

Master's thesis

Patterns of intergenerational continuity in domestic violence cases in the Netherlands

Name and initials: H.M. Pater
Student number: S3169294
E-mail address: h.m.pater@student.rug.nl
First assessor: Prof. Dr. Veroni Eichelsheim
Second assessor: Dr. Bertus Jeronimus
Programme: Research Master Behavioural and Social Sciences
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Are there deviations of the Master's thesis from the proposed plan?

No

Yes, please explain below the deviations

- We analyzed all cases that concerned intergenerational continuity of violence instead of a random sample of $N=5$ per type of violence. This resulted in a total sample of 70 cases instead of 60.
- Different title

Abstract

Individuals who have experienced violence are more likely to become victims or perpetrators, suggesting intergenerational continuity of violence. However, a deepening understanding of the mechanisms underlying this continuity is not frequently studied. This study explored how different mechanisms were manifested in the cases by examining various micro-and meso-level factors that may contribute to the intergenerational continuity of violence. We analyzed 70 case files reported to a domestic violence agency in the Netherlands in which some form of intergenerational continuity was mentioned. The findings suggested that several mechanisms described in the literature are manifested in diverse ways in this data, including social learning, multi-problem situations, and socioeconomic position. Additionally, mechanisms promoting intergenerational discontinuity, such as the role of bystanders, were also observed. These results underscore the complex interplay of factors contributing to the intergenerational continuity of violence. Our findings can be seen as an explorative study of these mechanisms.

Keywords: intergenerational continuity of violence, mechanisms, multi-problem families, intergenerational discontinuity of violence, domestic violence

Samenvatting

Mensen die geweld hebben meegemaakt, hebben een grotere kans om slachtoffer of pleger van geweld te worden, wat wijst op een mogelijke intergenerationele continuïteit van geweld. Er is echter weinig bekend over de mechanismen die hieraan ten grondslag liggen. Deze studie onderzocht door middel van exploratief onderzoek hoe verschillende mechanismen mogelijk tot uiting komen in de casussen. Hierbij werd gefocust op verschillende factoren op micro-en mesoniveau die kunnen bijdragen aan de intergenerationele continuïteit van geweld. Om dit te doen analyseerden we zeventig casussen die gemeld zijn bij Veilig Thuis. De resultaten tonen verschillende manieren waarop de mechanismen mogelijk tot uiting kwamen in deze casussen, waaronder door sociaal leren, multi-

probleemsituaties en sociaaleconomische positie. Bovendien kwamen in deze casussen ook mechanismen tot uiting die zouden kunnen bijdragen aan de discontinuïteit van geweld, zoals de rol van omstanders. Deze resultaten onderstrepen het complexe samenspel van factoren die bijdragen aan de intergenerationele continuïteit van geweld. Onze bevindingen kunnen worden gezien als een verkennende studie van deze mechanismen.

Samenvatting in B1-Nederlands

Mensen die geweld hebben meegemaakt, hebben een grotere kans om slachtoffer of dader van geweld te worden, wat wijst op de mogelijkheid dat geweld van generatie op generatie wordt doorgegeven. Er is echter weinig bekend over hoe dit precies gebeurt. Dit onderzoek wilde hier meer inzicht in krijgen door te kijken naar verschillende dingen die hierbij een rol spelen, zowel op persoonlijk als op gezinsniveau. We hebben hiervoor gegevens bekeken van gezinnen die één of meerdere keren zijn gemeld bij Veilig Thuis (70 in totaal) en waarin geweld van generatie op generatie voorkomt. De resultaten laten zien dat geweld in deze families op verschillende manieren kan worden doorgegeven. We vonden hier verschillende redenen voor, zoals wat mensen leren van anderen, hoeveel problemen er zijn en of ze genoeg geld hebben en een goede baan. In sommige gezinnen zagen we ook dat er dingen waren die juist kunnen helpen om het geweld niet door te geven, bijvoorbeeld als er mensen om de familie heen zijn die willen helpen. Dit alles laat zien dat er veel verschillende dingen spelen bij hoe geweld van generatie op generatie kan worden doorgegeven. Onze resultaten helpen om hier meer over te begrijpen en zijn een eerste stap om hier meer over te onderzoeken.

