Abusive Parenting Behavior and its Relation to Adolescent Violence and Violence Victimization

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to test the concurrent and prospective relations between abusive parenting behavior and adolescent violence and violence victimization. Moreover, this study investigated the changes in adolescent outcomes over time. To test this, data from a longitudinal prospective study was used. Seventh and 8th grade students from seven schools in a mid-sized Swedish city were surveyed on their parents’ abusive behavior (physical child abuse and parent’s angry outbursts) and their potential negative outcomes (bullying, bully victimization, violence and violence victimization). Multiple-regression models revealed that paternal outbursts were predictive of bullying, violence and violence victimization in adolescents one year later. Similarly, being exposed to maternal physical abuse was also related to adolescent violent behavior one year later. The implications of the study and future research are discussed.
Abusive Parenting Behavior and its Relation to Adolescent Violence and Violence Victimization

Physical child abuse was first brought to the publics’ attention when Kempe and his colleagues recognized the problem. This was nearly 50 years ago and since then, the causes and consequences of physical child abuse have been studied (see Malinosky-Rummell & Hansen, 1992). According to Brottsförebyggande Rådet (BRÅ), a national organization on Swedish crime statistics, a total of 11,530 cases of physical child abuse among 0-14 year old children were reported in 2010. These numbers show an extensive increase in physical abuse directed at children, in particular toward younger children (BRÅ, 2011). A recent study on the prevalence of physical child abuse in Sweden revealed that 15.2% of the participating children had been exposed to physical violence by their parents. The findings also showed that this abusive parenting behavior was only reported to the police by 7% of the children (Annerbäck, Wingren, Svedin & Gustafsson, 2010). These findings suggest that physical child abuse is severely underreported and that the official crime statistics presented by BRÅ are significantly lower than the true prevalence of physical child abuse in Sweden. As these numbers suggest, physical child abuse is a serious problem not only in Sweden but in many other countries. For instance, national crime statistics from the USA reported 879000 cases of child abuse or neglect in 2000. Physical child abuse accounted for 19% of these cases (see Runyon, Deblinger, Ryan & Thakkar-Kolar, 2004). Other alarming findings have suggested that 1 in 8 children in the USA experience maltreatment before the age of 18 (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner & Hamky, 2005).

In order to fully understand what these crime statistics and research findings mean, it is important to define the different terms used to describe the different acts of harming children. The prevalence and incidence of violence within home environments can vary greatly depending on the definitions used. There are many terms used to describe violence...
within a home. Family violence is one term used to describe either physical or sexual violence directed at a household member which may result in injuries or even death (see Bartol & Bartol, 2008). When merely studying physical child abuse, one may consider this definition to be rather poor, as family violence is interchangeably used as domestic violence, spouse abuse or intimate partner violence. The definition of family violence is insufficient, as the aforementioned terms are related to partner-to-partner violence, whereas the term family violence does not differentiate between partner violence and violence directed at children. Due to this, this paper will use the term physical child abuse to describe the act where a child below the age of 18 is physically harmed by a parent or caretaker.

Physical child abuse is a form of child maltreatment. Child maltreatment is an umbrella term for all abusive behaviors directed at children and includes aside from physical abuse also; emotional abuse, neglect, family abduction and sexual abuse (Bartol & Bartol, 2008). Of special interest in this study are the constructs of physical child abuse and parent’s angry outbursts. Parent’s angry outburst refers to the act where parents unjustifiably have a verbal outburst due to their child not behaving according to their wishes. This type of abuse may be closely related to emotional abuse. Emotional abuse may be defined as a non-physical act where parents harm their children by impairing their cognitive and psychological health and development (Glaser, 2002).

Several theories have attempted to explain the causes of physical child abuse and emotional abuse. All these theories have their basis in aggression, as they are acts of violence. Violence may be defined as a more serious form of aggression as the outcomes are more severe than in mere aggressive acts (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). What is perceived as aggression may vary across cultures and even among individuals in the same culture. Due to the different perceptions of what aggression is, aggression has become a very hard concept to define. One definition that has been proposed is that any behavior that is related to harming
another individual either physically or psychologically may be considered an act of aggression (Bartol & Bartol, 2008).

A series of different theories have been proposed to describe the development of aggression. One of these theories is the social learning theory which is of special interest to this study. This is as the social learning theory offers an explanation of human aggression which may explain why adolescents who are exposed to abusive parenting behavior later develop violent behaviors themselves.

According to the social learning theory proposed by researchers such as Bandura, aggression is a learned behavior. The main idea of the social learning theory is that humans through observation and experience learn how to act. Based on this belief, social psychologists argue that all behavior, including aggression, is a result of either directly experiencing aggression or observing other individuals behaving aggressively (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). In fact, there is good evidence suggesting that aggression may be a learned behavior. In an observation study, young children between the ages of 3-5 were placed in different groups either observing aggressive or nonaggressive adults. After observing these adults’ behaviors, the children were asked to play. The children who had observed the aggressive adults were much more likely to play in a physically or verbally aggressive manner than those children who had not observed any aggression. Furthermore, boys tended to act more aggressively after observing an aggressive adult male, suggesting that at least for boys, observing same-gender aggression has an impact on later aggression levels (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 2006).

