

## **Title: The relationship between being a victim of adolescent intimate partner violence and proactive aggression, What about empathy?**

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### **Abstract**

**Thematic importance.** Adolescent intimate partner violence can be defined as an interpersonal phenomenon in which aggressive behaviors have negative consequences for the development of individuals in cognitive, socioemotional, and behavioral dimensions and well-being and mental health. Therefore, understanding partner victimization in adolescents as a multidimensional phenomenon and identifying the role played by different specific factors can guide strategies for preventing and repairing this problem from early stages.

**Introduction and objective.** Adolescent intimate partner violence is a public health problem in Chile with scarce research in our context. Other studies have studied the experiences of both victims and perpetrators, including relevant components within socioemotional skills, such as empathy. On the other hand, the study of aggression's subtypes, reactive and proactive, is novel in adolescent partner violence, ignoring its role in the victims. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to determine the role of proactive aggression traits in victims of adolescent intimate partner violence with the levels of cognitive empathy that they present. It is hypothesized that proactive aggressive traits in victims are associated with lower levels of empathy. **Method.** The study presents a quantitative cross-sectional design. In a convenience sampling, 485 Chilean adolescents (53% female, mean age 16.14 years) completed self-report questionnaires about their partner victimization experiences, cognitive empathy skills, and proactive aggression traits, which were applied in an on-line format during school hours. A moderation analysis was used to examine the relationship between cognitive empathy, proactive aggression traits, and adolescent partner victimization. **Results.** An interaction effect was found between proactive aggression and adolescent partner victimization on cognitive empathy. In addition, proactive aggression affected cognitive empathy, whereas victimization failed to have an effect. Thus, adolescents with higher levels of victimization and higher levels of proactive aggression had lower levels of cognitive empathy. **Conclusions and implications.** The results highlight the importance of developing typological studies of aggression in adolescent intimate partner violence, highlighting the role that these could have on the perpetrators of violence and the victims. In addition, the importance of including socioemotional dimensions in the study of adolescent intimate partner violence is highlighted. Although the phenomenon of adolescent intimate partner violence has been strongly approached from the perspective of environmental risk factors, a look at adolescents at the individual level seems to be equally relevant. The public policy

approach implemented through intervention plans and programs could consider cognitive and socioemotional dimensions, such as empathy, and behavioral dimensions, such as proactive aggression. Future research on intimate partner violence could study the developmental trajectories of the dimensions addressed in this study through longitudinal designs.