

# Correlation between parental verbal violence behaviour and the aggressiveness of adolescents

## Correlación entre la conducta de violencia verbal parental y la agresividad de los adolescentes

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### SUMMARY

**Introduction:** *The phenomenon of adolescents' aggressive behaviour today has never subsided and even tends to increase. The factors causing the high incidence of quarrels are still unknown, but family quarrels and parental exposure to childhood abuse are predictors of aggressiveness among adolescents. This study aimed to examine the relationship between parents' verbal violence behaviour and adolescents' aggressive behaviour.*

**Methods:** *A cross-sectional design was used in this study. A total of 122 high school students were selected as samples through simple random sampling. The variables in this study were verbal violence as an*

*independent variable and adolescent aggressiveness as the dependent variable. Data was measured using a verbal violence questionnaire and an adolescent's aggressiveness questionnaire, which were tested for validity and reliability. The data were then analysed by the Spearman correlation test.*

**Results:** *Verbal violence committed by parents in mild verbal violence was 73.8 %, while as much as 68 % of the aggressive behaviour carried out by subjects was in the mild category. There is a significant correlation between verbal violence behaviour and aggressive behaviour in adolescents ( $p$ -value 0.0001) with  $r$  correlation = 0.510, a correlation with moderate strength.*

**Conclusion:** *Verbal violence by parents leads to more reproachful behaviour every time adolescents make mistakes; this affects the behaviour of adolescents, leading them to become irritable and commit harmful actions such as throwing, kicking, or slamming objects when they become angry. Parental understanding is needed to shift the punishment method positively to suppress the impact of aggressiveness that may appear in adolescents.*

**Keywords:** *Adolescent, aggression, emotional abuse, violence.*

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### RESUMEN

**Introducción:** *El fenómeno de la agresividad de los adolescentes en la actualidad nunca ha disminuido e incluso tiende a incrementarse. Los factores que causan la alta incidencia de peleas aún se desconocen, pero*

*las peleas familiares y la exposición de los padres al abuso infantil son predictores de agresividad entre los adolescentes. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo examinar la relación entre el comportamiento de violencia verbal de los padres y el comportamiento agresivo de los adolescentes.*

**Métodos:** *En este estudio se utilizó un diseño transversal. Se seleccionó como muestra un total de 122 estudiantes de secundaria mediante un muestreo aleatorio simple. Las variables de este estudio fueron la violencia verbal como variable independiente y la agresividad adolescente como variable dependiente. Los datos se midieron mediante un cuestionario de violencia verbal y un cuestionario de agresividad de los adolescentes, cuya validez y fiabilidad se probaron. Luego, los datos se analizaron mediante la prueba de correlación de Spearman.*

**Resultados:** *La violencia verbal cometida por los padres en la violencia verbal leve fue del 73,8 %, mientras que hasta el 68 % de las conductas agresivas realizadas por los sujetos fue en la categoría leve. Existe una correlación significativa entre la conducta de violencia verbal y la conducta agresiva en adolescentes ( $p$ -valor 0,0001) con  $r$  correlación = 0,510, correlación con fuerza moderada.*

**Conclusión:** *La violencia verbal por parte de los padres conduce a conductas más reprobatorias cada vez que los adolescentes cometen errores; esto afecta el comportamiento de los adolescentes, llevándolos a irritarse y cometer acciones dañinas como arrojar, patear o golpear objetos cuando se enojan. Se necesita la comprensión de los padres para cambiar positivamente el método de castigo para suprimir el impacto de la agresividad que puede aparecer en los adolescentes.*

**Palabras clave:** *Adolescente, agresión, abuso emocional, violencia.*

## INTRODUCTION

Exposure to violence has been a widespread social problem in societies worldwide that predicts serious adolescent maladjustment, including aggression (1-4). Aggression is known as a reaction that causes dangerous consequences for others (5,6). Many adolescents are unable to integrate well into society, often accompanied by conflict and personality problems, including increased aggressive behaviour (5,7-10). Adolescents are still widely known to commit acts of fighting between groups and interpersonal quarrels at school and in neighborhoods around their houses. The cause of the high incidence of

altercations is still unknown. Mentions of verbal abuse, family quarrels, and parental exposure to childhood abuse are predictors of physical abuse among adolescents (11,12). Exposure to violence can be physical aggression (such as spanking) and non-physical aggression (such as verbal and relational aggression, name-calling, or the subject of negative speech) (1,13,14).

