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The Public's Concern over Abusive Relationships

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ABSTRACT:

This research was done due to the media's overwhelming influence on the public. The increasing amount of stresses on the public, and the lack of healthy ways to release the stress can result in harm to the community. The purpose of this project was to see the pattern of abusive relationships between men and women. In order to discover those patterns, Google Trend searches were made using the key words abusive girlfriend and abusive boyfriend. After, doing the research it showed specific months that had a higher search rate than others. Some months repeated a higher search rate year after year. For example, February, May, June, and September. Concluding findings, searching additional terms could have possibly produced slightly different results. As well as comparing the information to times that certain abusive related media came out to the public.

KEYWORDS: Abusive Boyfriend, Abusive Girlfriend; Google Trends

More than before there has been an increase of media infiltrating society's thinking within the United States. Defining media as books, television, movies, commercialism, and news. Along with media's influence, there has been an increase of negative and stressful situations that affect people in many different ways and one of those ways include the way couples end up treating each other. Abusive relationships have always been an issue. Unfortunately, there has not been a decline in this area but it has been getting worse as well as repeating patterns of this problem. Why the increasing amount of violence in relationships? Are women becoming increasingly abusive toward their significant other? Finding out the reasons for abusive relationships can result in happier and healthier communities.

The Google Trend results looking at this term had various results. In the beginning, from January 2004 to May 2009, there was not any data for this search. It could have been due to the lack of data collection made by Google at that time, and change in admitting in the male society that women can be abusive. Before many men would not admit to their significant other being abusive because some filling of being macho. To follow the flat line was a huge spike in June 2009. Possibly due to the increasing awareness and more men feeling comfortable admitting to such an issue. From July 2009 to November 2009 there

was another flat line in the search until December 2009. The trigger for the spike in the data happened during the holiday season, Christmas. More search volume in April 2010 and no more flat lines afterwards. There could have been an encouragement in the media or services telling men to speak up. In October 2010 there was a rise and fall in the results then later on in January of 2011 to February there was an incline in the graph. Most likely the relationship tensions that arise during and around Valentine's Day there is a rise in the search. Usually, after March the line the interest usually drops from such a high incline. Small rise between March 2011 leading up to August 2011 with increasing new relationships, or media opening up on women being abusive to their mate. September of 2011 there was a spike and around this time school for most college students start back up so stresses begin and issues taken out on their partners. Then a spike in January 2012 and a slow fall until March 2012 probably due to Valentine's Day then a slow decline. In April 2012, a media relation possibly with a new book, posts, or support group through the Internet. July of 2012 during summer people drink, and the influence of the media during that time encourage young women to act out and wild. When alcohol is present more violence is usually prone to happen especially those who drink till their drunk, and no longer to control their behavior. Again around fall

in October 2012 there was a spike and then a decline to December 2012. Rise again in January to February 2013 around Valentine's Day. The next spike in May 2013 could be due new movie or show influences. The spike again July 2013 most likely due to the same reoccurring influences during the time of summer. In 2013, the month of December had a large spike,

possibly the holiday season stressing women out causing some to act violently toward their mate. Although December is not a usual month for an increase in search volume there was a large search. Meaning a new influence such as new reading material or television shows that may be sending the wrong message to women on how to react or treat their significant other.

Figure 1. Abusive Girlfriend Interest over Time

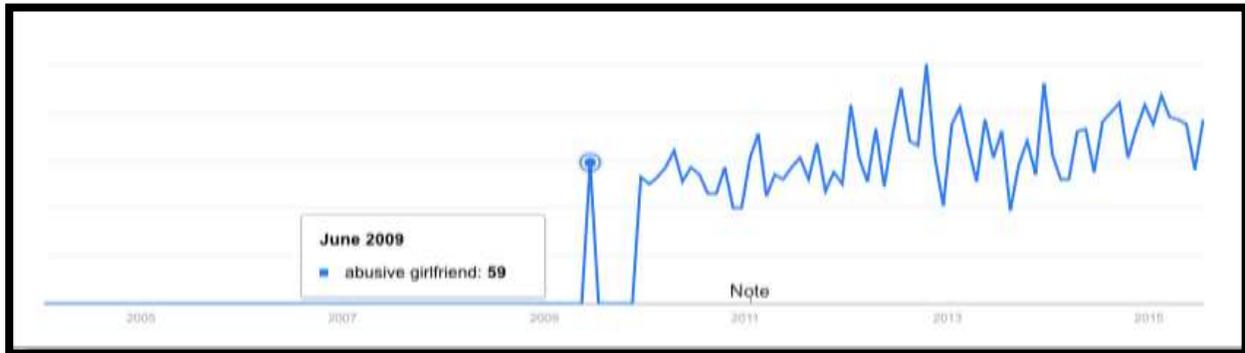


Figure 1 depicts Google trends showing interest over time in the keyword search of “Abusive Girlfriend” from June 2009 to partial of July 2015.