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Introduction

Experiencing certain severe adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) may have long-term consequences for individuals. ACEs, such as experiencing violence or having a household member who is a substance abuser, mentally ill, or criminal, could have an impact on a variety of life domains, such as externalizing problems, academic problems, antisocial behavior, and (mental) health problems (Assink et al., 2018; Felitti et al., 1998; Thornberry et al., 2012). ACEs commonly do not occur in isolation; they often coincide, and their effect can be cumulative (Hunt et al., 2017; Zhu et al., 2023). Of the different forms of ACEs, child maltreatment and intimate partner violence (IPV) are the most well-known (Chen & Fu, 2022; Fagan, 2022; Felitti et al., 1998; Hunt et al., 2017; Montalvo-Liendo et al., 2015; Narayan et al., 2021; Ports et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2023). In the past decades, research has provided valuable insight into the most common and shared risk factors for child maltreatment or exposure to IPV (Assink et al., 2018; Madigan et al., 2019). One of these factors is experiencing violence during childhood, suggesting a pattern of intergenerational continuity of violence (Assink et al., 2018; Garbarino & Gilliam, 1980; Madigan et al., 2019).

The general idea of intergenerational continuity of violence was proposed decades ago by Garbarino and Gilliam (1980). It was described as “the idea that abusing parents were themselves abused as children and that neglect breeds neglect” (p.111). This continuity can be homotypic, in which there is a maintenance of a specific type of violence (Lotto et al., 2023; Madigan et al., 2019). It can also be heterotypic, in which experiencing a specific form of violence increases the likelihood of perpetuating other forms of violence or transmitting risk factors of violence (Lotto et al., 2023; Madigan et al., 2019), such as parenting stress (Bai & Han, 2016), harsh parenting practices (Khan & Renk, 2019; Rijlaarsdam et al., 2014) or PTSD symptoms (Anderson et al., 2018). Recent meta-analyses show that people who have experienced violence indeed have an increased risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence (Assink et al., 2018; Madigan et al., 2019; Thornberry et al., 2012). However, there is an indication of bias. A meta-analysis found that study quality negatively influences the effect, leading to an overestimation of the odds (Assink et al., 2018). Moreover, the magnitude of

the odds was lower for children who experienced physical abuse and neglect than for children who experienced an unspecified maltreatment type (Assink et al., 2018).

Subsequently, it is important to study the intergenerational continuity of violence, as this makes it possible to be better able to provide care and prevent violent situations and the negative consequences that accompany said violence (Assink et al., 2018; Felitti et al., 1998; Thornberry et al., 2012). Previous studies distinguished different factors that contribute to the intergenerational continuity of violence. However, a deepening understanding of the exact mechanisms that enhance intergenerational continuity is not frequently studied. Moreover, protective factors that can effectively break the cycle of violence should also be investigated in greater depth (Madigan et al., 2019). This research explores a deepening understanding of these mechanisms by studying how different risk factors that underlie the intergenerational continuity of violence are manifested in the cases. Doing so could give insight into the best way to provide care in situations that may lead to violence and prevent maltreatment. Moreover, it can help deal with the consequences of violence, as it gives insights into the possible dynamics that could be at play in violent situations (Assink et al., 2018; Felitti et al., 1998; Thornberry et al., 2012).

