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Article

From Childhood Victimization to Child-To-Parent Violence: The Proactive and Reactive Violence Patterns as Mediators and Moral Disengagement as Moderator

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ABSTRACT

Antecedents/objectives: Childhood victimization is a risk factor for child-to-parent violence, which can have a proactive or reactive nature. Some social-cognitive variables may be involved in this relationship, which has been scarcely explored. The objectives of this study were: 1) to explore the mediating role of the proactive/reactive violence patterns in the relationship between childhood victimization in different contexts and child-to-parent violence; 2) to examine whether these relationships vary as a function of moral disengagement. **Method:** The sample consisted of 1,011 Chilean adolescents (56.2% girls). The instruments included the Child-to-Parent Violence Questionnaire, the Violence Exposure Scale, the Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire and the Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement Scale. **Results:** Childhood victimization at home was directly associated with child-to-parent violence and indirectly and more strongly related through the proactive and reactive violence pattern. Childhood victimization outside home was associated only indirectly with child-to-parent violence through the violence patterns. Moral disengagement moderated this mediational path. **Conclusions:** The findings highlight the strength of the violence exposure at home as a risk factor and the need to intervene in family contexts of violence to prevent child-to-parent violence, examining the proactive or reactive nature of violence and to address mechanisms of moral disengagement in interventions.

De la Victimización Infantil a la Violencia Filio-Parental: Los Patrones de Violencia Proactiva y Reactiva como Mediadores y la Desconexión Moral como Moderador

Palabras clave:
Violencia juvenil
Exposición a la violencia
Jóvenes chilenos
Factores de riesgo
Variables socio-cognitivas

RESUMEN

Antecedentes/objetivos: La victimización infantil es un factor de riesgo para la violencia filio-parental, que puede tener una naturaleza proactiva o reactiva. Algunas variables sociocognitivas están involucradas en esta relación, escasamente exploradas. Los objetivos son: 1) Explorar el rol mediador de los patrones de violencia proactiva/reactiva en la relación entre la victimización infantil en diferentes contextos y la violencia filio-parental; 2) Examinar si estas relaciones varían en función de la desconexión moral. **Método:** La muestra incluyó 1.011 adolescentes chilenos (56,2% chicas). Los instrumentos fueron el Cuestionario de Violencia Filio-Parental, Escala de Exposición a la Violencia, Cuestionario de Agresión Reactiva-Proactiva y Escala de Mecanismos de Desconexión Moral. **Resultados:** La victimización infantil en casa estuvo directamente relacionada con la violencia filio-parental e indirecta y más fuertemente relacionada a través de los patrones de violencia. La victimización infantil fuera del hogar solo se relacionó indirectamente con la violencia filio-parental a través de patrones de violencia. La desconexión moral moderó esta mediación. **Conclusiones:** Se destaca la importancia de la exposición a la violencia en casa como factor de riesgo e intervenir en contextos familiares de violencia para prevenir la violencia filio-parental, examinando su naturaleza proactiva o reactiva y la intervención en mecanismos de desconexión moral.

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Introduction

Youth violence is a global problem, as reflected in the large number of studies aimed at clarifying the factors behind the violent behaviors among young people. Adolescents and youngsters exercise violence in various contexts, as for example the school, the street or the family. Regarding youth violence within the family setting, parents are usually the most frequent victims, which is known as child-to-parent violence. Child-to-parent violence (CPV) refers to violence in which children's behavior causes some form of physical, psychological, or financial harm in order to gain power and control over a parent (Cottrell, 2001). Different elements have been added to its conceptualization, such as intentionality, awareness and repetition of violent behavior (Molla-Esparza & Aroca-Montolío, 2018), and isolated incidents or those occurring in a state of reduced consciousness are excluded (Pereira et al., 2017).

In the last decade, rates of CPV have risen dramatically, becoming a significant social problem in some countries. Consequently, this type of violence is currently one of the most prominent research areas and, although it is an internationally recognized phenomenon, most studies have been conducted in Spain, the USA and the United Kingdom (Rogers & Ashworth, 2024), with Spain becoming one of the leading countries in research on this topic (Contreras et al., 2021). Regarding prevalence, studies from North America reported percentages of verbal violence between 8% and 65%, physical violence between 6% and 13% (Margolin & Baucom, 2014; Pagani et al., 2004) and financial violence between 11% and 22% (Margolin & Baucom, 2014). In Europe, percentages of psychological/verbal violence ranged between 8.7 and 14.1% and 1.4 and 8.9% for physical violence (Beckmann, 2020; Calvete & Orue, 2016). Studies from Mexico revealed percentages of physical violence around 1.4% and around 3.5% for psychological violence (Calvete & Veytia, 2018) and, in Chile, psychological violence ranged from 12.6% to 26.8%, physical violence from 0.2% to 4.9%, and financial violence from 10.6% to 12.9% (Ilabaca & Gaete, 2018; Jiménez-García et al., 2022), whereas the percentages of control and domain behaviors was around 20% (Jiménez-García et al., 2022). Numerous studies have examined risk factors for CPV at both the individual, family and social levels (Beckmann, 2020; Cano-Lozano et al., 2020; 2021; Contreras & Cano-Lozano, 2016a; Contreras et al., 2020; Simmons et al., 2018). Notwithstanding, as Burgos-Benavides et al. (2024) noted, research in some countries is still very scarce, especially in Latin American countries such as Chile, where it seems that there is a perception that the issue does not exist, despite the prevalence rates reported in some studies. For this reason, it would be interesting to further investigate CPV in this country beyond its occurrence, exploring key variables associated with the development of this type of violence.