The trend looking at the abusive boyfriend data showed the first spike in April 2007. At first, there was no activity shown with this search, but the media possibly started to have a bigger influence in people's lives and those people maybe started to report or be more aware of their relationships. In September 2008, another increase in the search was evident due to the new stress at school it could be taken out on new relationships. March 2009 and following September of the same year both months had news headlines about abusive boyfriends; one was killed and the other strangled his girlfriend. Then in October of 2009 near the beginning of the start of a new school year, stresses and emotions can be high. January 2010, May 2010, and moving into June 2010 there was constant high levels of the search for an abusive boyfriend. Then another rise did not happen until January 2011 very close to Valentine's Day so that pressure could trigger some to be violent. In August 2011 and October 2011, search volume was possibly high due to the summer ending or holiday in October. January 2012 again being close to a holiday where many women have high expectations. July 2012 another high spike in the

graph around July the fourth is when a lot of people drink and become violent maybe due to this time in summer more couples become hostile toward each other. September 2012 as well as the past September months the graph showed a spike in the graph most likely because during this month school year starts up again. Then in December 2012, another noted raise most likely due to the holiday season, and the newsletter in December about an abusive boyfriend and the girl breaking up with him, and her friend being unsupportive. From May 2013 to June 2013 consisted of two news reports of an abusive boyfriend attacks, and the other article on how to stop a daughter from going back to an abusive boyfriend. Again another spike in the graph in January 2014 then a small decline in February 2014. May, June, and July 2014 there was a steady trend during the summer. During the summer there are a lot of gatherings, drinking, and especially media influence. Media wise many people are reading books, and watching TV shows resulting in consequences in couples' relationships. The recurring spike in December of 2014 and July 2015 supporting the trend that seems to be the case during those two months.

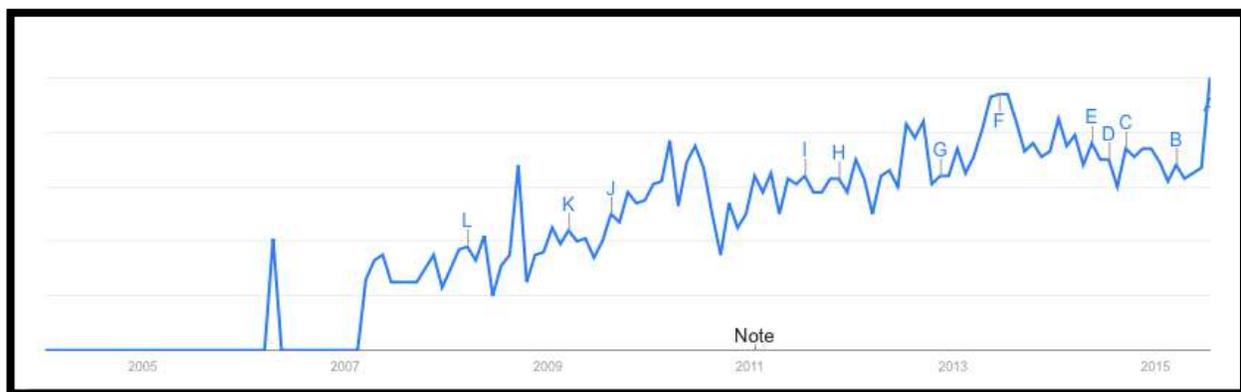
Figure 2. “Abusive Boyfriend” search of interest from October 2006 to partial of July 2015

Figure 1 depicts Google trends showing interest over time in the keyword search of “Abusive Girlfriend” from June 2009 to partial of July 2015