The social learning theory offers a good explanation to why adolescents exposed to violence may themselves act violently. The findings described above do suggest that aggression may be a learned behavior. However, what the social learning theory cannot
explain are those incidences in which an adolescent who has experienced parental physical child abuse is exposed to repeated violence in the form of peer violence. One theory that may explain re-victimization is learned helplessness. Seligman first proposed the idea of learned helplessness as he in a laboratory experiment exposed dogs to electric shocks without the chance of escaping. After continuous exposure to these shocks, the dogs were given the possibility of escape, which they failed to take. Instead, the dogs endured the painful shocks and behaved as if they considered their situation to be helpless. Seligman later argued that similar behaviors and thoughts could be related to human depression (see Auerbach Walker & Browne, 1985). In other words, according to this theory, individuals who have been abused, become so used to their situation that they do not take action to change anything about it and thereby become an easy target of violence. Therefore, this theory offers an explanation to why adolescents who have previously been abused by their parents are re-victimized by their peers.

Research has found that some adolescents are more at risk for developing violent behavior or violence victimization as a result of abusive parenting behavior. This is as physical child abuse has been found to be associated with a number of risk factors. Studies have found that children show an increased risk for experiencing physical child abuse if their parents: are depressed (Berger, 2005; Mammen, Kolko & Pilkonis, 2002), abuse alcohol (Berger, 2005; Ammerman, Kolko, Kirisci & Blackson, 1999) have a low family income (Berger, 2005), have a low socioeconomic status (Coulton, Korbin, & Su, 1999; Drake & Pandey, 1996) and express reactive aggression (Mammen, Kolko & Pilkonis, 2002). Furthermore, it is well documented that families in which domestic violence occurs show an increased likelihood for child maltreatment, including physical child abuse (Chen & Scannapieco, 2006; Cox, Kotch & Everson, 2003; McGuigan & Pratt, 2001; Ross, 1996).
Thus, many individuals who are exposed to one or more of these risk factors experience physical child abuse.

Due to the vast reports of physical child abuse, many researchers have dedicated their research to investigating the consequences of physical child abuse. In general studies have observed that victims of physical abuse show more difficulties than non-abused individuals. When speaking of negative outcomes, researchers most often refer to these as either internalizing or externalizing problems. With internalizing problems, researchers refer to problems related to the internal state and psychological well-being, whereas externalizing problems refer to problem behaviors that are apparent to the observer.

A number of different internalizing problems have been linked to physical child abuse. These include: mental health problems (Fergusson & Linskey, 1997), depression (Johnson et al., 2002; MacMillan, 2001; Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Moylan, Herrenkohl, Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl & Russo, 2010; Mrug & Windle, 2010; Runyon et al., 2004), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD, MacMillan, 2001; Runyon et al., 2004) changes in psychopathology (Kohn Maikovich, Jaffee, Odgers & Gallop, 2008), anxiety (Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Mrug & Windle, 2010; Runyon et al., 2004), and self esteem (Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Thus, physical child abuse can be linked to a variety of different internalizing problems.

Similarly, researchers have associated physical child abuse with a number of different externalizing problems including; substance use problems (Fergusson & Linskey, 1997; MacMillan, 2001; Margolin & Gordis, 2000), alcohol use (Malinosky-Rummell & Hansen, 1993), delinquency (Fergusson & Linskey, 1997; Lansford, Miller-Johnson, Berlin, Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 2007; MacMillan, 2001; Moylan et al., 2010; Runyon et al., 2004), and disciplinary problems (Margolin & Gordis, 2000). In short, being exposed to physical child abuse increase the risks for externalizing problems.
Of special interest to this study is the impact physical child abuse has on its victims in relation to violent behavior and violence victimization. Physical child abuse can be linked to a number of other externalizing problems in relation to violence and violence victimization. These include: aggression (Calvete & Orue, 2011; Johnson et al., 2002; Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Mrug & Windle, 2010; Runyon et al., 2004) general violence (see Malinosky-Rummell & Hansen, 1993) dating violence (MacMillan, 2001, Malinosky-Rummell & Hansen, 1993; Runyon et al., 2004), violence victimization (McIntyre & Spatz Widom, 2011) victim of dating violence (Malinosky-Rummell & Hansen, 1993), peer aggression (Margolin & Gordis, 2000), bullying (Dussich & Maekoya, 2007) bully victimization (Dussich & Maekoya, 2007; Duncan, 1999) and peer rejection (Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Furthermore, it has been found that 30% of those abused as children will themselves expose their children to physical violence in adulthood (see Malinosky-Rummell & Hansen, 1993). Similarly, Dutton and Hart (1992) found that men were three times more likely to be violent if they had been physically abused in childhood (Dutton & Hart, 1992). These two findings are good example of what some researchers refer to as the cycle of violence. According to the cycle of violence, individuals who have been victims of crime are at an increased risk of involving themselves in violent criminal acts in adulthood. Research has supported this theory by showing that childhood victims of crime are more likely than non-victims to engage in criminal behavior (Widom, 1996) such as physical child abuse.

