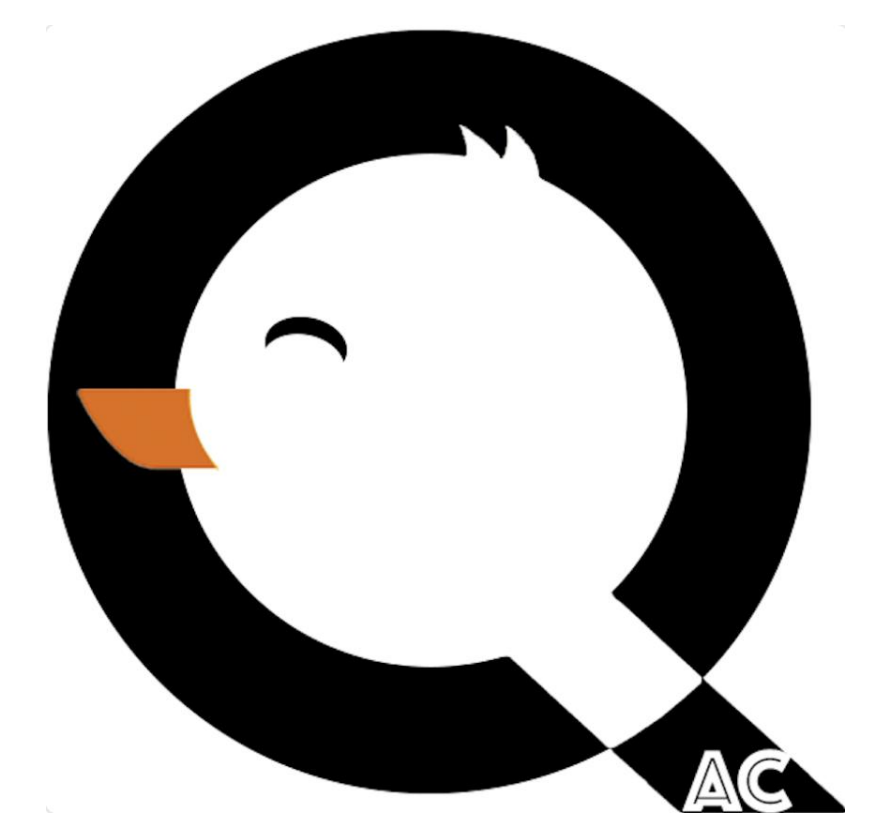




The Association Between Teenage Dating Violence and Child Abuse in Relation to Gender



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Introduction

- Teen dating violence (TDV) is a critical public health issue among adolescents in the United States. In the United States, at least 1 in 10 high school students reported experiencing sexual or physical dating violence (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025)
- Prior research suggests that childhood abuse is associated with TDV victimization; however, this study did not account for sexual dating violence (Emanuel et al., 2022). The role of gender in this association remains largely unexplored. Understanding how physical and sexual TDV may differ between genders is important for implementing recovery programs and improving education focused on TDV prevention.
- This study will examine how sexual and physical TDV is associated with child abuse, and if that association differs by gender.

Results

Bivariate

- Logistic regression revealed that there is a significant positive association between abuse with both physical (OR= 1.86, $p < 0.001$) and sexual dating violence (OR= 1.82, $p < 0.001$) (see Fig. 1).
- With a one-unit increase of abuse, the odds of experiencing sexual TDV increase by 82%, and physical TDV increases 86%, holding variables constant.