Previous studies have shown that certain variables are particularly relevant in the study of youth violence. One of these variables is the exposure to violence (EV). In general, the literature revealed, consistently, that the EV in different contexts was an important risk factor for the development of violent behavior during childhood, adolescence (Evans et al., 2008; McCabe et al., 2005; Margolin et al., 2010; Mrug et al., 2008; Wilson et al., 2009) and adulthood (Kimber et al., 2018). EV can be direct, when children directly experience the violence, or indirect/vicarious when children witness the violence. In the field of CPV, the influence of EV specifically within the family setting has been one of the approaches gaining momentum and could partially explain this type of violence, as CPV could occur both as a reaction to a previous violent experience or as an acquired response through social learning (Contreras & Cano-Lozano, 2016b). In fact, EV at home is strong predictor of CPV (Gallego et al., 2019). In a recent study with a wide sample of adolescents from a community population, more than half of the adolescents who perpetrate CPV had experienced some type of violence (direct victimization/ witnessing violence) within the family (Navas-Martínez & Cano-Lozano, 2022a). Some previous studies with judicial samples of young offenders have even confirmed the contextualization of violence by showing that adolescents who commit CPV offenses reported higher levels of EV at home than other young offenders, whereas the former group reported higher levels of EV outside home than CPV offenders (Contreras & Cano-Lozano, 2016b; Hernández et al., 2020), being EV at home a predictor of CPV (Contreras & Cano-Lozano, 2016b; Cuervo, 2021). More concretely, in the study by Contreras and Cano-Lozano (2016b) EV at home was a better predictor of CPV than EV outside home, specifically in the community, and EV at school was not even a predictor of this type of violence. Furthermore, although both direct victimization and witnessing violence are related to violence towards parents, the relevant role of direct victimization within the family has been verified (Cano-Lozano et al., 2023), as it has a greater predictive capacity for CPV than witnessing violence (Bautista-Aranda et al., 2023; Beckmann, 2020; Cano-Lozano et al., 2024; Margolin & Baucom, 2014). In this line, in the study by Navas-Martínez and Cano-Lozano (2022b), with a community sample of adolescents, direct victimization at home was a better predictor not only than witnessing violence at home, but also than direct victimization at school. However, very few studies have examined the distant effects of violence exposure on CPV (Bautista-Aranda et al., 2023; Cano-Lozano. et al., 2024), despite literature revealing the impact of childhood victimization on later violent behavior and delinquency (Chang et al., 2021; Widom, 2017), so it is necessary to continue exploring the relationship between early violence victimization and CPV.

Notwithstanding, establishing a simple association between EV and violent behavior would not be appropriate, as not all the children who experience some type of violence will inevitably become potential abusers in the future (Contreras et al., 2020). If children experience violence in the immediate and social environment, they may learn, on the one hand, that it is an appropriate way to deal with conflicts or to get desirable goals and, on the other hand, than others are likely to use violence in their social interactions. Consequently, youth who are exposed to violence might perceive that violence is normative and expected in their environment, particularly if they observe others achieving desirable outcomes (Pittmann, 2023). Then, what is the path from EV towards the development of violent behavior towards parents? Violence, as a complex and multidimensional construct, may be exhibited through heterogenous behaviors, which have different functions and antecedents (Andreu et al., 2009). Based on the motivation underlying violent behavior, the distinction between reactive and proactive violence has been made (Crick &

Dodge, 1996; Dodge, 1991). Reactive violence is described as a response to some form of aggression, threat or provocation, real or perceived, whereas proactive or instrumental violence involves the use of violence to achieve specific goals (Crick & Dodge, 1996). In this regard, one interesting aspect is the specific relation between EV and the development of reactive and proactive violence patterns. For example, Chaux et al. (2012) found that EV in the community was related both to reactive and proactive violence patterns in youth. Some authors have gone further on this issue, exploring the mediational role of these proactive/reactive violence patterns in the relationship between EV and some type of violence. For example, Flores and Charak (2024) focusing on the family context, revealed that the relationship between interparental violence and later intimate partner violence was mediated by a pattern of proactive violence. In the concrete field of CPV this path has not yet been explored. Only the study by Cano-Lozano et al. (2024) found that the relationship between direct victimization at home and CPV was mediated by both instrumental and reactive reasons for CPV. Thus, to advance knowledge about this issue, it would be interesting to study the role of proactive and reactive violence patterns in the relationship between victimization at home and CPV. That is, does the violence victimization at home relate to CPV through the development of proactive/reactive violence patterns? In that case and, in line with the contextualization of violence, does it occur in the same way in the case of victimization outside home?