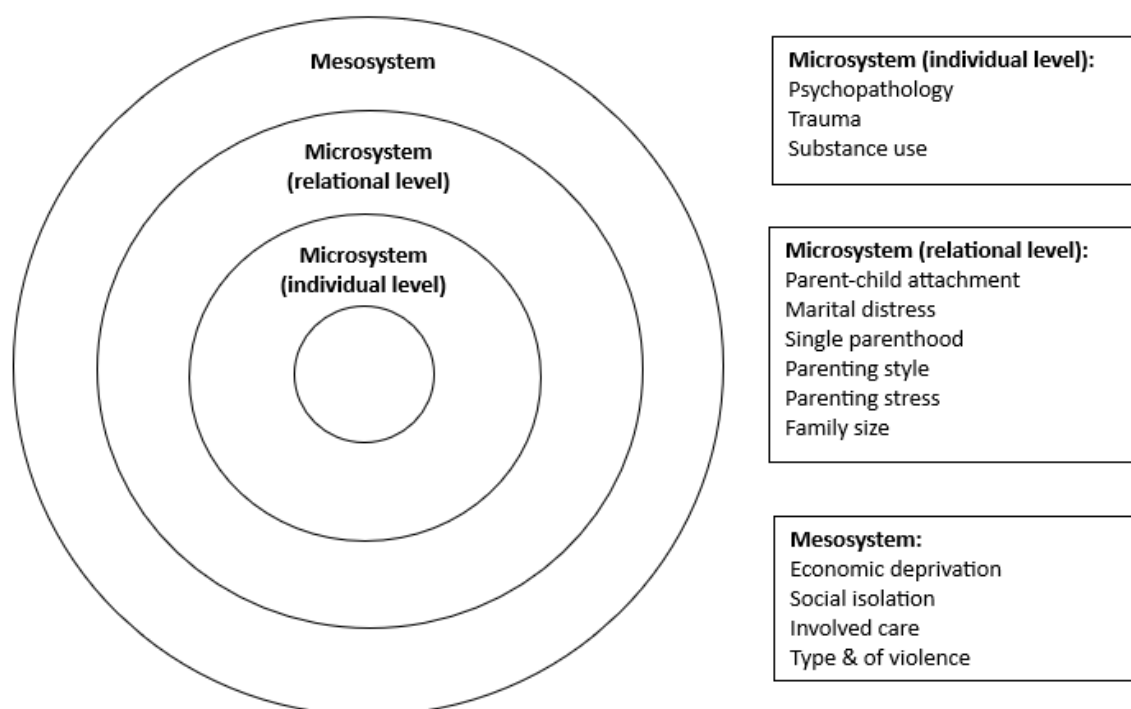
Contributing factors

Experiencing violence is an important predictor for re-experiencing violence, as well as across generations (Assink et al., 2018; Madigan et al., 2019; Thornberry et al., 2012). However, not everyone who has experienced violence experiences intergenerational continuity of violence. It is suspected that most people do not experience this (Kaufman & Zigler, 1987; Steketee et al., 2017; Werner & Smith, 2001). To understand why this plays a role in certain families, previous research distinguished different mechanisms that could underlie intergenerational continuity (Farrington, 2011). These mechanisms consist of various factors contributing to intergenerational continuity, as suggested in previous studies. In this study, these different factors are conceptualized in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994), specifically within the

microsystem (individual-level and relational-level) and the mesosystem. According to this model, all these separate factors across different systems are interrelated. The factors discussed in this study are summarized in *Figure 1*. These factors relate to all individuals involved in the violent situation, however, this does not imply that individuals can cause or be held responsible for the violence they experience. The perpetrator is the one who *acts* and chooses to use violence (Mash & Barkley, 2014).

Figure 1

Graphical representation of the contributing factors to the intergenerational continuity of violence



The *micro-system (individual level)* depicts factors within an individual that could contribute to the intergenerational continuity of violence. One enhancing factor is the presence of psychopathology, in particular the experience of trauma. Psychopathology may increase the risk of experiencing parenting stress, which in turn could make parents act more irritable and hostile towards their children (Friedman & Billick, 2015; Langevin et al., 2021; Maguire-Jack & Negash, 2016; Plant et al., 2013). Specifically, suffering from traumatic experiences may enhance this aggressive or angry behavior

toward others (Langevin et al., 2021; Lünemann et al., 2019; Mash & Barkley, 2014). Another possible individual level contributing factor is substance use, which may impair the cognitive parts of the brain and is linked to relationship conflict. This could lead to withdrawal symptoms, which may in turn result in irritability, anger, and aggression (Freisthler et al., 2017; Gilchrist et al., 2019).

The *micro-system (relational level)* consists of factors pertaining to interpersonal or familial relationships. An insecure parent-child attachment can lead to difficulties in balancing connectedness and autonomy, setting boundaries, and controlling aggressive behavior (Friedman & Billick, 2015; Lünemann, 2023). Moreover, some studies suggest that individuals who have experienced violence within the setting of their home may develop an internal working model that includes violence (Lünemann, 2023; McClellan & Killeen 2000). Internal working models are mental representations about life, others, and relationships between people that are developed, based on social experiences with early attachment figures (Bowlby, 1982; McClellan & Killeen 2000). Due to this internal working model, individuals can imitate the violent behavior of their attachment figure (Lünemann, 2023; McClellan & Killeen 2000). On the other hand, a positive parent-child relationship or secure attachment can serve as a protective factor against intergenerational continuity of violence (Schofield et al., 2017; Thornberry et al., 2013).

