

Individual and familial factors as mediators and moderators of young children's aggressive behavior

Mona Khoury-Kassabri

Iris Zadok

Rana Eseed

School of Social Work and Social Welfare

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Aggressive behavior in early childhood has been associated with several negative outcomes for children, such as short- and long-term academic, developmental, social, and emotional difficulties. This study used a social-ecological framework to consider the direct, indirect, and interactive effects of both individual and family factors on children's aggressiveness. Individual factors included impulsivity and peer rejection, while familial factors included maternal support and involvement, and psychological control. In addition, the current study explored the mediating role of maternal psychological control in the association between co-parenting and child aggression, as well as the moderating role of impulsivity on the relationship between maternal psychological control and aggressive behaviors. The cross-sectional study was based on online structured self-report surveys completed anonymously by 532 Israeli mothers of children aged 3-5 (31.6% Jews and 68.4% Arabs). The results showed that children's aggression was positively associated with maternal use of psychological control and negatively with co-parenting and prosocial behavior. Psychological control mediated the association between co-parenting and children's involvement in physical and indirect violence. However, while impulsivity moderated the effect of psychological control on physical aggression, no interaction effects between these factors were found in predicting indirect

aggression. Prevention and intervention programs that deal with early childhood aggression should consider focusing on maternal and couple practices as much as on individual characteristics and mechanisms in order to prevent and restrain early childhood violence.