2018

Violent Video Gaming, Parent and Child Risk Factors, and Aggression in School-Age Children

Erin Romanchych

romanch@uwindsor.ca

Recommended Citation

Romanchych, E. (2018). Violent Video Gaming, Parent and Child Risk Factors, and Aggression in School-Age Children. Retrieved from https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/research-result-summaries/48

The present study examined links between children's violent video game exposure and aggression, and the influence of parent and child risk factors (i.e., children's negative affect and hostile attribution bias, parental monitoring, and children's gender). Participants were 122 Canadian parent-child dyads including children between 7 and 10 years of age who completed pencil-and-paper questionnaires. Parents' perceptions about children's video gaming and links with aggression were also explored during semi-structured interviews with 15 of the parents. The analyses revealed that higher levels of parent-reported children's violent video game exposure predicted higher levels of aggression. In addition, higher levels of children's negative affect predicted higher levels of children's aggression. Children's negative affect was found to mediate the relation between children's violent video game exposure (parent report) and aggression, such that higher levels of children's violent video game exposure indirectly related to higher levels of children's aggression, through higher levels of negative affect. In terms of parental monitoring, higher levels of children's violent video game exposure were related to higher levels of parental involvement and communication. None of the parental monitoring variables (i.e., parental involvement, limit setting, and communication) were related to children's aggression. Results from the thematic analysis of the interview data supported these findings. Parents believed that exposure to children's violent video games would increase their risk of engaging in real world violence and imitating aggressive or violent behaviours from the video games. Parents also reported that children experienced negative reactions, such as aggression, to playing video games -- including violent video games. Parents thought that children's reactions to playing violent video games varied based on children's temperament, and that children might be at greater risk of experiencing negative reactions if they had certain traits (e.g., overly emotional, angry). In terms of parental monitoring, parents were more likely to monitor children's gaming if parents,

themselves, were interested in gaming or if children were playing games with violent content. Parents were more likely to discuss gaming with their children when children played video games with violent content. Similarly, parents tended to set limits on the content children were exposed to (i.e., violent games); however, most children were exposed to violence in video games. Overall, these findings identify parent and child factors (i.e., children's negative affect, parental involvement and communication) that may mitigate or exacerbate the effects of playing violent video games, which can be useful for education on media use, intervention programs, and directions for future research.