Other factors on the familial level may enhance the intergenerational continuity of violence. Some studies suggest that relational problems between parents, such as problematic, unsatisfying, exploitative, or victimizing patterns, or IPV between parents, could increase the risk of child maltreatment. These issues may reduce support, which can impact family functioning (Langevin et al., 2021; Thornberry et al., 2012). Positive communication between parents and positive relations between partners and other adults, on the other hand, can be a protective factor against intergenerational continuity of violence (Schofield et al., 2017; Thornberry et al., 2013; Younas & Gutman, 2023). At the familial level, single parenthood also possibly enhances intergenerational continuity, as it could coincide with other factors, such as economic deprivation, parenting stress, and a diminished quality of parenting (Baldwin et al., 2020; Berger, 2004; Connell-Carrick, 2003; Euser et

al., 2011; Younas & Gutman, 2023). Moreover, some studies suggest that family size could contribute to the intergenerational continuity of violence, as it could be related to financial and parenting stress (Baldwin et al., 2020; Cozza et al., 2019; Euser et al., 2011).

Parenting styles may also enhance the intergenerational continuity of violence. Some studies suggest that low levels of authoritarian parenting, low levels of positive parenting styles, poor discipline skills, and a lack of knowledge, skills, and comfort with parenting are related to a risk of violence (Dixon et al., 2009; Langevin et al., 2021; Pears & Capaldi, 2001; Younas & Gutman, 2023). These parenting styles may result in less responsiveness and sensitivity to the child and increased parenting stress (Thornberry et al., 2012). Parenting stress, whether caused by parenting style or other factors, seems to lead to less nurturing behavior towards the children, less enjoyment, and more punitive parenting practices, which could contribute to intergenerational continuity (Maguire-Jack & Negash, 2016). Positive parenting, parenting knowledge, and high satisfaction with parenthood on the other hand can act as protective factors, contributing to the discontinuity of violence (Dixon et al., 2009; Thornberry et al., 2013; Younas & Gutman, 2023).

The mesosystem depicts the environment surrounding individuals involved in violent situations. An important factor within this environment is economic deprivation. Economic deprivation possibly affects parental health and marital stability, which may lead to increased stress and disrupted parenting (Ajduković et al., 2018; Baldwin et al., 2020; Berger, 2004; Conger et al., 1992; Euser et al., 2011; Younas & Gutman, 2023). Conversely, a high socioeconomic position and financial stability can serve as protective factors against intergenerational continuity of violence (Dixon et al., 2009; Jaffee et al., 2013). Additionally, some studies suggest that the school could play a role in the intergenerational (dis)continuity of violence. School connectedness can mitigate aggressive behaviors of children, provide stability, and expose children to adults and peers who may serve as role models (Haight et al., 2013; Romano et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2023).

Social isolation or a lack of social support could potentially play a role in the intergenerational continuity of violence, as it may reduce access to financial and emotional resources (Langevin et al.,

2021). Contrarily, if social support is present, for example through positive relations with other adults, it can help cope with stressful events and contribute to the discontinuity of violence (Bartlett et al., 2017; Dixon et al., 2009; F. Li et al., 2011; Schofield et al., 2017; Thornberry et al., 2013; Tracy et al., 2018; Younas & Gutman, 2023). If professional care is already involved in the family, this may contribute to the continuity of violence (Younas & Gutman, 2023), as it suggests that individuals within the family experience additional issues, such as psychopathology or family dysfunction (Schumacher et al., 2001).

Several other situational characteristics also enhance the intergenerational continuity of violence. The type of violence could matter; studies suggest that the largest effects were observed when multiple types of violence coexist (Assink et al., 2018; Bartlett et al., 2017) and smaller effects for physical abuse and neglect (Assink et al., 2018; Widom et al., 2015). Moreover, studies suggest that intergenerational continuity is often homotypic, meaning that the specific type of maltreatment experienced by the parent or perpetrator is likely to be the same type experienced by the child or victim (Bartlett et al., 2017; Madigan et al., 2019). Further, prolonged exposure to violence may increase the likelihood of intergenerational continuity (Kaysen et al., 2010; LoCascio et al., 2021; Triantafyllou et al., 2019).