There is little doubt that physical child abuse has negative consequences for the victim. Another construct of interest in this research is parent’s angry outbursts. As described earlier, parent’s angry outburst is referred to as a parent’s aggressive reaction when his or her child has done something they do not approve of. With aggressive reaction, a non-physical outburst is meant, such as uncontrolled yelling. Parent’s angry outburst can be considered a milder form of child abuse but may serve as an aspect and a marker for emotional abuse. As
previously described, emotional abuse can be defined as a non-physical act where parents harm their children by impairing their cognitive and psychological health and development (Glaser, 2002).

As with physical child abuse, there are certain factors which have been associated with an increased risk for emotional abuse. Similar to physical child abuse, emotional abuse often co-occur with domestic violence (McGuigan & Pratt, 2001; Tajima, 2000, 2002). Although domestic violence has been found to be a good predictor for emotional abuse of children, marital verbal aggression has been found to be an even better predictor (Tajima, 2000).

Research investigating the consequences of emotional abuse have demonstrated a number of internalizing and externalizing problems. Emotional abuse has been found to be a predictor for internalizing problems such as; lower self esteem (Solomon & Serres, 1999), anxiety, depression, PTSD (Spertus, Yehuda, Wong, Halligan, & Seremetis, 2003) and suicide (Locke & Newcomb, 2005). On the other hand, emotional abuse has also been found to be related to externalizing problems such as: maladjustment (Moore & Pepler, 2006; de Zoysa, Newcombe, Rajapakse, 2010), tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug use (Moran, Vuchinich & Hall, 2004), bully victimization (Duncan, 1999; Fosse & Holen, 2002), bullying peers (Espelage & Swearer, 2003), and violence in terms of victim and perpetrator of dating violence (Wekerle et al., 2009). Thus, being exposed to emotional abuse increase the likelihood for a variety of different internalizing and externalizing problems.

As can be seen, physical child abuse and emotional abuse share many similar internalizing and externalizing negative outcomes. A strong relationship between physical child abuse and emotional abuse has been found, suggesting that these types of abuse often co-occur in abusive families (see Miller-Perrin, Perrin & Kocur, 2009). In fact, it has been found that children often experience more than one type of abuse simultaneously (Dong et al., 2004).
As has been shown above, there are many studies demonstrating both internalizing and externalizing problems as a consequence of physical child abuse and emotional abuse. However, there are a number of gaps and limitations in the literature related to these types of abuse. This is as, although many researchers have chosen to investigate physical child abuse using a longitudinal method, these have most often only investigated the prospective outcomes. This means that many studies investigating physical child abuse have investigated physical child abuse merely in terms of its longitudinal negative outcomes, leaving out the concurrent relation between physical child abuse and adolescent outcomes. Furthermore, many previous studies have not differentiated between paternal and maternal physical abuse, and they have therefore not been able to test the possible different adolescent outcomes. Moreover, most studies fail to report the changes in adolescent outcomes when conducting a longitudinal prospective study. The current study, on the other hand, investigated maternal and paternal physical child abuse and its relation to the concurrent and prospective adolescent outcomes as well as the changes in outcomes over time.

Moreover, as described earlier, to date, there are no studies investigating parent’s angry outbursts and its possible negative outcomes on its victims. Although parent’s angry outburst may be similar to emotional abuse and psychological aggression, these types of abuse may still be experienced very differently. Due to this, the investigation on adolescents exposed to parent’s angry outbursts may reveal very different negative outcomes as those observed for emotional abuse.

In order to address the aforementioned gaps and limitations in the literature, the current research aims to investigate the relation between physical child abuse and adolescent outcomes in terms of violence and violence victimization. To further expand the current research, the current study also examines whether parents’ angry outburst is related to youths’ violence and violence victimization. Considering the family as a whole, the role of both
parents’ and mothers’ behaviors on youth outcomes were examined simultaneously. Finally, to provide a complete understanding of the relations, the current study tested the research questions in three steps. First, we tested the concurrent relationships to identify the unique effects of parents’ behaviors on youth outcomes. Second, we tested the prospective effects of parents’ behaviors to understand whether the effects endure one year after the report of the youths’ experiences of abuse. Third, we also examined the relations longitudinally to understand whether parents’ behaviors are related to changes in youths’ outcomes over time.