In addition, there seems to be a process by which witnessing or directly experiencing violence leads to the development of beliefs supporting the use of violence, which in turn increase the probability of violent behaviors in adolescents (Farrell et al., 2022). In this regard, it would be interesting to examine if some social-cognitive variables play a role in this path, as for example the moral disengagement (MD). Through the socialization process, people develop social norms -moral standards- to guide behavior. The MD, based on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1999), acts as a buffer between the moral standards and the behavior, as enables people to deliberately detach from their own moral standards, reinterpret their immoral behaviors, and rationalize it into acceptable behavior, allowing individuals to behave in a way that is inconsistent with their moral principles without experiencing shame or guilt (Paciello et al., 2008). Some examples of moral disengagement are justifying one's behaviors, distorting consequences of one's behaviors, changing the language used to describe a behavior, displacing one's responsibility or dehumanizing victims (Bandura et al., 1996). Previous studies have noted that individuals who endorsed MD mechanisms often engaged in distinct types of violence, beginning from early adolescence (Gini et al., 2014; Kokkinos et al., 2016). In respect of the concrete relation between MD and proactive/reactive violence patterns, on the one hand, perpetrators of proactive violence appeared to be sufficiently aware of moral norms (Gini et al., 2015), but their willingness to use violence to get their instrumental goals (despite the suffering of their victims) could reflect problematic moral reasoning (Arsernio et al., 2009). On the other hand, reactive aggression was related more to problems in emotional self-regulation processes (including high levels of frustration and anger) than to moral reflection (Gini et al., 2015), so this suggested that MD could be more related to proactive than reactive violence.

Moreover, research on this topic has gone beyond the simple association between MD and violence. Although the role of MD as a mediator between EV and violent behavior has been widely studied (Esposito et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2019, 2021; Wojciechowski, 2021), including one study in the field of CPV (Bautista-Aranda et al., 2023), its moderator role has been scarcely explored. One example is the study by Phan and Gaylord-Harden (2022), who recently reported that the positive association between witnessing violence and subsequent offending behavior was stronger for individuals who were moderate to high in MD. Thus, we also set out to examine whether MD acts as a moderator of the relationship between victimization and CPV through the violence patterns, that is, whether victimization has a differential impact on both violence patterns and these, in turn, on CPV depending on the levels of MD.

The Current Study

Despite the great number of studies on the relationship between EV and CPV, few studies have explored the mechanisms involved in this relationship, and even fewer have analyzed this issue regarding EV during childhood, so it was particularly interesting to explore the distant effects of EV on CPV. Furthermore, as previously noted, the literature highlighted the more relevant role of direct victimization in comparison with witnessing violence. For this reason, two objectives were set. The first aim was to explore the differential mediating role of the proactive/reactive violence patterns in the relationship between childhood victimization in different contexts and CPV. The expected hypotheses were the following: H1) Childhood victimization at home was expected to be directly related to CPV (Bautista-Aranda et al., 2023; Beckmann, 2020; Cano-Lozano et al., 2024; Contreras & Cano-Lozano, 2016b; Cuervo, 2021; Margolin & Baucom, 2014) and indirectly through the proactive/reactive violence patterns (Flores & Charak, 2024; Cano-Lozano et al., 2024). H2) Childhood victimization outside home was not expected to be directly related to CPV (Contreras & Cano-Lozano, 2016b; Navas-Martínez & Cano-Lozano, 2022b), but indirectly through the proactive/reactive violence pattern (Chaux et al., 2012).

The second aim was to examine whether the relationship between childhood victimization in different contexts and CPV through the proactive/reactive violence pattern varied as a function of the levels of moral disengagement. The expected hypotheses were: H3) The levels of moral disengagement were expected to moderate the relationship between childhood victimization at home and CPV through the proactive violence pattern (Arsenio et al., 2009), such that this relationship was stronger in those with higher moral disengagement. No significant moderate mediation effect was expected for the reactive violence pattern (Gini et al., 2015). The same results were expected for the relationship between childhood victimization outside home and CPV.

Method

Participants

A total of 1,011 Chilean adolescents (56.2% girls) aged between 13 and 18 years old (M_{age} = 15.31, SD = 1.36) from schools in

Araucanía (50.8%) and Bío-Bío (49.2%) participated in the study. All participants lived with at least one of the two parents. Almost the whole sample reported having siblings (89.3%), being a biological child (99.1%) and that their parents were married (40.2%) or living together without being married (22.8%). One third of the participants (25%) had divorced or separated parents, with the mother having exclusive custody in 78.5% of the cases, the father in 7.4% of the cases and shared custody in 13.6% of the cases.

Measurement Instruments

Child-to-Parent Violence Questionnaire, adolescent version (CPV-Q; Contreras et al., 2019, Chilean validation by Jiménez-García et al., 2022). It consists of 14 parallel items (assessing father and mother separately) that measure the frequency of physical, psychological, financial, and control-domain violence behaviors toward the father and toward the mother during the last year through a 5-point Likert-type scale (0 = *never* to 4 = *very often, six times or more*).

Spanish adaptation of the Violence Exposure Scale (VES; Orue & Calvete, 2010). The VES consists of 21 items that assess direct (victimization) and indirect (witnessing) exposure to physical, psychological and verbal violence in various contexts (home, school, street and television). For this study, an adaptation of the original scale was made; the time frame was restricted to the period of childhood (before the age of 10 years). The subscale of direct victimization at home (childhood victimization at home) and the subscales of direct victimization at school and on the street (childhood victimization outside home) were employed. Each subscale consists of 3 items that are answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale (0 = *never* to 4 = *every day*).

Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire (RPQ; Raine et al., 2006, Spanish validation by Andreu et al., 2009). It measures two motivational dimensions of violence in general through 23 items referring to the frequency with which violent behaviors of a proactive (12 items) and reactive (11 items) nature are carried out. The response scale is a 3-point Likert-type scale (0 = *never* to 3 = *often*).

Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement Scale (MMDS-S; Bandura et al., 1996, Spanish validation by Rubio-Garay et al., 2017). This scale assesses the extent to which participants use eight moral disengagement mechanisms (moral justification, euphemistic language, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, distortion of consequences, dehumanization, and attribution of blame) to deactivate moral self-censorship regarding a variety of harmful behaviors. It consists of a total of 32 items answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

Procedure

The study followed a quantitative, correlational and cross-sectional design using survey methodology. The research obtained all the pertinent ethical and administrative authorizations, including a favorable report of the Ethics Committee of the University of Jaén (reference: OCT.19/1.PRY), authorizations of the Public Administration and the educational centers, as well as signed informed consents from both the parents of the underage adolescents and the adolescents themselves. Participants completed a battery of paper-and-pencil questionnaires voluntarily, anonymously and confidentially in their classrooms, in a group setting, under the supervision of trained researchers who provided standardized instructions.

Data Analysis

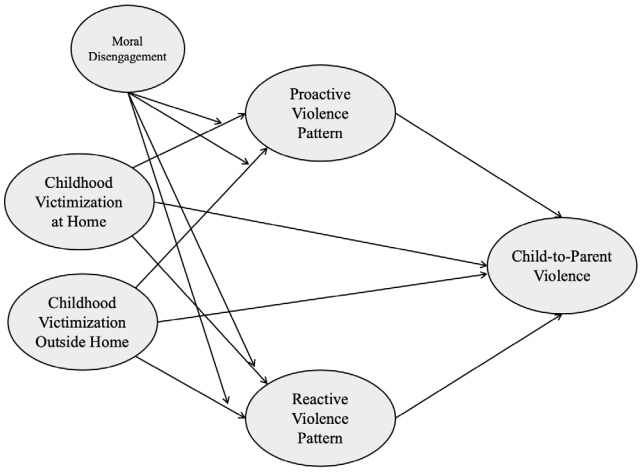
The analyses were conducted using the free software R Version 4.4.2 and with SPSS (27). Before analyzing the internal structure of the scales, Item descriptive statistics were computed. In addition, we subjected the data to *data screening* in which we analyzed the distribution of the data as well as the assumptions for factorial treatment. The multivariate normality of the data was analyzed using the Mardian test. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index was computed to determine the factorization adequacy of the item correlation matrix, values above 0.7 denoted an average adequacy, and values higher than 0.80 were considered as meritorious (Kaiser, 1974). To deal with missing values, after confirming that they had a random distribution, we performed an imputation with the R package MICE, in which only those values that accounted for less than 5% per case and per variable were imputed.

To analyze the structural validity of the scales used we conducted a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using the R package *lavaan*. Due to the absence of multivariate normality of our data, we used the Diagonally Weighted Least Squares estimator (Finney & DiStefano, 2013). We analyzed the adequacy of the factorial structure of the scales by fitting the models through the CFI, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), using the following recommended thresholds as indicators of good and acceptable fit, respectively: CFI $\geq$ .95 and .90; TLI $\geq$ .95 and 0.90; RMSEA $\leq$ .05 and .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The internal consistency of the scales was measured through Cronbach's alpha (α) and McDonald's omega (ω), considering satisfactory values > .70 as acceptable, > .80 as good and > .90 as excellent (George & Mallery, 2003).

Once the psychometric properties of the scales were examined, correlational analyses were conducted initially to examine associations among the study variables. Subsequently, mediational analyses were conducted to examine the direct and indirect relationships outlined in the theoretical model proposed in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Proposed Theoretical Mediational Model



Specifically, first, the direct effect of childhood victimization (predictor variables: childhood victimization at home and childhood victimization outside home) on CPV (dependent variables: child-to-father violence and child-to-mother violence) was analyzed. Second, the indirect effect of violence patterns (mediating variables: proactive violence pattern and reactive violence pattern) on the relationship between childhood victimization and CPV was examined. Finally, we assessed whether the indirect effect varied as a function of levels of moral disengagement (moderator variable). The sex variable was included as a covariate to control for its possible influence.

