



# Psychometric properties of the Violent Experiences Questionnaire



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## ABSTRACT

The Violent Experiences Questionnaire—Revised (VEQ-R) is a brief retrospective self-report inventory which provides estimates of annual frequencies of childhood physical abuse, sibling physical abuse, exposure to parental violence, peer bullying, and corporal punishment as they were experienced from ages 5 to 16. The VEQ-R indices rely on a frequency metric that estimates the number of days on average per year a specified class of behavior occurred over a 12 year retrospective period. All scores range from a frequency of 0 to a high of 104. Scale normative data was generated from both a college ( $N = 1266$ ) and national ( $N = 1290$ ) sample to expand the research applicability of this relatively new inventory. Subscales were added to estimate the frequency of victimization during childhood, the pre-teen years, and adolescence. Four “hostility” component indices were derived from perpetrator source (parent, sibling, peer, or domestic). Thresholds were established to for High, Moderate, Low, and No Risk classifications. Subscales dimensions were found to have both adequate internal and temporal consistency. Evidence of concurrent and discriminant validity was generated using the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scale-Short-Form®, LONGSCAN Physical Abuse Self-Report scale, and Physical Punishment scale of the Assessing Environments III inventory.

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## 1. Psychometric properties of the Violent Experiences Questionnaire

The *Risk and Prognostic Factors* sections of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) identified childhood maltreatment as a likely contributor to more than twenty major psychiatric disorders. Evidentiary support for these task force conclusions can be found in meta-analytic studies showing the adverse impact of physical abuse (Norman, Byambaa, Butchart, Scott, & Vos, 2012), sexual abuse (Chen et al., 2010), exposure to intimate partner violence (Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith, & Jaffe, 2003), peer bullying (Hawker & Boulton, 2000), and other forms of maltreatment on psychological functioning. Self-report measurement scales have been useful in establishing nexuses between child abuse and its sequelae. The present study describes the psychometric properties of a relatively new and distinctive self-report inventory that has shown value in extending these links between child abuse and adult maladjustment.

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**Table 1**

Violent Experiences Questionnaire (VEQ-R) and Scale Item Assignments. Please indicate how often one or more of the target acts occurred during the specified period.

<i>Frequency Index of Incident:</i> A) never happened B) happened only once C) happened only twice D) happened less than four times E) happened about once a year F) happened about twice a year G) happened about once a month H) happened about once a week I) happened more than once a week	ACTS TOWARD YOU BY A PARENT or STEP-PARENT			ACTS TOWARD YOU BY A SIBLING or STEP-SIBLING			ACTS OBSERVED BETWEEN PARENTS or STEP-PARENTS		
	during each of these age ranges			during each of these age ranges			during each of these age ranges		
TARGET ACT	5-8	9-12	13-16	5-8	9-12	13-16	5-8	9-12	13-16
<i>Parental Discipline:</i> spanking or other forms of reasonable <i>physical</i> discipline producing mild to moderate pain <i>without physical injury</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>						
<i>Verbal Conflict:</i> yelling, cursing, damaging property, or other expressions of anger <i>without physical injury</i>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<i>Threats of Physical Violence:</i> words or gestures expressing a <i>threat</i> to inflict physical injury	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<i>Physical Acts with or without Physical Injury:</i> pushing, shoving, shaking, striking, kicking, punching, beating, burning or use of a weapon to inflict pain or injury	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>ACTS DIRECTED TOWARD YOU BY A BULLY</b>									
<i>How often were you:</i>									
<i>Physically taunted or bullied by peers during or after school?</i>				<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b>			
<i>Called names or verbally teased by peers during or after school?</i>				<b>34</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>36</b>			

VEQ-R Primary Indices	Label	Items	Component Indices	Items
Corporal Punishment	CORP	1-3	Parental Hostility	1-3 & 7-12
Parent-Child Verbal Discord	PVD	4-6	Sibling Hostility	13-21
Sibling Verbal Discord	SVD	13-15	Domestic Hostility	22-30
Observed Parental Discord	OVD	22-24	Peer Hostility	31-36
Parent-Child Physical Threats	PPT	7-9		
Sibling Physical Threats	SPT	16-18	<b>Age Indices</b>	<i>z-score summations</i>
Observed Parental Threats	OPT	25-27	Childhood	1,4,7,10,13,16,19,22,25,28,31,34
Child-Parent Physical Abuse	CPA	10-12	Pre-Teen	2,5,8,11,14,17,20,23,26,29,32,35
Sibling Physical Abuse	SPA	19-21	Adolescence	3,6,9,12,15,18,21,24,27,30,33,36
Observed Parental Violence	OPV	28-30		
Peer Bullying	BULL	31-33		
Peer Teasing	TEAS	34-36	Total	1-36

### 1.1. Violent Experiences Questionnaire—revised

The Violent Experiences Questionnaire (VEQ-R; King, 2012; King, 2014a; Mugge, Chase, & King, 2015; Russell, Veith, & King, 2015; Walter & King, 2013) provides indices of 12 different forms of childhood and adolescent maltreatment. Item content for the VEQ-R is presented in Table 1. The bolded item numbers and lower scale designations would be removed prior to administration in either electronic or hard copy form. SPSS scoring syntax is available upon request. Scores are calculated within four-year recording blocks (ages 5–8, 9–12 & 13–16) using weights based on a frequency index (A = 0, B = 0.25, C = 0.5, D = 0.875, E = 1, F = 2, G = 12, H = 52, I = 104). The score for each scale is interpreted as the number of days on average per year a specified class of behavior occurred during the respective time period. Subscale scores are averaged over the entire 12 year recording period and range from 0 to 104. The predecessor VEQ (King, Tuhy, & Harris, 1989) focused exclusively on parental physical abuse and exposure to intimate partner violence (Green & King, 2009; King, 2016; King, 2014b; Moe, King, & Bailly, 2004; Mugge, King, & Klophaus, 2009) without sampling sibling abuse, peer bullying, or corporal punishment.

Current maltreatment measures differ in their focus on the nature (e.g., general versus specific acts), frequency, severity, age of occurrence, recall timeframe (e.g., lifetime, past year, etc.), and source (e.g., parent, sibling, peer, etc.) of the specified index acts. While item content differs across measures, the targeted acts tend to be similar in gravity and face-validity. The VEQ-R can be contrasted with other measures in some substantive ways. The extent to which these differences represent advantages or disadvantages would depend on researcher or practitioner objectives. Available maltreatment protocols often

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