**Method**

**Participants**

The sample of the current study is based on a longitudinal study which was conducted on 7th to 9th grade students living in a medium-sized city in central Sweden. In order to represent the overall socio-demographic characteristics of the local population, seven schools were chosen from different parts of the city. The longitudinal school project took place over a four year period, where students were surveyed each year during spring. The current study is based on the data collected in the last two waves of the study, which will be referred to as T1 and T2. At T1 the study included 1025 7th and 8th grade students, including 527 boys (51.4%) and 498 (48.6%) girls. The sample varied in ages from 12 to 16 (M = 13.9, SD = 0.71). A total of 114 adolescents (11.1%) showed missing values from T1 to T2. The majority of adolescents lived with parents who were married, (62.5%) of Swedish/Nordic origin (60.4%) and employed (Father: 88.3 %, Mother: 79.1 %). Furthermore, subjective reports indicated that most adolescents considered their family finances to be equal to most other families (62.5%).
Measures

**Abusive parenting behavior**

*Physical abuse.* Physical abuse was assessed using six items. These items separately assessed maternal and paternal physical abuse during the past semester. The items were formulated as following: Think about the past semester. Has the following happened? Has your mother/father: “Thrown things at you”, “Pushed, grabbed or shaken you hard?”, “Hit or slapped you”, “Kicked, bit, or punched you with their fists?” “Hit you with an object?” “Given you a beating?” The items were coded as 1=Never, 2= Sometimes, 3= Many times. These six items yielded good inter-item reliability coefficients ($\alpha = .87$ for mothers, $\alpha = .86$ for fathers).

*Parent’s angry outbursts.* Parent’s angry outbursts was assessed using five items. These items separately assessed maternal and paternal outbursts during the past semester. The items were formulated as following: How do your parents react when you’ve done something that they really don’t like? “Becomes very angry and has an outburst”, “Has an outburst of anger and yells at you”, “Has a hard time controlling his/her frustration”, “Argues and complains in a loud voice”, “Shouts and argues with you”. The items were coded as 1=Never, 2= Sometimes, 3= Most often. Good inter-item reliability coefficients were generated by these five items ($\alpha = .88$ for mothers, $\alpha = .87$ for fathers).

**Adolescent outcomes**

Adolescents’ victimization and violent behaviors were measured by two variables each. Bullying and bully victimization represented the experiences primarily within and around the school context, whereas violence and victim of violence represented experiences during free time.
**Bullying.** Bullying was assessed using four items. Every item assessed verbal, physical, ostracizing or racial discrimination types of bullying respectively taking place either at school or to and from school. The items were formulated as following: “Have you said nasty things, mocked or teased anyone in an unpleasant way at school (this semester)?” “Have you beaten, kicked, or assaulted anyone in an unpleasant way at school or on the way to or from school (this semester)?” “Have you participated in ostracizing someone (this semester)?” “Have you said nasty things to anyone at school, only because that person was an immigrant (this semester)?” The items were coded as 1=No, it has not happened, 2= Yes, it has happened once or twice, 3= Yes, it has happened about once a week, 4= Yes, it has happened several times a week. Moderate inter-item reliability coefficients were yielded by these four items (α = .58 for T1, α = .76 for T2).

**Violence during free time.** Violent behavior was assessed using four items. Every item included violent behavior related to assault, physical violence, threats using a weapon or threats to rob someone during free time in the ongoing semester. The items were formulated as following: “Have you attacked others without them threatening or attacking you or your friends (this semester)?” “Have you carried weapons during free time (even as self-defense) (this semester)?” “Have you kicked someone lying down or kicked his/her head (this semester)?” “Have you taken part in threatening or making someone give you money, cell phone, cigarettes, or something else (this semester)?” The items were coded as 1=No, it has not happened, 2= Yes, it has happened once, 3= Yes, it has happened 2-3 times, 4= Yes, it has happened 4 or more times. Good inter-item reliability coefficients were generated by these four items (α = .72 for T1, α = .84 for T2).

**Victim of bullying.** Victim of bullying was assessed using three items. Every item assessed verbal, physical or ostracizing bullying respectively and was concerned with being exposed to bullying either at school or on the way to or from school. The items were
formulated as following: “Have you been mocked, teased in an unpleasant way, or has anyone said nasty things to you at school or on the way to or from school (this semester)?” “Have you been beaten, kicked, or assaulted in a nasty way by anyone at school or on the way to or from school (this semester)?” “Sometimes one can be ostracized by someone or some people and not be allowed to hang out with them. Has this ever happened to you (this semester)?” The items were coded as 1=No, it has not happened, 2= Yes, it has happened once or twice, 3= Yes, it has happened about once a week, 4= Yes, it has happened several times a week. These three items generated moderate inter-item reliability coefficients (α = .46 for T1, α = .70 for T2).

Victim of violence during free time.Victim of violence was assessed using four items. Every item assessed violence based on assault, physical violence, threats using weapons or threats to be robbed during free time in the ongoing semester. The items were formulated as following: “Have you experienced other groups of youths attacking you for no reason during free time (this semester)?” “Have you experienced some group or groups of youths kicking you when you were lying on the ground, or kicking your head (this semester)?” “Have you experienced other groups of youths threatening you with weapons of some kind during free time (this semester)?” “Have you been threatened or forced to give money, cell phone, cigarettes, or anything else to other groups of youths (this semester)?” The items were coded as 1=No, it has not happened, 2= Yes, it has happened once, 3= Yes, it has happened 2-3 times, 4= Yes, it has happened 4 or more times. These four items yielded good inter-item reliability coefficients (α = .66 for T1, α = .79 for T2).

