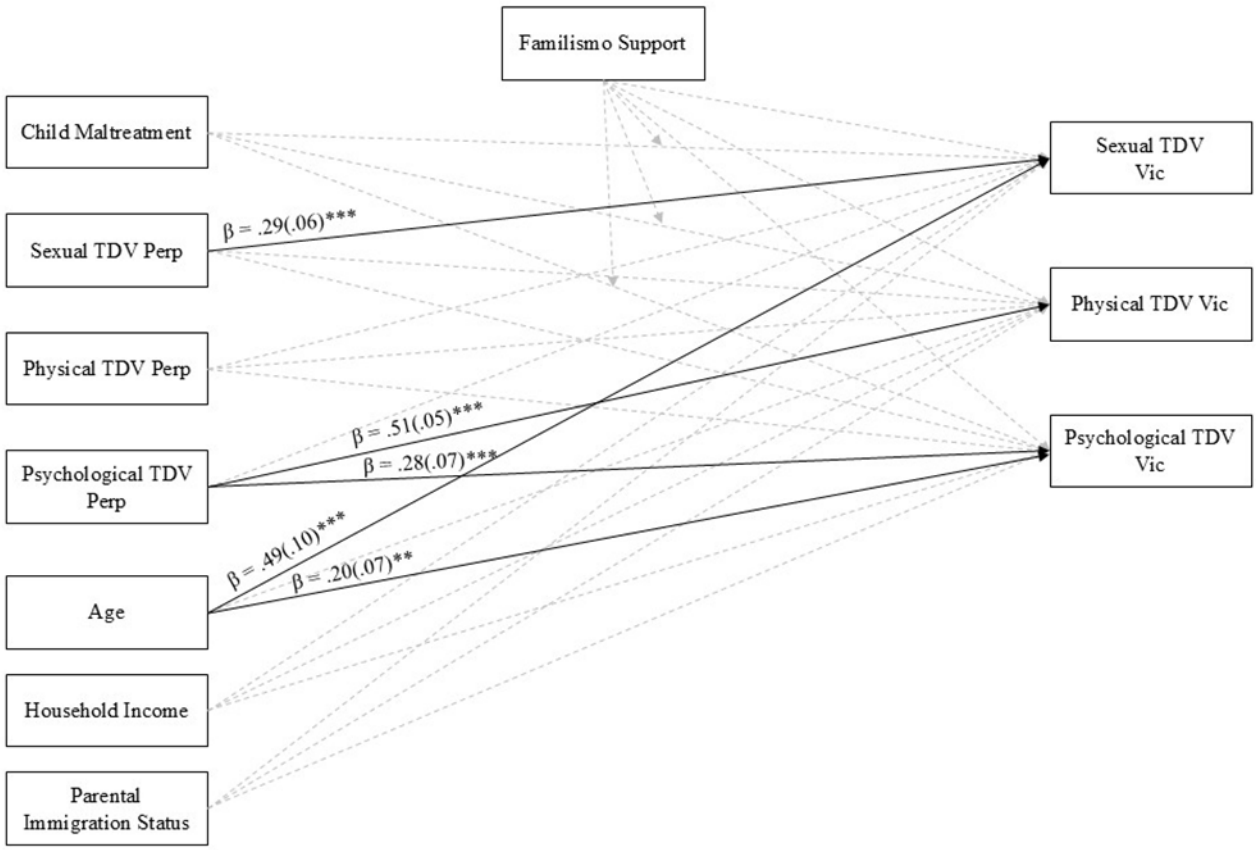


Figure 1

Path Analysis Figure

Note: Only significant paths are shown. Standardized betas and standard errors are provided. ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

VITA

Saúl A. Padilla was raised in Monroe, New York. After graduating from high school, he attended Binghamton University and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology. His experiences as an undergraduate researcher, along with clinical experiences gained through internships, inspired him to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology at the University of Tennessee under the mentorship of Dr. Lucybel Mendez. His research interests involve examining how trauma exposure and cultural values are associated with experiencing teenage dating violence among Latinx youth. He looks forward to continuing to pursue his research and clinical goals for the remainder of his time in the doctoral program at the University of Tennessee.