Looking at both terms each had months that had a reoccurring high search rate leaving a significant pattern. In order of the months of the year, January to March showed a fluctuating higher search during those times. Particularly during February, there was a high search during this time. Due to the holiday, Valentine’s Day, during that month relationship issues arise. Whether the person forgot to get or send the other proof that they care then tensions can become prominent. Pressure from the media as well as normal pressure from the people in an individual’s circle can stimulate negative feelings. The commercialism that accompanies this holiday makes it crucial that you must give your significant other something he or she will value. Then in May and June, there had been a spike around this time. May and June can be stressful times for young people even those couples who are a little older, but at the girlfriend and boyfriend stage in their relationship. Graduation time is within these two months and summer a lot of times means the end for many couples. From observation summer is not usually a time for couples to get together, but to separate. Separation can be due to one or the other leading into a different direction in life, or leaving for an extended period of time and being unable to take their partner with them. Lastly, September where in particular the start of high school or college year. Possibly with the start of new relationships or people struggling with new problems with school couples could possibly take their frustration or anger out on each other. In new

relationships people may struggle with realizing their significant other is controlling or abusive way, therefore, having a hard time looking for help or ways to deal with it.

Defined by the CDC intimate partner violence as, “physical violence, sexual violence, stalking and psychological aggression (including coercive acts) by a current or former intimate partner.” (CDC). It is important to look at abusive relationships because this is not an internal couple issue but has an external effect on others. The CDC mentions several things that can come about from this partner violence such as heavy alcohol or drug use, depression, unemployment, isolation, low income, anger, and many other issues (CDC, 2015). This list is happening on an individual level. Although these things are listed as individual issues when one person is unemployed it creates a domino effect. Especially in a family, the kids suffer when the household income is then cut in half, both parents are angry, kids see the violence between the parents, and with tensions high the parents may result to alcohol or drug use to lessen the stress. With all of that going on in a household the children will then have a hard time functioning. When children grow up this is the example shown so it is more likely they will act in a similar matter as their parents. In addition, the CDC list community issues that can result as well, “poverty and factors from that (overcrowding), low social capital- lack of institutions, relationships that contribute to social norms, weak community guard against IPV, and money costs to the community (2015).

There are more external problems that arise than people realize because it is not as clearly seen.

Some additional interesting findings when searching using Google Trends out of the two terms used only the Abusive Boyfriend search showed up with available headlines. That is most likely due to the lack of public reporting from men admitting or speaking up about their own girlfriend being abusive. Regarding the exact terminology of the two term sets the couples are mostly younger as well as un-established of relationships. In younger or newer relationships tensions can and will run higher meaning more likelihood for misunderstandings and frustrations being prominent. Media is always a big influence in people's lives and it is very likely it affects relationships. Celebrity relationships or drama, reality TV, movies, shows, magazines, and popular books at the time or around the time of high-end search volumes can distort or change the way a person reacts or plays a role in a relationship positively, or negatively. Looking overall at both data sets the search on abusive girlfriend those graph lines were higher most of the time compared to the abusive boyfriend graph. Meaning is there any possibility women are becoming more abusive in their relationships? Maybe women feel they need to be more aggressive due to past rough relationships they were in. Another theory is holidays, the commercialism, and general family pressures. In general looking at both data sets during the months of February, July, October, and December there were significant searches during these months year after year.

In society, there is the idea that the man should be stronger and to a degree anatomically speaking that is true. The other side to this is regardless of how strong a man is no woman should be abusive in any form to their mate even

if the relationship is just starting, and frustrations arise. For this situation to get any better actions toward prevention must be made. In the article, "Violence Prevention is a Public Health Issue," it goes into how both boys and girls need to treat each other with respect and be trained to express anger, or frustration in non-violent ways (Petipas-Taylor, 2007, p. 13-14). Petipas-Taylor goes on in the article to suggest a public education and awareness to encourage a zero tolerance in violence toward one another (2007, p. 13-14). Women and men need to learn how to control anger in all situations to prevent violence from occurring. It is possible to have fewer reports of partner violence, abuse when taught to use other expressions of frustrations or anger. There is an example in the same article about a campaign Australia. This campaign included posters that said "No Respect- No Relationship" reminding especially catered to men to have respect for their significant other (Petipas-Taylor, 2007, p. 13-14). Respect is definitely key in all relationships because if there is no respect that is not a real relationship. Learning to have a relationship that doesn't consist of violence is positive for future generations as well as the community.

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