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CoGNITIVE SCHEMAS AS MEDIATORS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IN MALTREATED ADOLESCENTS

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OBJECTIVE
To clarify the mechanisms through which exposure to violence at home leads to aggressive behavior in adolescents who were victims of abuse and neglect. The main hypothesis was that cognitive schemas of justification of violence, mistrust, and grandiosity act as mediators between exposure to violence and aggressive behavior and depression.

RESULTS
Figure 1. Gender differences in the coefficients for the model linking exposure to violence, schemas and aggressive behavior and depression.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS
166 adolescents (95 boys) between 11 and 18. They were all living in welfare and protective service centers.

MEASURES
Exposure to violence at home. Exposure to Violence Scale (EVS; Orue & Calvete, 2010).
Grandiosity and Mistrust Schemas. Schema Questionnaire (SQ; Young, 1990).
Justification of Violence. The JV subscale of the Irrational Beliefs Scale for Adolescents (IBSA; Cardenoso & Calvete, 2005).
Aggression. Proactive-Reactive Aggression Questionnaire (RPQ; Raine et al., 2006).

ANALYTIC PROCEDURE
Path analysis with LISREL 8.80. Multiple-group analysis to test gender differences.

CONCLUSIONS
Witnessing violence has more impact on aggressive behavior, both proactive and reactive, than direct victimization.
Specifically, witnessing violence was associated with aggressive behavior through the schemas of justification of violence and grandiosity.
Victimization, in contrast, was associated with less aggressive behavior and more depression, through the schema of mistrust.
Gender modulated some of the relations among the variables of the study. In general exposure to violence seemed to contribute more to the development of aggressive behaviors in girls than in boys.

IMPLICATIONS
The results suggest that intervention in social cognitive mechanisms is important to reduce aggressive behavior in adolescents who have been exposed to violence.

REFERENCES

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