Procedure

Prior to conducting the study, authorization from the municipal’s local education authority was sought as well as from the management of each individual school. Both parental
and adolescent consent was required for adolescents to participate in the study. They were informed about their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw from the study whenever they wished to do so. Since the survey was administered during regular school hours, other tasks were made available for those students who declined to participate. The survey was administered by trained research assistants without the presence of their teachers. Prior to data collection, the trained research assistants were informed about those individuals who showed reading difficulties, and individually read the questions out loud to them. After data collection, the participants received a gift in the form of a pen or calculator. In order to increase the sample size, the same procedure was carried out one week later with those students who were absent from school one week prior.

**Analysis**

Multiple-regression analysis was used to test the research questions. Three different multiple-regression models were fitted. These models tested 1) the concurrent relations between abusive parenting behaviors at T1 and adolescent outcomes at T1, 2) the prospective relations between abusive parenting behaviors at T1 and adolescent outcomes at T2, and 3) the changes in adolescent outcomes, whether abusive parenting behaviors were related to changes in outcomes over time. In the concurrent and prospective analyses, age and gender was entered in the first step to control for their effects. For the analysis of change in adolescent outcomes, the outcome variables measured at T1 were entered in the first step, age and gender in the second step and abusive parenting behavior in the third step.

All mother and father behaviors (e.g., angry outburst and parental physical abuse) were included in the same regression models for each outcome variable. The correlations between the predictor variables may cause multicollinearity problem in regression analysis when predictors are highly correlated (Field, 2009). Therefore, separate models were ran
including one predictor at a time and adding others sequentially to examine whether patterns of associations change due to multicollinearity. The highest collinearity index value was 25 and VIF values increased as high as 3.04. These values were observed only when all four main parenting variables (maternal outburst, paternal outburst, maternal physical child abuse and paternal physical child abuse) were included in the same model, and the pattern of associations did not change when all predictors were included in the same model. These analyses suggested that there was no serious effect of multicollinearity. Therefore, in all models, both maternal and paternal outburst and physical violence were entered in the same models for the sake of parsimony.

**Results**

**Adolescent’s Experience of Abusive Parenting Behavior**

The descriptive analysis suggested that 59% of the adolescents had experienced maternal outbursts at least once during the last semester, and about 15% more than once. Similarly, the majority of adolescents experienced paternal outburst at least once during the last semester (25.8% no paternal outburst, 57.9% once, 16.3% more than once). On the other hand, experience of physical abuse was not as common as angry outbursts. Overall, about 13% of the adolescents experienced maternal physical abuse (12.3% once, 1% more than once) and paternal physical abuse (11.6% once, .8% more than once) at least once during the last semester.

Parent’s behavior’s against the youths were moderately correlated (see Table 1) across and within the parents. Specifically, parents who displayed angry outbursts also tended to use physical abuse (r = .26 among mothers, r = .27 among fathers). In a similar vein, mother’s and father’s angry outbursts (r = .55) and physical abuse (r = .78) were positively related.
Table 1. Correlation, means and standard deviations, and inter-item reliability estimates (on the diagonal) of variables.

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<td>.28**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 13.9 1.49 1.56 1.57 1.06 1.06 1.06 1.08 1.07 1.09 1.15 1.13 1.15 1.11
SD .71 .05 .54 .55 .22 .22 .22 .25 .24 .32 .27 .33 .30 .30

* p < .05, ** p < .01

Notes: F refers to “father” and M refers to “mother”. Significant at: *p <0.05, **p <0.01.

Crobach alpha reliability estimates are presented on the diagonal.
Concurrent Relations between Abusive Parenting Behavior and Adolescent Outcomes

In order to test the concurrent relations, adolescent outcomes measured at T1 were regressed on parental behaviors. The overall model explained 10% of the variance in bullying ($R^2 = .10$, $F(6, 826) = 15.11, p < .01$). The results suggested that boys were more likely to bully their peers ($\beta = -.13, p < .01$). Regarding parents behaviors, both higher levels of mothers’ ($\beta = .17, p < .01$) and fathers’ ($\beta = .11, p < .01$) angry outburst were related to higher levels of bullying among adolescents.

Moreover, the overall model accounted for 8% of the variance in violence ($R^2 = .08$, $F(6, 825) = 11.10, p < .01$). A gender difference was observed, where boys showed more violent behavior than girls ($\beta = -.11, p < .01$). Paternal physical abuse was the only abusive parenting behavior which was predictive of higher levels of adolescent violence ($\beta = .18, p < .01$).