Mechanisms underlying intergenerational continuity

Although a deepening understanding of the exact mechanisms that enhance intergenerational continuity is yet to be studied, some mechanisms relating to other forms of intergenerational continuity have been identified, for instance concerning offending (Farrington, 2011; Madigan et al., 2019). These mechanisms combine various of the micro-and meso-level factors mentioned above and are not mutually exclusive; multiple mechanisms may be simultaneously at play within one family.

The first potential mechanism is social learning, which entails that children learn behavior by observing and imitating role models, of which parents are the most important (Besemer et al., 2017; Farrington, 2011; Lünnehan, 2023; Wiertsema et al., 2022). Subsequently, children could develop

similar violent attitudes and behaviors as their parents, as they observe aggressive or violent behavior instead of healthy interaction (Besemer et al., 2017; Lünnehan, 2023; Wiertsema et al., 2022).

Another underlying mechanism could be assortative mating, which in the case of criminality means that offenders tend to cohabit with or marry other offenders (Farrington, 2011). Regarding intergenerational continuity of violence, one study identified phenotypic assortment (Herrero et al., 2018), wherein individuals choose partners similar to them in terms of personality and behavior, including aggressive or violent behavior (Farrington, 2011; Herrero et al., 2018).

Moreover, another mechanism emphasizes biological aspects and suggests that genetic mechanisms contribute to the intergenerational transmission of offending (Farrington, 2011). Some studies indicate that exposure to violence is associated with epigenetic changes, meaning that biological mechanisms may play a role in the intergenerational continuity of violence (Serpeloni et al., 2020; Stenz et al., 2018).

Exposure to multiple risk factors may contribute to intergenerational continuity. Studies suggest that these risk factors may include poverty, family size, the relationship quality of the parents, and inadequate parenting practices (Farrington, 2011). This can lead to an accumulation of antisocial traits as children develop. According to this explanation, intergenerational continuity is incorporated into a broader cycle of deprivation, alongside antisocial and aggressive behavior (Farrington, 2011).

One of these risk factors is low socioeconomic position (SEP), which can be considered an underlying mechanism. Some studies mention that financial stress and lower social class are associated with aggressive behavior, other externalizing issues, and decreased quality of parenting practices (Colman et al., 2009; Madden et al., 2015). This may result in a cumulative impact of a low socioeconomic position on aggressive behavior and thus could underlie the intergenerational continuity of violence (Wiertsema et al., 2022).

Mechanisms can also lie beyond the family context, such as an official registration bias against certain families (Farrington, 2011). In the context of criminal behavior, this bias involved

heightened scrutiny of known criminal families, increasing the likelihood of their members being processed and thus appearing more frequently in statistical records, which can result in stigmatization (Besemer et al., 2017). A similar process may also occur in families or couples experiencing violence, where increased reporting about the families may lead to heightened stigmatization.

Another possible mechanism is the mediation of intergenerational continuity by environmental factors (Farrington, 2011). Environmental risk factors may contribute to the intergenerational continuity of violence and could include inadequate parenting practices (Dixon et al., 2009; Langevin et al., 2021; Pears & Capaldi, 2001; Younas & Gutman, 2023), family size (Baldwin et al., 2020; Cozza et al., 2019; Euser et al., 2011) and social support (Bartlett et al., 2017; F. Li et al., 2011).

The current study

To extend upon previous research, the current study explores how the various factors contributing to intergenerational continuity may interact and how different mechanisms underlying intergenerational continuity are potentially manifested in these cases. Examining this is important because exposure to violence can result in various adverse outcomes for individuals (Assink et al., 2018; Felitti et al., 1998; Thornberry et al., 2012) and society as a whole, including financial burdens on the healthcare system (Langevin et al., 2021; Thornberry et al., 2012). Previous research in this field often relied on survey data or data based on self-report, which may introduce bias due to difficulties in recalling information. This research distinguishes itself from previous studies as it investigates the intergenerational continuity of violence through a qualitative analysis of case files. This approach provides in-depth insights into the potential manifestation of the aforementioned factors and mechanisms in real-life cases and explores their (complex) interplay. As these mechanisms have not frequently been studied concerning intergenerational continuity of violence, this research is explorative. The current study will answer the following questions: *How does the intergenerational*

continuity of violence play a role in the cases in this research? Which micro- and meso-level factors underlie patterns of intergenerational continuity of violence?