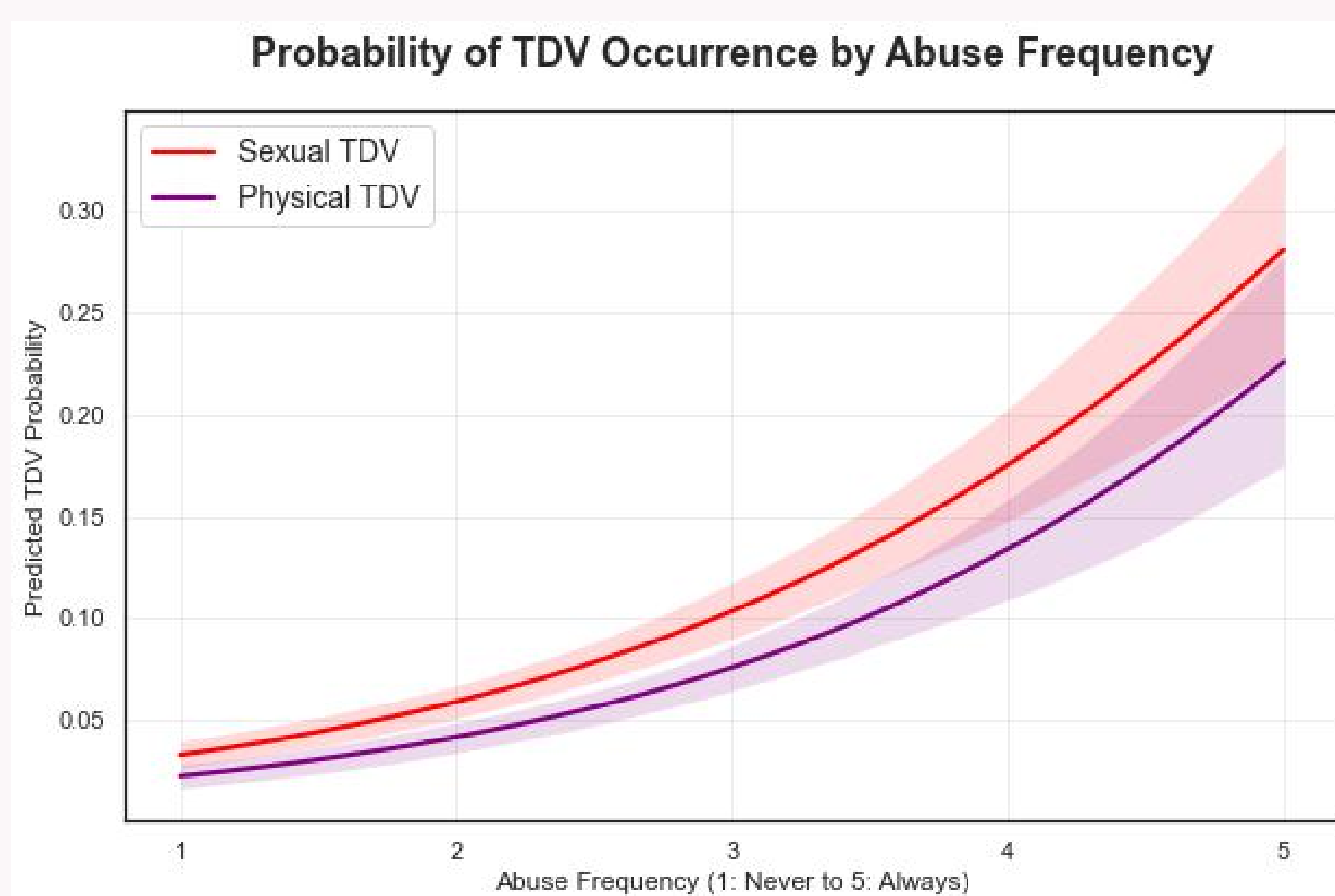


Figure 1: Line graph depicting that instances of sexual and physical TDV increase as the frequency of abuse increases.

Multivariate

- There is a significant positive association between sexual TDV and child abuse with gender ($p < .001$), holding variables constant. Females have the odds of experiencing sexual TDV 4.5 times higher than males, holding all other variables fixed.
- Additionally, the relationship between sexual TDV and child abuse is significantly moderated by gender ($p = 0.001$). The frequency of abuse has a stronger interaction with male students than female students ($B = 0.92$, $p < 0.001$) (Fig. 2).
- Physical TDV and child abuse are not significantly associated with gender, after controlling for age, abuse frequency, and race ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, no moderating effect is observed (Fig. 3).
- Students with a racial background of Black or African American were significantly associated with sexual TDV and abuse (O.R. = 0.4, $p = 0.015$), once holding all variables fixed.

Discussion

- Rates of physical and sexual TDV victimization increase in association with the frequency of abuse.
- The association between frequency of child abuse and sexual TDV victimization is stronger for male students than for female students, despite female students overall experiencing higher rates of sexual TDV (see Fig. 2). The relationship between physical TDV and abuse is not significantly associated with gender (see Fig. 3); only a direct relationship between abuse and physical TDV exists.
- Further research is needed with a different dataset than the 2021 ABES, as the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted abuse frequencies and teenage relationships. In addition, research should be conducted on racial differences and control for other demographics not in the dataset, such as income or sexuality.
- TDV prevention programs may consider how gender and frequency of abuse impact TDV rates to educate and protect the youth generation.

Research Questions

- What is the association between physical and sexual TDV and child abuse?
- Does the association between physical and sexual TDV and child abuse differ by gender in the United States?