Furthermore, the investigation on adolescent violence victimization revealed that 7% of the variance in bully victimization was explained by the overall model ($R^2 = .07$, $F(6, 823) = 9.49, p < .01$). The results suggested that younger adolescents experienced higher levels of bully victimization ($\beta = -.08, p < .05$). Higher levels of bully victimization was only related to previous exposure of maternal outbursts ($\beta = .17, p < .01$).

Moreover, the overall model accounted for 9% of the variance in violence victimization ($R^2 = .09$, $F(6, 826) = 13.13, p < .01$). A gender difference was observed where boys were more often exposed to violence victimization than girls ($\beta = -.10, p < .01$). Only adolescents who experienced maternal outbursts ($\beta = .12, p < .01$) and paternal physical abuse ($\beta = .24, p < .01$) showed higher levels of violence victimization (see Table 2).

Overall, the findings suggested that abusive parenting behaviors predicted immediate adolescent outcomes. Although the predictors for adolescent outcomes varied, at least one
Abusive parenting behavior was related to every adolescent outcome. Overall, boys tended to show higher levels of adolescent outcomes than girls.

Table 2. Standardizes regression coefficients for estimating the concurrent adolescent outcomes from parental behaviors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Bullying</th>
<th>Violence in free time</th>
<th>Bully Victimization</th>
<th>Violence victimization in free time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.08*</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.13**</td>
<td>-.11**</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.10**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>.01**</td>
<td>.02**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01**</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Bullying</th>
<th>Violence in free time</th>
<th>Bully Victimization</th>
<th>Violence victimization in free time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angry outbursts-M</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry outbursts-F</td>
<td>.11**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse-M</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse-F</td>
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<td>.18**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.24**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
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<tr>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Total}}$</td>
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<td>.08**</td>
<td>.07**</td>
<td>.08**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01.

Prospective Relations between Abusive Parenting Behavior and Adolescent Outcomes

In order to test the prospective relations between abusive parenting behavior and adolescent outcomes, adolescent outcomes measured at T2 were regressed on parental behaviors at T1. The overall model explained 8% of the variance in bullying ($R^2 = .08$, $F (6, 741) = 11.35, p < .01$). The results suggested that boys were more likely to bully their peers than girls ($\beta = -.17, p < .01$). Regarding parents behaviors, only paternal outbursts was related to higher levels of bullying one year later ($\beta = .14, p < .01$).

Furthermore, the overall model accounted for 7% of the variance in violence ($R^2 = .07$, $F (6, 738) = 9.84, p < .01$). A gender difference was noted where girls showed more violent behavior than boys ($\beta = -.15, p < .01$). Higher levels of violence was observed in adolescents who had one year earlier been exposed to paternal outbursts ($\beta = .11, p < .05$) and maternal physical abuse ($\beta = .15, p < .05$).
Moreover, 3% of the variance in bully victimization was explained by the overall model ($R^2 = .03, F(6, 741) = 3.71, p < .01$). The findings suggested that girls were more prone to bully victimization than boys ($\beta = -.08, p < .05$). However, no abusive parenting behavior was related to later bully victimization.

The overall model explained 5% of the variance in violence victimization ($R^2 = .05, F(6, 740) = 5.81, p < .01$). A gender difference was observed, where boys showed more violence victimization than girls ($\beta = -.15, p < .01$). Prospective violence victimization was only predicted by paternal outbursts ($\beta = .09, p < .05$, see Table 3).

Overall, the findings suggested a gender difference for violent behavior and violence victimization. Aside from bully victimization, at least one abusive parenting behavior was related to adolescent outcomes one year later.

Table 3. Standardizes regression coefficients for estimating the prospective adolescent outcomes from parental behaviors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bullying</th>
<th>Violence in free time</th>
<th>Bully Victimization</th>
<th>Violence victimization in free time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>-.15**</td>
<td>-.08*</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
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<td>.02**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.02**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry outbursts-M</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry outbursts-F</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse-M</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse-F</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
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<tr>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Total}}$</td>
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<td>.07**</td>
<td>.03**</td>
<td>.04**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.
Analysis of Change in Adolescent Outcomes

In order to assess the changes in adolescent outcomes, adolescent outcomes measured at T1 and adolescent outcomes measured at T2 were regressed on parental behaviors. The overall model explained 19% of the variance in bullying ($R^2 = .19$, $F(7, 739) = 25.06$, $p < .01$). The findings suggested that boys increased their levels of bullying over time ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .01$). Regarding parents behaviors, only youths whose fathers’ displayed angry outburst were increasing in bullying over time ($\beta = .11$, $p < .01$).

Furthermore, the overall model accounted for 22% of the variance in violence ($R^2 = .22$, $F(7, 735) = 29.94$, $p < .01$). A gender difference was observed as girls showed an increase in violent behavior over time ($\beta = -.09$, $p < .01$). However, no abusive parenting behavior was a predictor for changes in adolescent violent behavior over time.

