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A PROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF YOUTH VIOLENCE IN ADOLESCENTS: INFLUENCE OF DEPRESSION, PERSONALITY, SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND MEDIA VIOLENCE

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Objective: Understanding youth violence remains a pressing issue of social concern.

Identifying key risk factors for youth violence may help guide prevention and intervention efforts.

Aims: To examine the relative impact of varying social influences related to family, community, mental health, television and video games on youth violence in a multivariate format.

Study design: The current study involved a one-year prospective study of multiple risk and protective factors for youth violence in a Hispanic-majority sample of early adolescents.

Multiple regression was used to examine risk factors from a multivariate format.

Results: Results find that current depression level was the most significant risk factor for youth violence. The influence of depression was most pronounced in individuals with preexisting antisocial personality traits. Risk and protective factors related to schools, neighborhoods, family environment or video game or television violence use were not predictive of youth violence.

Conclusions: Potentially, prevention efforts which focus on mental health issues may demonstrate the most positive effects. The degree of resources and rhetoric spent on other factors, particularly television and video game violence may conversely prove unhelpful in reducing youth violence.