Methods

Sample:

- The 2021 Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey (ABES) is a nationally representative sample of 7,705 United States high school students during the COVID pandemic, collecting information on students' health and behaviors. A subset of students (grades 9-12) who reported experiencing physical or sexual TDV in the past year ($n = 3802$) was drawn from the 2021 ABES.

Measures:

- For each student in the sample, it is recorded if the student has experienced physical or sexual TDV in the past year and if that student was a male or female. Additionally, a variable measuring frequency of child abuse in the past year was created that combined the rate of occurrence of verbal and physical abuse on a five-point scale, from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

Sexual TDV Rates and Abuse Frequency By Gender

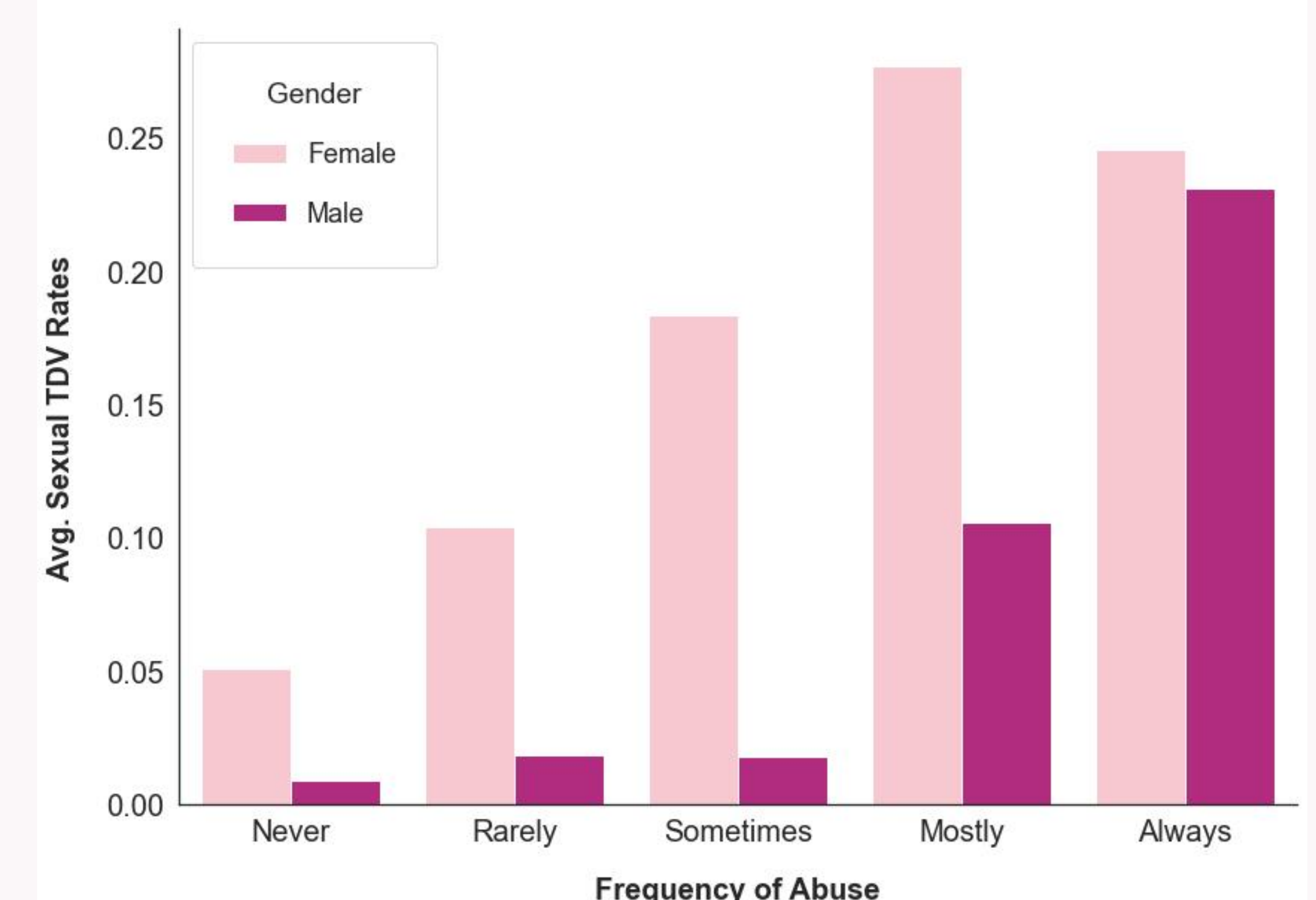


Figure 2: Bar graph depicting the difference in the average rate of sexual TDV in male versus female students for the frequency of abuse.