All assumptions of the analyses performed were met, except for the assumption of normality, which is common in the study of violent behavior in community samples. The significance of indirect effects and moderated mediation indices was assessed using 95% confidence intervals generated from bootstrapping with 10,000 resamples (Hayes, 2017). This method provided a robust and reliable estimate of the significance of indirect and conditional effects in non-normal distributions, considered statistically significant when the confidence interval does not include zero (Alfons et al., 2022; Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Results

In the first analytical phase, we evaluated the psychometric properties of the scales used to confirm their internal consistency and validity of the scales used in the target population. To analyze the internal consistency of each scales, we calculated the Cronbach's Alpha and McDonald's Omega. All the scales showed internal consistency between acceptable and excellent (see Table 1). All the scales showed acceptable KMO index values for their factorial adequacy (between average and meritorious) (see Table 1). Once the acceptability of the internal consistency of the scales and their suitability for factorial treatment had been verified, we analyzed the suitability of the fit indices resulting from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis for each of the scales. Table 1 presents the fit indices resulting from the CFA for all scales. As can be seen, the fit indices of the analyzed models were excellent in all cases.

All the study variables were significantly related to each other, except for the sex variable, which did not show a significant relationship with violence toward the father and violence toward the mother, or with the reactive violence pattern (see Table 2). The variables showing a stronger correlation with violence toward the father were childhood victimization at home (r = .236), proactive (r = .294) and reactive (r = .279) violence patterns, while childhood victimization outside home (r = .140) and moral disengagement (r = .156) showed lower correlations. Similarly, the variables showing a stronger correlation with violence toward the mother were childhood victimization at home (r = .299), proactive (r = .306) and reactive (r = .302) violence pattern, while the variables showing a lower correlation were childhood victimization outside home (r = .151) and moral disengagement (r = .186).

The proposed mediation theoretical model was tested for childhood victimization at home and for childhood victimization outside home.

Table 1

Fit indices for each of the analyzed scales.

Models	χ^2	*df*	χ^2/df	*p*	CFI	TLI	RMSEA [90% CI]	SRMR	α	ω
CPV-F	90.89	71	1.28	.056	.97	.97	.02 [.00, .03]	.04	.72	.80
CPV-M	75.68	71	1.07	.330	.99	.99	.01 [.00, .02]	.06	.67	.75
R-F	33.17	19	1.75	.023	.97	.96	.03 [.01, .05]	.06	.70	.72
R-M	43.63	19	2.30	.001	.96	.94	.04 [.02, .05]	.06	.70	.71
CEV	236.79	224	1.06	.266	1.0	1.0	.01 [.00, .02]	.05	.90	.91
RPQ	574.49	229	2.51	< .001	.94	.93	.04 [.04, .04]	.06	.82	.83
MMDS	885.98	436	2.03	< .001	.99	.98	.03 [.03, .04]	.04	.93	.93
Common guidelines[a]	—	—	< 2 or 3	> .05	≥ .95	≥ .95	< .05 [.00, .08]	≤ .08		

Note. CPV-F: Child-to-Parent Violence – Father; CPV-M: Child-to-Parent Violence – Mother; R-F: Reasons-Father; R-M: Reasons-Mother; CEV: Childhood Exposure to Violence; MMDS: Moral Disconnection; RPQ: Reactive and Proactive Violence. [a]Based on Schreiber (2017), Table 3.

Table 2

Correlations Between Study Variables

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	CFV	-							
2	CMV	.808***	-						
3	CV at Home	.236***	.299***	-					
4	CV Outside Home	.140***	.151***	.383***	-				
5	Proactive Violence Pattern	.294***	.306***	.212***	.267***	-			
6	Reactive Violence Pattern	.279***	.302***	.285***	.312***	.499***	-		
7	Moral Disengagement	.156***	.186***	.162***	.171***	.345***	.327***	-	
8	Gender	-.041	-.002	.123***	-.139***	-.249***	-.047	-.152***	-

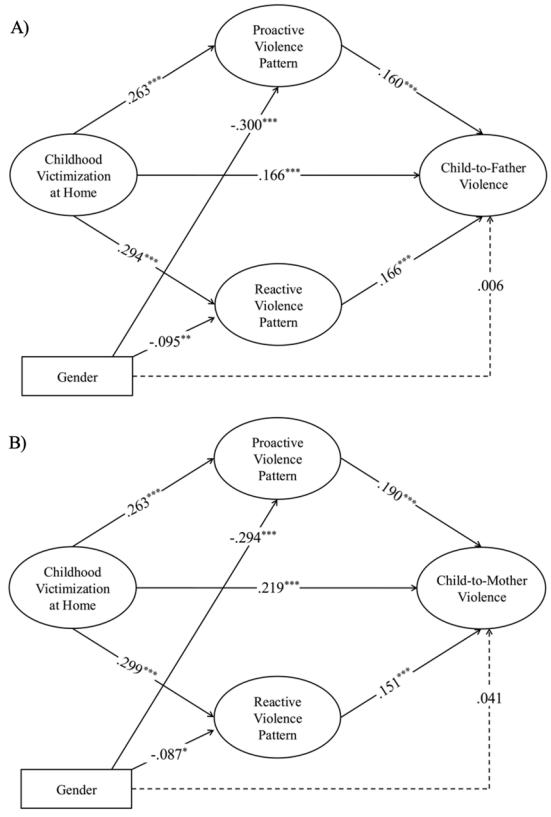
Note. CFV = child-to-father violence; CMV = Child-to-mother violence; CV = childhood victimization; 1 = female.

