

Violent and abusive acts during adolescence – a study of children’s and adolescents’ conflicts with their parents

We would like to invite your child to participate in a scientific study.

You are receiving this letter because you are the guardian of a child in year 8, and because the principal/management team of your child’s school has announced that the school wants to participate in the study. We would like your permission to invite your child to participate in the study.

The study will be conducted by researchers at Malmö University and will be conducted at approximately 40 high schools and upper secondary schools in Skåne during the spring semester of 2022. In total, we estimate that more than 6,000 children and adolescents will participate in the study.

What is the study about?

Conflicts between children and parents are common during adolescence. This study is about different types of violent and abusive behaviours that children and adolescents can expose their parents to, and how this can be explained. Internationally, there is very little research on these type of behaviours by children and adolescents against their parents. This is the first study in the Nordic region focussing on this issue.

The study aims to investigate how common it is for children and adolescents between the ages of 14 and 19 to expose their parents to various types of violent and abusive behaviours: verbal abuse, physical violence, theft and vandalism. We want to find out if such behaviour differs between different ages and between different social groups within the population. We also want to investigate the personal and family-related factors that may explain such behaviour. In order to investigate this, it is important to reach a large group of children and adolescents, including those who have experience of the behaviour we are interested in and those who do not have such experience. The study will be conducted in schools in approximately ten municipalities in Skåne and is aimed at young people in grades 8 and 9 in national school and grades 1, 2 and 3 in upper secondary school.

What does participation in the study mean for your child?

Your child will answer a questionnaire at school. The questionnaire is answered online (on a computer) and contains many questions. These include personal characteristics, upbringing and family relationships, social background, school and leisure time, and experience of various types of violent and norm-breaking behaviour directed at parents.

The questionnaire is answered anonymously. This means that we do not know who responded to the surveys - no login details or passwords are required, and we do not register IP addresses. No other children, parents or teachers will have access to your child’s answers.

How is your child's information processed?

The information we obtain in the study will be stored in a database that is stored on a confidential server at Malmö University. The collected information may only be used within the study and in the manner that you and your child have approved. The database will be saved for ten years after the project is completed, and then deleted.

We need your consent to invite your child to participate

In the case of studies involving children who have not yet reached the age of 15, it is customary to seek the approval of both the children and their guardians, i.e. informed consent. This letter is a request for you, as guardian, to agree to your child being invited to participate in the study. There is information at the end of the letter on how to agree to your child's participation. If you choose not to respond, it will be interpreted as consent. This is called passive consent.

We need the active consent of children. This means that their participation in the study is completely voluntary. Before the children fill in the questionnaire, we will inform them about the study and its purposes, that their participation is voluntary, and that they can stop filling in the questionnaire at any time, if they so wish.

How will the results be reported?

The results of the study will be published in scientific journals, mainly in English, and in popular science texts in Swedish. The results only will only be reported in the form of group level statistics. There is no risk of individuals being identified.

What are the benefits of participating?

By participating in the study, your child will help us gain new knowledge about violent and norm-breaking behaviour that occurs in many families in Sweden. Violent behaviour towards parents can be associated with anxiety, guilt, shame and other negative consequences, for both the parents and the children. The knowledge we gain through the study can teach us more about how to design preventive and supportive measures for affected families.

Are there any disadvantages to participating?

The questions we ask in the survey have been used in many previous youth studies by other researchers, without any problems being discovered. We have also conducted a pilot study in which we tested the survey on just over 350 students. Of course, it cannot be completely ruled out that some questions may arouse thoughts or feelings in some children. If your child thinks that some of the questions in the questionnaire are too sensitive or difficult, he/she can refrain from answering them.

Study manager

The study is carried out by researchers at Malmö University and is funded by FORTE, the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare. The project manager is Björn Johnson (professor at the Department of Social Work). Lisa Andersson (researcher at the Department of Social Work) and Robert Svensson (professor at the Department of Criminology) also participate in the project.

Can we invite your child to participate in the study?

If you agree to your child being invited to participate in the study, you do not need to do anything. If you do NOT agree to your child being invited, please let us know by email (respons@mau.se), telephone (040-6657690) or SMS (070-4383973). Enter the child's first and last name and which school the child attends.

If you would like more information about the study, you can contact Professor Björn Johnson, either by email (bjorn.johnson@mau.se) or by phone (040-6657690).