Method

This study consists of data from Safe at Home [Veilig Thuis], the official domestic violence agency in the Netherlands, comprising 25 regional agencies. Safe at Home provides a 24-hour helpline for seeking information or assistance regarding domestic violence, as well as reporting suspicions of violence. Employees of Safe at Home evaluate the reported situation and assess the safety of the people involved, via a structured and validated assessment procedure. To achieve this, information is gathered from individuals directly involved in the violent situation, bystanders, professionals, or other individuals within the social environment. Based on this assessment, follow-up steps are determined, which may include arranging an emergency shelter, referring individuals to specialized care, or initiating further investigation. All reported cases are documented by the agency (Coomans et al., 2023; Van Baak et al., 2024). For this study, only cases involving suspicions of violence are analyzed. Positive advice on this research project and its methodology was obtained by the Ethics Committee for Legal and Criminological Research (CERCO) on August 31, 2020.

Sample selection

Data were collected from case files in one Safe at Home region between January 1st, 2019, and December 13th, 2020. This region, which is one of the 12 provinces of the Netherlands, consists of urban and rural areas and has an overall population density that is similar to the national average. The data collection was part of a larger project investigating the prevalence, severity, and types of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic (Coomans et al., 2023; Van Baak et al., 2024).

Safe Home employees categorized six different types of violence in the case files: (1) intimate partner violence & child maltreatment, (2) child maltreatment, (3) intimate partner violence, (4) violence against parents, (5) elderly abuse, and (6) other problems. Multiple types of violence could

be present simultaneously in one case. However, for this research, only the most prominent type of violence in each case was documented by the researcher. An overview of these cases and their type of violence is presented in *Table 1*.

In total, the dataset comprised 260 cases consisting of 456 reports¹. The researcher reviewed all cases, selecting only those that included a form of intergenerational continuity of violence. This resulted in a selection of cases explicitly mentioning intergenerational continuity of violence ($n=63$), such as instances where one of the parents had experienced violence in their childhood, and cases indicating *fear* of intergenerational continuity of violence ($n=7$), such as when a Safe Home employee noted that children might normalize violent behavior. This led to a total sample of 70 case files consisting 157 reports. *Table 1* provides an overview of the different types of violence for the total sample and the cases in which intergenerational continuity of violence is mentioned.

Table 1

Number of case files per type of violence

	Intimate partner violence & child maltreatment	Child maltreatment	Intimate partner violence	Violence against parents	Elderly abuse	Other problems	Total
All cases	96	45	37	25	24	33	260
Intergenerational	34	4	4	14	4	10	70

Description of the data

The reports included alerts to Safe at Home made by individuals involved in the violent situation, bystanders, including neighbors, family members, and friends, the police, or other professionals.

¹ One case could include multiple reports, with a range between 1 report per case to 11 reports per case.

Following an alert a Safe at Home employee called or visited the involved family, resulting in records of conversations with the family members, sometimes including discussions with children. In some cases, Safe at Home also contacted professionals involved with the family, such as (mental) health care professionals or teachers, to gather additional information. This approach resulted in what is termed “multi-source information,” meaning that the same situation is described and evaluated from the perspective of multiple sources, who may be eyewitnesses or who have more distance from the situation. Combining information from these different sources renders comprehensive data on each case. Moreover, many studies on violence and its intergenerational continuity rely on self-reports, which have limitations, such as recall bias (Assink et al., 2018; Langevin et al., 2021). Using data from multiple sources makes it possible to combine information, potentially reducing bias.

Data analysis procedure

A qualitative thematic analysis was conducted in this study to examine the mechanisms that underlie the intergenerational continuity of violence. A thematic analysis is a structured and systematic way to investigate patterns in the data, focusing on the interdependence of different parts of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All steps of this thematic analysis are visually represented in *Figure 2*. The initial step was to get familiar with the data, which was achieved by carefully and critically reading all 260 cases and making preliminary codes regarding background characteristics. Based on this initial review and coding, it was determined by the researcher which case files contained information about the intergenerational continuity of violence.