*** p < .001.

Regarding the first victimization context (see Figure 2 and Table 3), the results showed that childhood victimization at home is directly related to violence toward the father (***β*** = .166, B = .173, 95% CI [.097, .248]) and more strongly indirectly related (***β*** = .257, B = .267, 95% CI [.193, .341]) through the proactive (***β*** = .042, B = .044, 95% CI [.012, .086]) and reactive (***β*** = .049, B = .051, 95% CI [.022, .084]) violence patterns. The proactive violence pattern explained 16.3% of the total effect, whereas the reactive accounted for 19.1%, explaining together 35.4% (***β*** = .091) of the total effect of childhood victimization at home on violence toward the father.

Figure 2

Standardized Coefficients of the Relationship Between the Components of the Childhood Victimization at Home and Child-to-Parent Violence Model



Similarly, childhood victimization at home was directly related to violence toward the mother (***β*** = .219, B = .208, 95% CI [.142, .273]) and indirectly more strongly related (***β*** = .314, B = .298, 95% CI [.233, .362]) through the proactive (***β*** = .050, ***β*** = .047, 95% CI [.020, .083]) and reactive (***β*** = .045, ***β*** = .043, 95% CI [.018, .072]) violence patterns. The proactive violence pattern explained 15.9% of the total effect, while the reactive pattern represented 14.3%, together explaining 30.2% (***β*** = .095) of the total effect of childhood victimization at home on violence toward the mother.

The results of the moderated mediation analysis showed, for both CPV toward fathers and mothers (see Table 3), that the indirect effect of the proactive violence pattern significantly varied as a function of the levels of moral disengagement. Specifically, the impact of the proactive pattern as a mediator of the relationship between childhood victimization at home and CPV was only significant when the levels of moral disengagement were high, suggesting that childhood victimization at home influenced CPV through the proactive violence pattern only in individuals with high levels of moral disengagement. In contrast, the indirect effect of the reactive violence pattern on that relationship remained constant regardless of the levels of moral disengagement.

Regarding the second victimization context (see Figure 3 and Table 4), the results suggested that the relationship between childhood victimization outside home and CPV was almost entirely explained through the indirect effects of proactive and reactive violence patterns. Specifically, childhood victimization outside home was not directly related to violence toward the father (β = .014, B = .017, 95% CI [-.071, .106]) but it was indirectly related (β = .116, B = .141, 95% CI [.053, .229]) through the proactive violence pattern (β = .042, B = .051, 95% CI [.017, .097]) and the reactive violence pattern (β = .060, B = .072, 95% CI [.037, .111]). Both patterns of violence explained 87.9% (β = .102) of the total effect of the relationship between childhood victimization outside home and violence toward the father (36.2% for the proactive pattern and 51.7% for the reactive pattern).

Figure 3

Standardized Coefficients of the Relationship Between the Components of the Childhood Victimization Outside home and Child-to-Parent Violence Model

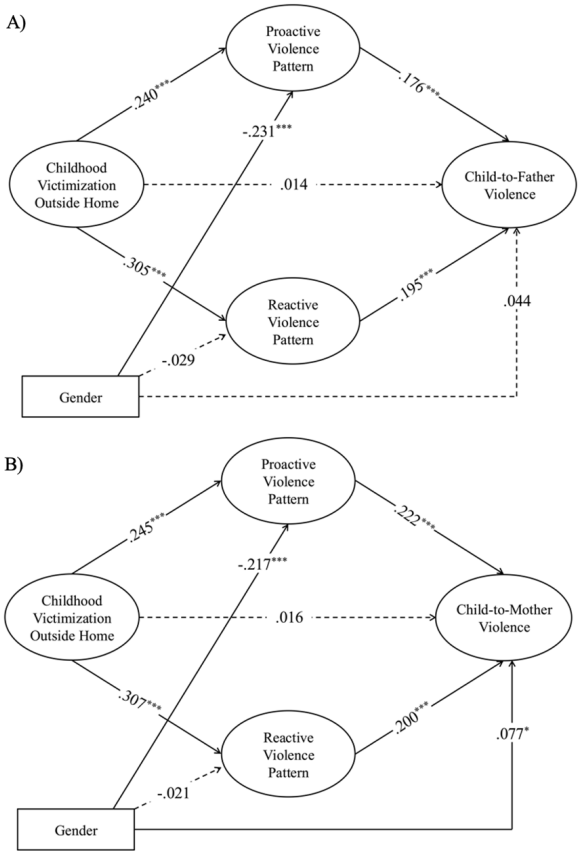


Table 3

Total, Direct, Indirect and Conditional Effects of Childhood Victimization at Home on Child-to-Parent Violence