Moreover, 9% of the variance in bully victimization was explained by the overall model ($R^2 = .09$, $F(7, 736) = 10.63$, $p < .01$). The findings suggested that girls increased in bully victimization during the study period ($\beta = -.07$, $p < .05$). The exposure to abusive parenting behavior did not change bully victimization over time.

The overall model accounted for 14% of the variance in violence victimization ($R^2 = .14$, $F(7, 738) = 17.26$, $p < .01$). The findings suggested that boys showed higher levels of violence victimization over time ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .01$). Adolescents who had been exposed to abusive parenting behaviors did not change in the level of violence victimization over time (see Table 4).

Overall, the findings suggested that adolescent outcomes, predicted by abusive parenting behaviors, did not change over time. Adolescent bullying was an exception, as paternal outbursts were related to increased levels of bullying over time. A clear gender
difference was also observed, as either gender showed increased violent behavior or violence victimization over time.

Table 4. Standardizes regression coefficients for estimating the change in adolescent outcomes from parental behaviors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Bullying</th>
<th>Violence in free time</th>
<th>Bully Victimization</th>
<th>Violence victimization in free time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>.40**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.33**</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.12**</td>
<td>-.09**</td>
<td>-.07*</td>
<td>-.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2_{Change}$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Angry outbursts-M</td>
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<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry outbursts-F</td>
<td>.11**</td>
<td>.08</td>
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<td>.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical abuse-M</td>
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<td>.09</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical abuse-F</td>
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<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2_{Change}$</td>
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<td>$R^2_{Total}$</td>
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<td>.10</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether abusive parenting behaviors predict adolescent violence and violence victimization. Although the prospective and concurrent relations varied, overall adolescent outcomes were predicted by at least one abusive parenting behavior.

Three aims were put forward to test the relations between abusive parenting behavior and adolescent violent behavior and violence victimization. First, this study was interested in the concurrent relations between abusive parenting behavior and adolescent outcomes.
Second, this study investigated the prospective relations between abusive parenting behavior and adolescent outcomes. Last, the changes in adolescent outcomes over time were assessed.

Regarding the first aim, examining the relation between abusive parenting behaviors and adolescent violent behaviors, moderate consistency was found across the change, prospective and concurrent relations between parent behaviors and bullying. Paternal outbursts were related to increases in bullying over one year as well as the level of bullying concurrently. Moreover, concurrent bullying was also predicted by maternal outbursts. These findings indicate that the exposure to paternal outbursts influence adolescents more strongly than being exposed to maternal outbursts. This is as paternal outbursts were linked to longer lasting adolescent bullying behavior which increased over time. The increase in bullying in relation to parental outburst suggests father’s parenting behaviors may influence changes in adolescent’s behaviors prospectively. The aforementioned findings are consistent with previous findings suggesting that emotional abuse is linked to later adolescent bullying (see Espelage & Swearer, 2003). However, no support could be found for previous findings suggesting physical child abuse to predict later adolescent bullying (Dussich & Maekoya, 2007).

Moreover, the findings on adolescent violent behavior did not suggest any changes over time. Paternal outbursts and maternal physical abuse predicted adolescent’s engagement in violent behavior one year later. On the other hand, paternal physical abuse was related to adolescent’s immediate involvement in violent behavior. These findings suggest that exposure to paternal outbursts and maternal physical abuse impacts adolescents one year after exposure, whereas the exposure to paternal physical abuse shows immediate violent behavior in adolescents.
These findings are consistent with previous findings suggesting that physical child abuse (see Malinosky-Rummell & Hansen, 1993) and emotional abuse (Wekerle et al., 2009) predict later adolescent violent behavior. However, it must be noted that few studies have differentiated between maternal and paternal physical child abuse when investigating their relation to adolescent outcomes. Hence, differentiating between maternal and paternal physical child abuse was found to be of importance as only maternal physical child abuse could be linked to later adolescent violence.

The findings described above suggest a link between parental violence exposure and later adolescent violent behavior. The findings give further support for the social learning theory as adolescents seemed to imitate their parents’ abusive behaviors. In other words, exposure to parental outbursts predicted adolescent bullying whereas maternal physical abuse predicted adolescent violent behavior. Furthermore, the findings also indicated a relation between paternal outbursts and later adolescent violence. This may suggest that exposure and imitation of verbal violence escalates to adolescent physical violence. Further support was also found for the notion of same-gender imitation (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 2006). This is as boys showed higher levels of bullying after exposure to paternal outbursts and girls showed higher levels of violence after exposure to maternal physical abuse.

Another aim of this study was to test the relations between abusive parenting behavior and adolescent violence victimization. The findings suggested that bully victimization did not change throughout the study period. Moreover, no abusive parenting behavior could predict bully victimization one year later. On the other hand, maternal outburst was related to immediate bully victimization. These findings suggest that the exposure to maternal outbursts is only predictive of immediate bully victimization, whereas no abusive parenting behavior could be linked to later violence victimization. The aforementioned findings differed from previous findings as these have found physical child abuse (Duncan, 1999; Dussich &
Maekoya, 2007) and emotional abuse (Duncan, 1999; Fosse & Holen, 2002) to be predictors of later adolescent bully victimization.