Adolescents show aggression with their peers to gain recognition. Overall, adolescents were the highest victims of aggression by peers (53.4 %) (1). The aggressiveness can be physical as through spanking, verbal as through name-calling, and relational as through causing social exclusion or property damage that can occur directly or over online media (15,16). Other studies mention there are four forms of aggressive behaviour: physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger aggression, and hateful aggression (17). The percentage of parents who reported verbal abuse and altercations with their children was 56 % (11). The percentage of people who claimed to have witnessed verbal abuse was 68.8 % (18). Based on preliminary studies, 20 students were found to be aggressive in school, for which 40 % of students have fought their peers, 40 % have bullied other children, and 20 % have bullied their friends.

Factors underlying the aggression in children are identifying family members who behave aggressively or violently, a conducive environment for aggression, or the lack of cooperation between schools and parents to overcome child aggression. In addition, internal factors may encourage the development of aggression, such as the ability to regulate emotions (17). Traumatic events in children are also known to occur most often due to having separated caregivers, finding out that someone died, and watching people fight (19).

The attack factor is the most common cause of aggressive behaviour, a disorder that affects others. The frustration factor is the failure to achieve goals, which also creates a motive to be aggressive toward other adolescents. The attack can be carried out by anyone, including the elderly (19,20). It has been mentioned that exposure to individual childhood violence (physical, verbal, and sexual) will negatively impact childhood to adulthood. Parenting behaviour also contributes to the development of negative beliefs (21).

Experiences of childhood abuse, especially from trusted figures such as parents, can result in the development of negative perceptions about oneself and others (21). In Germany, approximately 40 % of adolescents reported physical and verbal victimization by their parents during childhood (22). Violence against children by adults in the family is one of the most invisible forms of child abuse. It occurs in the privacy of domestic life but is also considered an acceptable cultural norm (11). The combination of family violence and forms of victimization has a more severe behavioural impact than on children who only witness family violence (23). Children experiencing violence may negatively affect their cognition, emotion, and behaviour, impacting their future academic performance (24). Children whose parents commit violent and verbal violence will do the same when they become parents themselves (11). The solution to minimizing the occurrence of aggressive behaviour in children is for all parties, parents, and schools, to be responsible in their roles. Early detection of negative manifestations and aggression will enable the implementation of preventive measures, thus correcting and preventing further negative impacts (25).

Knowing the factors and mechanisms that influence aggressive behaviour is known to help to develop interventions to control and reduce the occurrence of aggressive behaviour (26). Effective depression management will also reduce the impact on cognitive dysfunction (21). Parental awareness should be improved concerning the adverse impact of parental aggression in children's early stages of life (1). Parents should also show children more love, affection, and protection and avoid hitting or corporal punishment (11). This study intends to examine the relationship between parental verbal violence behaviour toward adolescents' aggressive behaviour.

## METHODS

### Study Design

The study utilized a design with analytical correlation and a cross-sectional approach. This study examined the correlation between verbal violence and adolescents' aggressiveness.

### Population and Sample

The population in this study was all students in Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia. Sampling was conducted with simple random sampling. Participants needed to meet the inclusion criteria of being 16-18 years old, living with parents, understanding the purpose of this study, and volunteering to participate. From these, 122 participants were selected as the sample. Adolescents' aggressiveness is the dependent variable, and verbal violence is the independent variable. Both were investigated as research variables

### Instruments

Verbal violence indicators are measured according to events experienced by children during the last three months. These are based on various types of verbal violence styles grouped into three categories: disrespect, offensive language, and expressing an intention to harm (27). The three groups of categories were then developed into several types of questions. The utilized instrument for measuring the history of verbal violence behaviour was a questionnaire on verbal violence that contained 11 items and had been modified for the research. Respondents meet the indicator of experiencing verbal violence if they get it within a period of 1-3 times in the last three months (0-point) and more than 3 times in the last three months (1-point). Based on this assessment, the scores obtained are categorized into no verbal violence (score 0), mild verbal violence (scores 1-3), medium verbal violence (scores 4-7), and severe verbal violence (scores 8-11).