Effects	Path	Child-to-father violence			Child-to-mother violence		
		B	*SE*	95% CI [1] LL – UL	*B*	*SE*	95% CI [1] LL – UL
Total	CVHome → ProactiveVP → ReactiveVP → CPV	.267	.038	.193 – .341	.298	.033	.233 – .362
Direct	CVHome → CPV	.173	.038	.097 – .248	.208	.033	.142 – .273
Indirects	CVHome → ProactiveVP → CPV	.044	0.19	.012 – .086	.047	0.16	.020 – .083
	CVHome → ReactiveVP → CPV	.051	.016	.022 – .084	.043	.014	.018 – .072
	ProactiveVP minus ReactiveVP	-.007	.030	-.063 – .055	.005	.025	-.042 – .056
Conditional	Moderated mediation index: CVHome → ProactiveVP → CPV	.001	.001	.000 – .002	.001	.001	.000 – .002
	-1 SD Moral Disengagement (< 46.732)	.015	.013	-.003 – .046	.014	.013	-.006 – .044
	+1 SD Moral Disengagement (> 84.676)	.047	.022	.011 – .096	.051	.020	.018 – .096
	Moderated mediation index: CVHome → ReactiveVP → CPV	.000	.000	-.001 – .001	.000	.000	-.001 – .001
	-1 SD Moral Disengagement (< 46.732)	.035	.015	.011 – .071	.032	.014	.010 – .064
	+1 SD Moral Disengagement (> 84.676)	.042	.017	.014 – .079	.038	.014	.013 – .069

Note. CVHome = childhood victimization at home; VP = violence pattern; CPV = child-to-parent violence; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; [1] Significant effect if CI do not contain the 0 value.

Table 4

Total, Direct, Indirect and Conditional Effects of Childhood Victimization Outside Home on Child-to-Parent Violence

Effects	Path	Child-to-father violence			Child-to-mother violence		
		B	*SE*	95% CI [1] LL – UL	*B*	*SE*	95% CI [1] LL – UL
Total	CVOut → ProactiveVP → ReactiveVP → CPV	.141	.045	.053 – .229	.144	.038	.069 – .219
Direct	CVOut → CPV	.017	.045	-.071 – .106	.018	.038	-.057 – .093
Indirects	CVOut → ProactiveVP → CPV	.051	0.21	.017 – .097	.059	0.18	.029 – .099
	CVOut → ReactiveVP → CPV	.072	.019	.037 – .111	.067	.016	.037 – .101
	ProactiveVP minus ReactiveVP	-.021	.033	-.082 – .046	.008	.027	-.058 – .047
Conditional	Moderated mediation index: CVOut → ProactiveVP → CPV	.001	.001	.000 – .003	.001	.001	.000 – .003
	-1 SD Moral Disengagement (< 46.646)	.013	.018	-.025 – .050	.015	.019	-.024 – .053
	+1 SD Moral Disengagement (> 84.786)	.052	.024	.015 – .108	.061	.022	.027 – .113
	Moderated mediation index: CVOut → ReactiveVP → CPV	.000	.000	-.000 – .001	.000	.000	-.000 – .001
	-1 SD Moral Disengagement (< 46.646)	.049	.018	.018 – .087	.046	.015	.018 – .078
	+1 SD Moral Disengagement (> 84.786)	.059	.019	.026 – .102	.061	.018	.031 – .102

Note. CVOut = childhood victimization outside home; VP = violence pattern; CPV = child-to-parent violence; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; [1] Significant effect if CI do not contain the 0 value.

In the model of violence toward the mother, again childhood victimization outside home was not directly related to violence toward the mother (β = .016, B = .018, 95% CI [-.057, .093]) but was indirectly related (β = .132, B = .144, 95% CI [.069, .219]) through the proactive (β = .054, B = .059, 95% CI [.029, .099]) and reactive (β = .061, B = .067, 95% CI [.037, .101]) violence patterns. Both violence patterns explained 87.1% (β = .116) of the total effect of childhood victimization outside home on violence toward the mother (40.9% for the proactive pattern and 46.2% for the reactive pattern).

Finally, regarding the moderated mediation analysis, similar to what was previously found, the indirect effect of the proactive violence pattern was significant only when levels of moral disengagement were high (see Table 4), indicating that childhood victimization outside home influences CPV through the proactive violence pattern only in individuals with high levels of moral disengagement, while the indirect effect of the reactive violence pattern remained constant independently of the levels of moral disengagement.

Discussion

The first aim of this study was to explore the differential mediating role of the proactive/reactive violence patterns in the relationship between childhood victimization in different contexts and CPV. Hypothesis 1 established that childhood victimization at home would be directly related to CPV and indirectly through the proactive/reactive violence pattern. The results confirmed this hypothesis. Actually, childhood victimization at home was directly related to violence toward the father and the mother, what was consistent with previous literature (Bautista-Aranda et al., 2023; Beckmann, 2020; Cano-Lozano et al., 2024; Contreras & Cano-Lozano, 2016b; Cuervo, 2021; Margolin & Baucom, 2014; Navas-Martínez & Cano-Lozano, 2022b), but it was also indirectly and more strongly related through the proactive and reactive violence patterns. Thus, our results confirm the mediational role of the proactive and reactive violence patterns in the pathway from childhood victimization at home and CPV. To our knowledge, no previous studies have explored this issue and only the study by

