Violent video games and delinquent behavior in adolescents: A risk factor perspective

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## Authors

Exelmans L.;Custers K.;Van den Bulck J.

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## Sample

3372 adolescents age ranged between 12 and 18 years old from 54 secondary schools in Belgium, consisted of 58.4% girls and 41,6% boys.

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

Over the years, criminological research has identified a number of risk factors that contribute to the
development of aggressive and delinquent behavior. Although studies have identified media violence
in general and violent video gaming in particular as significant predictors of aggressive behavior,
exposure to violent video games has been largely omitted from the risk factor literature on delinquent
behavior. This cross-sectional study therefore investigates the relationship between violent video game
play and adolescents’ delinquent behavior using a risk factor approach. An online survey was
completed by 3372 Flemish adolescents, aged 12 to 18 years old. Data were analyzed by means of
negative binomial regression modelling. Results indicated a significant contribution of violent video
games in delinquent behavior over and beyond multiple known risk variables (peer delinquency,
sensation seeking, prior victimization, alienation). Moreover, the final model that incorporated the
gaming genres proved to be significantly better than the model without the gaming genres. Results
provided support for a cumulative and multiplicative risk model for delinquent behavior.

# Outcome

Four main conclusions can be drawn from the current study. "Firstly, violent video gaming was positively related to individual delinquent behavior, whereas nonviolent video gaming was not. This indicates that the association
between video games and delinquent behavior depends on the content. Secondly, violent video gaming is a significant predictor of adolescents’ delinquent behavior over and beyond other known risk factors. Adding violent video gaming to the risk factor list for delinquent behavior seems valuable for future research. Thirdly, a linear trend suggests that each additional risk factor increases the risk of the negative outcome, and that any combination of risks will result in the same negative outcome, also termed equifinality. A significant quadratic trend suggests an interactive risk model where any combination of multiple risk factors has a bigger effect than any specific individual factor. Finally, violent video gaming performs significantly better in predicting adolescents’ delinquent behavior than a risk model without. Delinquent behavior is the result of a complex combination of numerous risk factors, and that violent video gaming appears to be a small, yet significant piece of the puzzle." (Exelmans et al., 2015, pp. 18-19)