Similarly as for the findings on bully victimization, there was no change observed in adolescent violence victimization over time. Adolescent who were exposed to paternal outbursts experienced violence victimization one year later. On the other hand, maternal outbursts and paternal physical abuse were related to concurrent violence victimization. These findings imply that the exposure to paternal outbursts impacts adolescents one year later compared to being exposed to maternal outbursts and paternal physical abuse which results in immediate adolescent violence victimization. These findings are partially supported by the literature. This is as parental outbursts much like emotional abuse (Wekerle et al., 2009) predicted later violence victimization but parental physical child abuse (McIntyre & Spatz Widom, 2011) did not as previously observed.

Since the exposure to abusive parenting behavior predicted adolescents’ re-victimization outside of their homes, these findings may be explained by learned helplessness. As described earlier, Seligman found dogs to act helpless after repeated exposure to shocks which he later compared to human aggression (see Auerbach Walker & Browne, 1985). The notion of learned helplessness can also be applied for the youths in this study. As parental outbursts predicted violence victimization, these findings suggest that adolescents become so helpless in their role as a victim that their victimization escalates into physical peer violence. Hence, their helplessness as a victim makes them an easy target for repeated violence victimization.

Considerably different findings were observed in this study compared to previous observations. One reason why this occurred may be due to the way the predictors and outcome constructs were measured. The current study was based on data collected from a
longitudinal school project investigating many different areas of adolescent lives. Since the constructs investigated in this study were only a small part of the original study, only a few items measured each construct. Therefore, other behaviors related to these constructs may not have been included among the items. Utilizing comprehensive measures may have revealed different patterns of associations. Furthermore, since the previous literature is not based on Swedish research, societal and cultural differences may also account for the different results observed in this study. Societal and cultural differences may be observed when comparing the current findings to American findings. This is as American families generally have considerably different egalitarian family structures compared to Swedish families and as a potential consequence of this American studies show lower paternal participation rate.

Despite the explanations to why different findings were observed in this study, a methodological limitation was noted as only adolescents were used as informants. The use of multiple informants to assess the relation between abusive parenting behavior and adolescent’s outcomes is still rather rare. However, its importance has been reflected in previous study findings which have repeatedly shown different reports from different informants (Lewis et al., 2010; Litrownik, Newton, Hunter, English & Everson, 2003; Sternberg, Lamb, Guterman, Abbott, 2006). These findings suggest that each informant capture information which they are most sensitive to which thereby highlight the importance of using multiple informants. Therefore, the current study could have been improved if, for instance, teacher and caretaker reports had been included. Furthermore, since a non-normal distribution of the measures was used, the effects may be lower than actually observed in this study. Another problem that cannot be excluded is the possibility that other alternative factors may be predictors for the outcome constructs investigated in this study.

However, this study had a number of strengths. First, the aims of this research enabled it to investigate the outcomes of abusive parenting behavior in terms of its concurrent and
prospective findings as well as the changes in outcomes over time. This was a great advantage over many other studies which most often merely report the longitudinal outcomes of abusive parenting behaviors. Second, this study was able to demonstrate the relation between parent’s angry outburst and adolescent outcomes. As no research has ever been conducted on this abusive parenting behavior, the findings observed in this study are of crucial importance. Third, this study differentiated between maternal and paternal abusive behavior which made it possible to observe how each abusive parent predicted adolescent outcomes.

Last, this study made use of a large sample which according to subjective reports did not differ from other families in terms of finances, parental employment and parental divorce. Although these factors were not controlled in the analysis, it may be claimed that the participants used in this study did not differ from the general population. Since a good sample was used, the findings observed in this study may be generalized to the broader Swedish population of same-aged adolescents.

The observations made in this study have implications for parents, teachers and prevention practices. First, teachers need to be informed about the negative outcomes of abusive parenting behavior in order to identify adolescent who may experience abuse within the home. Second, prevention practices are needed to reduce other externalizing and internalizing problems associated with violence and violence victimization. Last, prevention practices also need to work with at-risk families in order to teach them proper child-rearing skills.

Alarmingly many adolescents reported parental outbursts in this study. Since the relation between this abusive parenting behavior and adolescent outcomes was tested for the first time, we now have a better understanding of its relation to violent behavior and violence
victimization. However, there is still little known and much more to be learned about this abusive parenting behavior. Future research should therefore continue the investigation of parental outbursts and its relation to other harmful adolescent outcomes.

Many adolescents all over the world experience abuse in their homes. With the lack of protective factors, these adolescents are at an increased risk of being re-victimized or becoming perpetrators themselves. It is therefore crucial to improve and develop new prevention strategies in order to break the cycle of violence and to increase each individual’s chance of living up to their full potential.
References


