

P-270 - COGNITIVE SCHEMAS AS MEDIATORS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IN MALTREATED ADOLESCENTS

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Introduction: Child and adolescent maltreatment is a severe problem which causes many psychological problems in them. Of these problems, aggressive behavior is probably the best documented, and there are many studies that report higher prevalence of diverse types of aggressive behavior among adolescents who were maltreated.

Objective: To clarify the mechanisms through which exposure to violence leads to aggressive behavior in adolescents who were the victims of abuse and neglect.

Aim: To test whether cognitive schemas of justification of violence, expectations of maltreatment, and ideas of grandiosity act as mediators between exposure to violence and aggressive behavior.

Methods: A sample of 166 adolescents from child welfare and protection centers for victims of abuse and neglect completed measures of victimization and witnessing violence at home, schemas of justification of violence, mistrust, and grandiosity, proactive and reactive aggressive behavior, and depression.

Results: Witnessing violence is more intensely associated with aggressive behavior than victimization, and that part of this association is mediated by schemas of justification of violence and grandiosity. Victimization, in contrast, was associated with less aggressive behavior and more depression, through the schema of mistrust. The results were somewhat different in the sample of girls because victimization in girls was associated with more aggressive behavior and, in general, exposure to violence was more intensely associated with aggressive behavior.

Conclusions: This study contributes to our understanding of the mechanisms through which transmission of violence takes place in maltreated adolescents. The contents of the schemas involved are themselves targets of intervention.