The form of adolescents consists of physical and non-physical aggressiveness (28). Physical aggressiveness appears in several actions such as rude behaviour, retaliation, mischievous, and harmful behaviour. Meanwhile, non-physical aggressiveness includes intimidation, catcalling, and sexual harassment. Aggressive behaviour was measured with a questionnaire on aggressive behaviour that contained eight items and had been modified for this research. We determined the value category from the results of the calculation of the aggressiveness questionnaire with a 2-point score (yes=1,

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no=0). There are the non-aggressive categories (score 0), low adolescents' aggressiveness (1-2), moderate aggressiveness (3-5), and high aggressiveness (6-8). Both measuring instruments had been tested for validity and reliability, with the r values of Cronbach's alpha being 0.935 and 0.929, respectively ( $r > 0.404$ ;  $\alpha 0.05$ ).

**Statistical analysis**

Students could participate in the surveys after reading and filling out the consent form. The Spearman rank correlation test was utilized for data analysis with a value of  $\alpha < 0.05$ . Ethical approval (Reference No: 116/EC/KEPK-S2/02/2021) was obtained from the ethics committee of Universitas Muhammadiyah Lamongan.

**RESULTS**

Table 1 showed that the subjects consisted of male and female students, with female students being more dominant in proportion, with 95 subjects (77.9 %). The subjects were 16-18 years old, and the average age was  $16.79 \pm 0.752$  years, with the majority being 17 years old (43.3 %). Subjects were questioned on their parents' characteristics, including their fathers' occupation and parental status. Of 122 subjects, parents were employed as entrepreneurs (64,8 %), and only a small percentage were unemployed (5.7 %). For their parent status, 110 subjects (90.2 %) were fostered by married parents, as both their fathers and mothers, while only 12 subjects (9.8 %) were fostered by single parents, specifically by their fathers.

The verbal appearance of violence made by parents was seen for the duration of the last 3 months. The results showed that the most common form of verbal violence carried out by parents was the form of offensive language. Parents verbally convey words of rebuke, especially when children make mistakes (63.9 %) (Table 2).

Indicators of aggressive behaviour carried out by the subject can be seen in Table 3. The indicators of aggressive behaviour carried out by the subject are dominated by harming behaviour

Table 1  
Demographic Characteristic

Demographic Characteristic	n (%)
Gender	
Male	27 (22.1)
Female	95 (77.9)
Age	$16.79 \pm 0.752$
16 years	44 (36.2)
17 years	53 (43.3)
18 years	25 (20.5)
Parent Occupation Status	
Unemployed	7 (5.7)
Civil servant	10 (8.2)
Entrepreneur	79 (64.8)
Farmer	26 (21.3)
Parent Status	
Single	12 (9.8)
Married	110 (90.2)

Table 2

Indicators of Parental Violence

Verbal Violence of Parents	%	Mean	SD
Disrespect			
Not showing care	20.5	0.20	0.405
Compare with others	25.4	0.25	0.437
Ignoring	4.1	0.02	0.199
Sidestepping	9.8	0.10	0.299
Avoiding	2.5	0.02	0.156
Offensive language			
Speak in a high tone	7.4	0.07	0.262
Accusing	11.5	0.11	0.320
Name-calling	0.0	0.0	0.0
Blaming for a mistake	63.9	0.64	0.482
Shouting at a mistake	54.9	0.55	0.500
Express an intention to harm (Threatening)	14.8	0.15	0.356

(55.7 %), such as easily throwing, kicking, or slamming something when angry.

Based on Table 4, the category of verbal violence history involved verbal violence that subjects experienced from their parents in the last three months; 73.8 % of subjects reported having experienced mild verbal violence. On the other hand, the forms of aggressive behaviour performed by the subjects within the last three months were mostly indicated as mild aggressive

behaviour, by 68,0 %. This shows a significant correlation between verbal violence committed by parents and aggressive behaviour in adolescents, with a value of 0.0001 ( $p < 0.05$ ) and a correlation value of  $(r) = 0.510$ , which shows a positive correlation with moderate correlation strength.