An initial coding scheme was developed based on both theory and familiarity with the cases from the first round of coding. Subsequently, five cases were analyzed, using this initial coding, taking into account other relevant information. One case was selected for independent coding by another researcher involved in different projects using this data. This researcher used the initial coding scheme and considered any additional information. The coded case was then compared and the researchers discussed their codes in detail. Differences in coding were discussed until a consensus

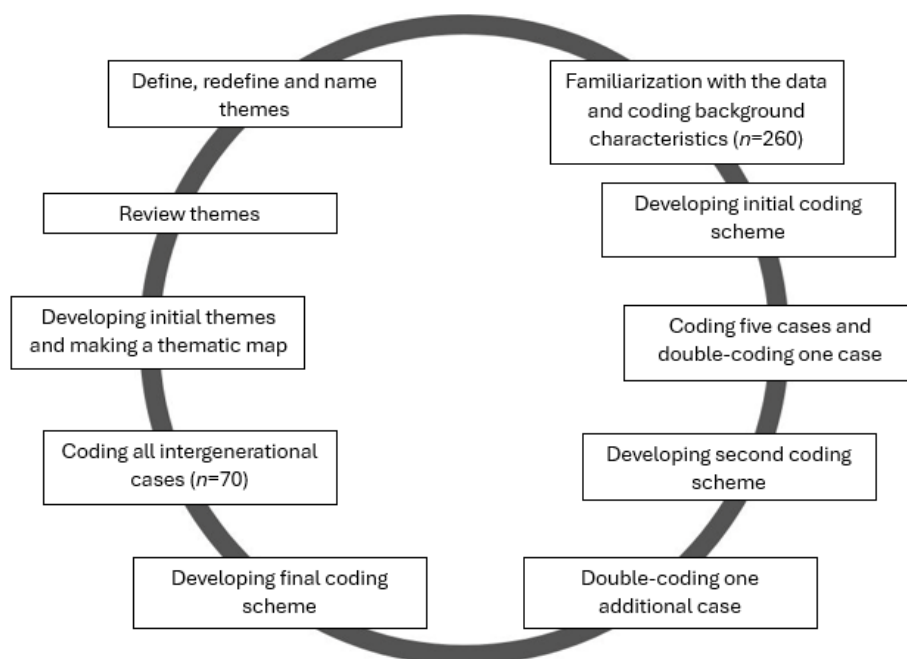
was reached. This process resulted in a refined second coding scheme. Using this second coding scheme, both researchers co-coded another case using the same process, resulting in the development of the final coding scheme. This scheme was then used to code all cases using ATLAS.ti version 9 (registered trademark of ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH).

Following this, cases indicating intergenerational continuity of violence were coded using the final coding scheme, which included both deductive codes and inductive coding, which are codes that emerge during data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The final coding scheme can be found in *Appendix A*.

In the final step, the data were analyzed, and themes were derived from the notes of the researcher and the co-occurrence analysis that was conducted using ATLAS.ti (Hennink et al., 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initially, preliminary themes were developed by identifying similarities in meaning between different codes and connecting codes with shared meaning. Thematic maps were used for this purpose, which provided a visual representation of potential themes and the relationships between them. Subsequently, these preliminary themes were reviewed to assess their feasibility and explore opportunities for improved pattern development. Finally, the themes were refined, defined, and named, in which each theme received a clear definition and name (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Figure 2

Visual representation of the data analysis process



Results

Based on the case files analysis, several themes were found, which suggest how different factors and mechanisms that contribute to the intergenerational continuity of violence are possibly manifested in these families. These themes represent overarching mechanisms across cases, but there could be variations within families. Furthermore, these themes are not mutually exclusive and may reinforce each other.

Role of intergenerational continuity

The way intergenerational processes played a role in these cases varied, and can be summarized in four themes, namely *a violent child*, *a violent adult*, *other forms of continuity*, and *a suspicion of intergenerational continuity*.

The theme *a violent child* includes cases in which a child has experienced violence and subsequently begins to exhibit violent behavior. This often starts during adolescence but it may also

occur earlier. This includes different forms of violence, such as aggression towards parents, peers, and siblings, or other behaviors such as running away from home or engaging in criminal activities. The age of the child seemed to matter; within the same family, an older child was more often violent than the younger child. However, this also seemed to coincide with differences regarding mental health.

The theme *a violent adult* involves adults showing violent behavior, such as aggression against their partner, their child, or an elderly person, who have also experienced violence during their childhood. The type of violence experienced during childhood is often unknown, as these reports were not included in the data collection process. If the type of childhood violence was identifiable, this included similar forms of violence as they experienced during their childhood in some cases, which is called homotypic continuity. However, this pattern was not consistently observed.