Physical TDV Rates and Abuse Frequency By Gender

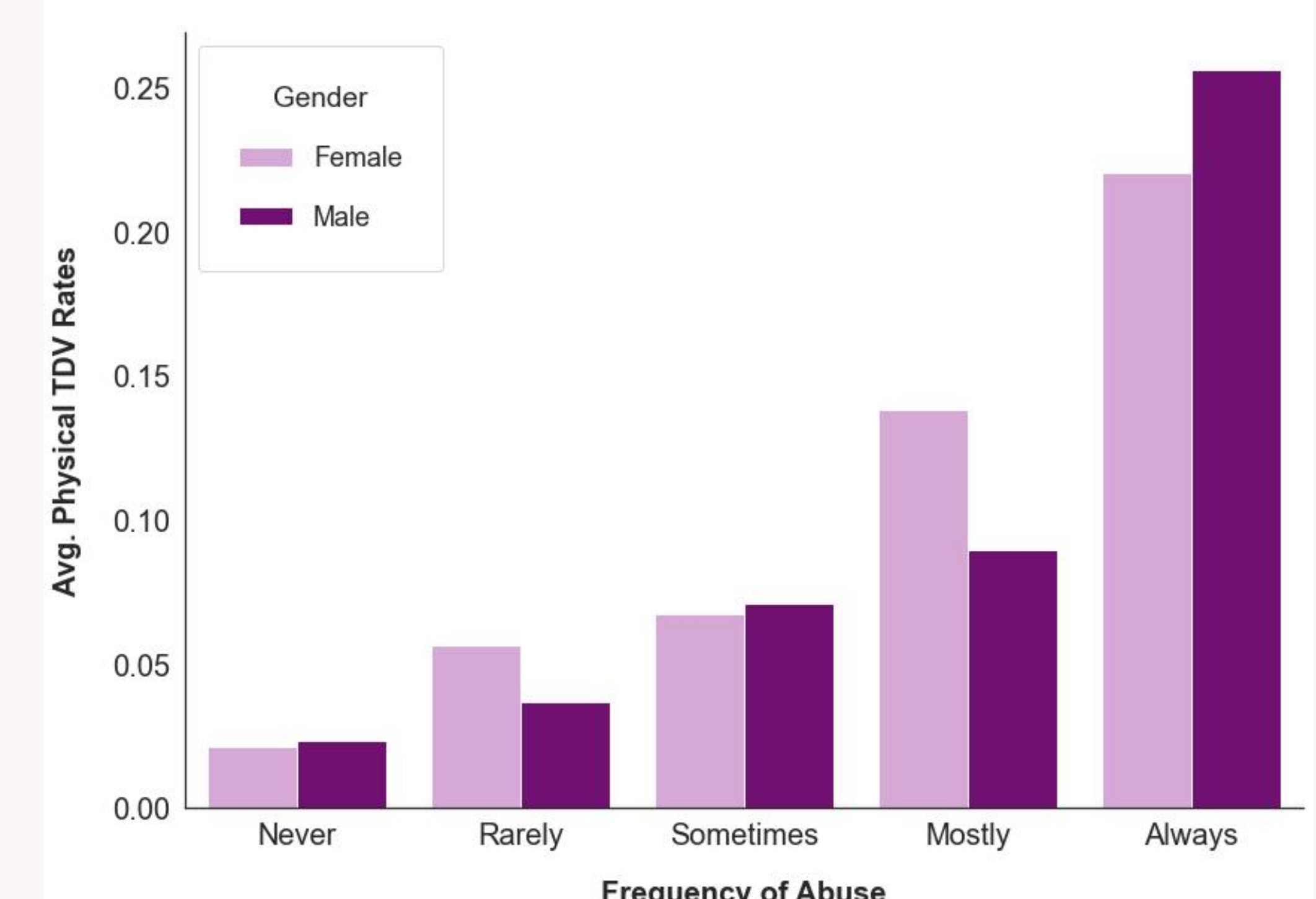


Figure 3: Bar graph depicting the average rate of Physical TDV in male vs. female students for the frequency of abuse.

References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025, January 14). Teen dating violence. <https://www.cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence/about/about-teen-dating-violence.html>
- Emanuel, S. K., Toews, M. L., Spencer, C. M., & Anders, K. M. (2022). Family-of-origin factors and physical teen dating violence victimization and perpetration: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 31(7), 1957–1967. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-021-02221-w>