Table 3  
Indicators of Aggressiveness

Aggressiveness of adolescents	%	Mean	SD
<b>Physical</b>			
Rude behavior	44.3	0.44	0.499
Retaliation	27.9	0.28	0.450
Mischievous	9.0	0.09	0.288
Harming behaviour	55.7	0.56	0.499
<b>Non-physical</b>			
Intimidation	0	0	0
Catcalling	11.5	0.11	0.320
Sexual harassment	0	0	0

Table 4

Correlation of Parental Verbal Violence Behavior and Aggressive Behavior

Categories	Mild	Medium
Verbal violence	90 (73.8 %)	32 (26.2 %)
Aggressiveness on adolescents	83 (68.0 %)	39 (32.0 %)

$r = 0.510$ ;  $p$  value 0.0001 ( $p < 0.05$ )

## DISCUSSION

The results showed that most parents of students committed mild verbal violence. The verbal violence that was committed the most was offensive language. Parents blame and yell at the mistakes of adolescents. Previous results also showed that more than students experienced violence perpetrated by parents. The examined forms of verbal violence involved care expressions, intimidation, embarrassment, reproach, ignorance, face-to-face bullying victimization and perpetration, cyberbullying, and relational bullying (29,30). Students who experience such violence are 3.5 times more likely to be perpetrators of violence (31,32). It is

known that external factors such as the influence of culture, parenting patterns, and psychosocial stressors influence parental violence (33). Some psychosocial stressors that can cause verbal violence in children are due to the indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may be job loss, hunger, and loneliness (29). Lockdown conditions and health protocols applied to the pandemic, such as stay-at-home orders and social distancing, give family members more time to interact, leading to microsystem factors that can make families more conflicted. Parents experience stress due to social distancing and the closure of schools and daycare facilities. There was an increase in violence toward children during the pandemic and an increase in verbal violence (34). The results showed that the parents' occupations were dominated by entrepreneurs. The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) period is known to have weakened several business sectors so that it might trigger household stressors. In addition, most of them are female adolescents, who are more required to maintain their morals, so the determination of strict rules can cause friction between parents and children.

Aggressive behaviour in adolescents was dominated by physical aggressiveness, which was a lot of harmful behaviour. The actions taken are generally throwing, kicking, and slamming objects. Early adolescents between 12-15 years of age enter an adaptation phase in which boys and girls begin to be exposed to information and experiences related to a new life stage. While late adolescence, which is between the ages of 16 and 18 years, is a period in which the information previously obtained will be used to build their own identity. In early adolescence, there are more conflict episodes, so the role of the family is very influential in determining adolescents' behaviour. Conflicts between parents and children are more common at this time (35). The family environment is known to play a role in helping adolescents to get better psychological well-being and quiet communication (36). Aggressiveness showed by adolescents as a form of response to various stimuli received. If the stimulus received is negative, it will also be shown with negative behaviour.

The results of this study showed a correlation between parents' verbal violence and the aggressiveness of children in adolescence. This

aggressive behaviour is due to verbal violence that they experience from their parents. This is in line with previous studies that showed that parents' verbal and physical violence and lack of care could lead to increased levels of paranoia in children (37). Early childhood trauma such as violence, neglect, and other harmful events, have a negative effect on early attachment relationships (38). Results of previous studies have shown that giving parenting workshops to parents can reduce the incidence of verbal violence and corporal punishment in children (39). Parents committing verbal violence to children has a bad impact on the children. Childhood trauma can be a contributing factor to adolescent aggressive behaviour. The existence of the family is the dominant environment around children. Indirectly, parents are role models for adolescents to build their behaviour. The main factors of parents, such as parenting, can be investigated further to determine the causes of aggressive behaviour in adolescents.

### CONCLUSION

Verbal violence by parents leads to more reproachful behaviour every time adolescents make mistakes. This would affect the behaviour of adolescents, making them more irritable and prone to commit harmful actions such as throwing, kicking, or slamming objects when they become angry. Therefore, parental understanding is needed to make the punishment more positive to suppress the impact of aggressiveness that may appear in adolescents.

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