Cano-Lozano et al. (2024) found that the relationship between direct victimization at home and CPV was mediated by both instrumental and reactive reasons for CPV, which is in line with our results. Children who experience violence in their immediate contexts may learn, not only that violence is an appropriate way to deal with conflicts or to get desirable goals, which is related to the development of a proactive violence pattern, but also that others are likely to use violence in their social interactions, which is associate with a reactive violence pattern. In short, they learn that violence is normative and expected in their environment (Pittman, 2023). Consequently, the childhood victimization would lead to the development of violence patterns and in turn, to violence towards parents. In case of CPV, the proactive nature of this type of violence is reflected in the way that many adolescents use aggression against parents to obtain certain positive reinforcements, such as to obtain permission to go out, to extend the time to return home at night or to avoid unwanted tasks (Calvete & Orue, 2016; Contreras et al., 2019). Actually, the definition of CPV highlights the intention to control and dominate parents (Cottrell, 2001; Molla-Esparza & Aroca-Montolío, 2018), that results in an inversion of conventional power relationships within the family (Tew & Nixon, 2010). In addition, previous studies have also confirmed the reactive nature of CPV (Calvete & Orue, 2016; Contreras et al., 2019, 2020), which is more linked to emotional regulation problems (Calvete et al., 2015; Contreras & Cano-Lozano, 2015, 2016a).

Moreover, one of the main contributions of the current study is the confirmation of the strength of the victimization at home as a risk factor for the development of violence towards parents in comparison to the victimization in other contexts. In this regard, the results confirmed the hypothesis 2 by showing that childhood victimization outside home is not directly related to CPV toward the mother and the father, but indirectly through the proactive/reactive violence pattern. Other previous studies have also indicated that violence exposure within the family context was a stronger predictor of CPV than violence exposure in the community, and even that violence exposure at school was not a predictor of CPV (Contreras & Cano-Lozano, 2016b). This could be explained by the influence of other variables in this relationship. In our study, the effect of victimization outside home on CPV is exclusively produced through the development of proactive and reactive violence patterns.

Moreover, in this study it has also been explored the role of a socio-cognitive variable such as moral disengagement (MD) in these relationships. Thus, the second aim of this study was to examine whether the relationship between childhood victimization in different contexts and CPV through the proactive/reactive violence pattern varies as a function of the levels of MD. The results confirmed hypothesis 3, revealing that the relationship between childhood victimization (both at home and outside home) and CPV through the proactive violence pattern was moderated by MD. More specifically, childhood victimization in different contexts influences CPV (toward the mother and the father) through the proactive violence pattern only in individuals with high levels of MD. In contrast, there was not a moderate mediation effect in the case of the reactive violence pattern, that is, the indirect effect of the reactive violence pattern on that relationship remained constant regardless of levels of MD. As Flores and Charak (2024) suggested, there are aspects of reactive and proactive aggression that are independent of one another and, actually, although both tendencies are correlated, each pattern has unique behavioral, emotional, and social-cognitive correlates (Arsenio et al., 2009). As those individuals who exert proactive violence appear to be sufficiently aware of moral norms (Gini et al., 2015), moral disengagement allows to violate their moral standards without self-blame (Bandura, 1999), as it enables them to deliberately detach from their own moral standards or norms, reinterpreting their immoral behavior as acceptable. Arsenio et al. (2009) used the expression “cold-blooded” adolescents to refer to those juveniles who victimize others for personal gain despite the cost for potential victims (p. 1739). On the contrary, reactive violence is more associated to problems in emotional self-regulations processes, such as high levels of frustration and anger. In this line, in the study by Contreras et al. (2020), anger was specifically related to the reactive use of CPV. Thus, it is probably that the processes underlying MD (deliberated deactivation of moral standards) do not play a significant role in these “hot-headed” (Arsenio et al., 2009) individuals, but possibly other variables are implied.

Notwithstanding, the results of this study must be interpreted with caution considering some limitations. First, the data collected was based on retrospective self-reports, which increase the likelihood of recall bias. Second, the measures administered inquired about violence exposure and CPV, which might lead to underreporting due to social desirability bias. Third, although we infer that victimization during childhood preceded CPV during adolescence, the cross-sectional design limits the establishment of definitive conclusions about causal associations between the variables, so it would be necessary to carry out longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of violence exposure on CPV in greater depth. Finally, participants belong to a specific geographical and cultural context, so the findings cannot be generalized beyond the current sample.

In spite of these limitations, this study confirms the specific contribution of direct victimization at home during childhood in comparison to victimization in other relevant contexts during this period. Most children who experience one form of family violence are at an increased likelihood of experiencing multiple types of victimizations (Navas-Martínez et al., 2022a, 2022b), so future research should continue to delve deeper into the effects of polyvictimization, as violence does not happen in a vacuum (Flores & Charak, 2024). Furthermore, our results provide additional evidence about the complexity of the pathways between victimization and CPV, highlighting the mediational role of proactive and reactive violence patterns in this association. Finally, our results show that MD is a cognitive mechanism that moderates the specific mediational effect of the proactive violence pattern in the relationship between victimization and CPV. Future studies could expand on the literature by addressing protective factors that may interrupt these paths, incorporating other cognitive and emotional variables (such as empathy, copying styles, etc.) which might help to explain the complexity of these relationships. In the case of the reactive violence pattern, future studies could explore the role of other possible moderators of these associations. In terms of practical implications, our results provide key points for intervention and prevention programs by showing the need of the early detection of violence exposure cases, the relevance of identifying the specific type of violence patterns (proactive/

reactive) exhibited in CPV cases (Contreras et al., 2020) and the effect that changing beliefs about the use of violence in cases of proactive violence patterns might have on reducing CPV.

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