



The Association between Perceived Parental Care and Violent Tendencies among Adolescents

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Introduction

- When a child displays violent behavior, it is always cause for concern; ultimately, however, this behavior is often dismissed by family and friends hoping an individual will "grow out of it."
- Violent tendencies in adolescents include a wide range of behaviors including physical aggression, temper tantrums, and attempts or thoughts of wanting to hurt others (1).
- One factor often studied to help understand a possible increased risk of violent behavior in adolescents is being the victim of emotional, psychological abuse in the home (1).
- Globally, it is estimated that up to 1 billion children (aged between 2-17 years of age) experience physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect in 2016 (2).

Research Questions

- Is the association between perceived parental care and violent behavior tendencies (VBT) among adolescents significant?
- Does the association between perceived parental care and violent behavior tendencies (VBT) differ between the gender of the parent (perceived maternal vs. perceived paternal care)?
- Does the association between perceived parental care and VBT differ between the gender of the child (male vs. female)?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=6504) were drawn from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (AddHealth) Wave 1, a nationally representative sample of U.S. adolescents from grades 7 through 12 during the September 1994 – December 1995 school year.

Measures

- Perceived maternal and paternal care were assessed using the questions:
 - "How much do you think she [maternal figure] cares about you?"
 - "How much do you think he [paternal figure] cares about you?"
- The explanatory maternal and paternal care variables were coded in a categorical 1 to 5 scale in which 1 represents "not at all [care]" and 5 represents "very much [care]."
- Violent behavior tendency was measured with a 2-question series:
 - "Have you gotten into a physical altercation?"
 - "Have you shot or stabbed someone?"
- I coded every response as 0 or 1, in which 0 is "never been in a physical fight" and "never shot/stabbed someone" and 1 is "been in a physical fight" or "shot/stabbed someone" once or more.

Results

Univariate

- 0.23% of adolescents perceive "not at all" maternal and paternal care.
- 84.625% of adolescents perceive "very much" maternal care.
- 57.688% of adolescents perceive "very much" paternal care.

Bivariate

- A Pearson's Chi-Squared Test showed that **perceived maternal care** was significantly associated with **violent behavior tendencies in adolescents** (X-squared=13.863, p=0.008).
- Chi-squared analysis showed that there is also a significant association between **perceived paternal care** and **violent behavior tendencies in adolescents** (X-squared=35.483, p<0.001).

Figure 1. Perceived Maternal Care and Violent Behavior Tendencies

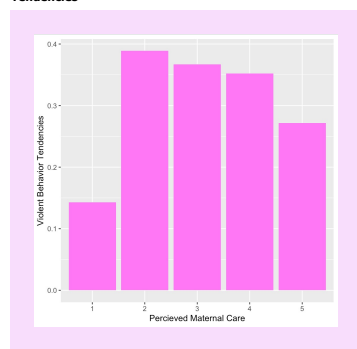
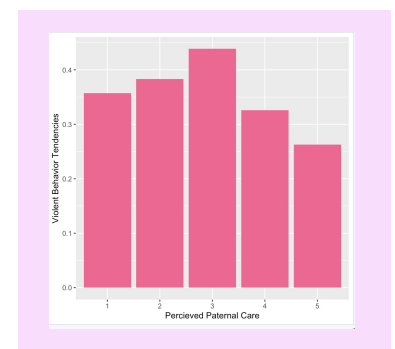


Figure 2. Perceived Paternal Care and Violent Behavior Tendencies



- Bivariate graphing shows that adolescents who perceived "very little" maternal care (2 on x-axis) and "somewhat" paternal care (3 on x-axis) were more likely to display violent behaviors (Figures 1 and 2).

Multivariate

Figure 3. Beliefs About Perceived Maternal Care vs Violent Behavior Tendencies by Gender

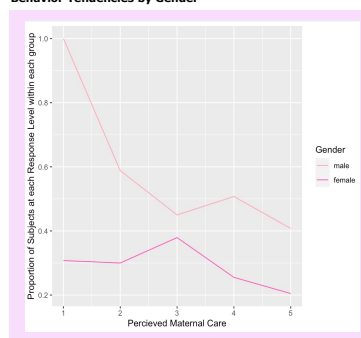
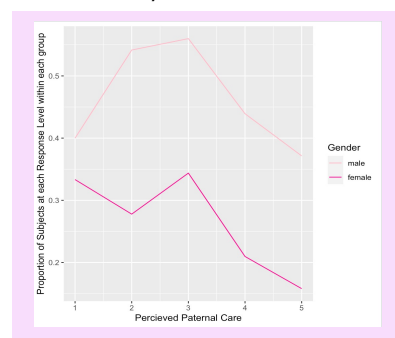


Figure 4. Beliefs About Perceived Paternal Care vs Violent Behavior Tendencies by Gender



- Gender appears to moderate the relationship between perceived parental care and violent behavior tendencies (Figures 3 and 4).
- In males, there seems to be a decline in VBT for perceived maternal care.
- In females, there seems to be a decline in VBT for perceived paternal care.
- After controlling for gender, it seems the gender of the adolescent has a negative, declined VBT effect for the opposite gendered parental type.

Discussion

- It is understood that perceived parental care affects maladaptive behaviors and possible negative trait dispositions in adolescent individuals.
- If adolescents with perceived parental rejection are more sensitive to violent tendencies or behaviors, they would represent an important population subgroup for incarceration programs, child development studies, and therapies.
- Gaining reception in this field of study will allow for the general population to take violent behavior in children more seriously and understand that parental rejection/acceptance has the potential to affect the well-being, emotional security, and overall safety of adolescents.