Another theme is *other forms of continuity*, which entails that other risk factors potentially eliciting intergenerational continuity of violence are continued, such as other adverse childhood experiences. Examples of such experiences include divorce, parental death, and substance use. These adverse childhood experiences can also elicit mental health issues, which subsequently may contribute to violent or aggressive behavior.

A last theme is *fear of intergenerational continuity*. This theme was identified in cases where the professionals from Safe Home suggested that the situation could lead to intergenerational continuity, despite lacking evidence within the case file. This fear was sometimes mentioned without specific context but in other instances, professionals outlined potential mechanisms through which intergenerational continuity could occur, such as norm-setting behavior of parents or children mimicking the actions of their parents. It remained unclear why this fear was mentioned in some cases and not in others. The number of cases in which this played a role was limited, however, in these cases, the violence could persist over many years, there could be multiple forms of violence, alongside various other problems, or the child who experienced the violence was very young.

How (known) mechanisms play a role in domestic violence cases

Different themes were identified that show how different mechanisms may have manifested in these families. There is some overlap between these themes, as the mechanisms are not mutually exclusive and could potentially reinforce each other. However, the distinguishing feature of these themes is that specific issues are prominent.

Themes related to social learning

One theme that may play a role in these families is *social learning mechanisms*. This theme predominantly emerged in cases that involved violence against parents, elder abuse, or other forms of violence, including violence against peers, criminal behavior, or violence toward siblings. In these cases, individuals experienced domestic violence or (exposure to) IPV during their upbringing and often seemed to show similar behavior against their parents or others later in life. This behavior sometimes started during childhood, however, even though this was interpreted as violence, it could also be part of externalizing behavior. An example of this is Case 137, in which both parents experience trauma and use psychological and physical violence toward the children. Subsequently, the neighbors mention in their report that they see that the children start to use the same aggressive behavior:

“Mother scolds the children and probably physically abuses them. There is a tense relationship between mother and father. Children are aggressive towards the mother and neighbors. Children always witness fights between parents.” – Case 137 (mother, father, minor son, minor daughter)

Cases in which the theme of social learning potentially played a role often coincided with challenges in parenting and the parent-child relationship, for which care was often involved for one or both parents, the child, or the entire family. In Case 374, both parents have encountered adverse childhood experiences. They are open to care, but face difficulties effectively implementing the tools

they learn. A Safe at Home employee summarizes the various intertwined challenges mentioned in the alert by the sister of the mother and explains why the involved care may not always yield the desired outcomes:

“Parents are open to care, but do not seem to be on the same page about the care of the daughter.

Parents have both indicated concerns about each other and the care of their daughter, parents do not get along about who has which (parenting) duties and how they should be carried out.” – Case 374

(mother, father (divorced), two minor daughters)

Another theme that possibly manifested in the cases was *divorce-related dynamics*, where relationship problems, particularly those concerning ending the relationship or marriage, seem to be up-front in the family. In these cases, the parents have experienced violence in the past or within the context of their relationship, and this violence seems to persist during the process of divorce, occurring in either verbal, physical, or both forms. Children frequently become involved in these dynamics, if disputes over parenting and custody arise, exposing them to violence as well. Additionally, socioeconomic challenges and the lack of social support were mentioned to play a role in these cases, contributing to difficulties leaving the home. Subsequently, parents may sometimes be compelled to continue to live in the same house despite their separation, which seems to exacerbate stress and prolong the violence. In Case 462, IPV occurs between the parents, accompanied by child maltreatment, and both parents have endured adverse childhood experiences. The parents want to get separated, as the mother and children experience (mental) health problems due to the situation. However, the unavailability of housing complicates this. The mother explains how this influences her (mental) health, which is written down by a Safe at Home employee:

“Client has been waiting for a home of her own for her and the children for some time, but in the meantime, she has nowhere to go but to continue living with her partner (...) Client indicated that she

continuously lived under high stress and experiences physical complaints more frequently as long as she does not have her own home.” - Case 462 (mother, father, minor son, minor daughter)

Further, *mating* seems to play a role, wherein both parents have a history of experiencing violence, adverse childhood experiences, or mental health issues. In these families, relationship issues or divorce may often coincide with revictimization. Other difficulties also may contribute, including mental health issues or substance abuse. In cases where prior relationships have occurred, it is not uncommon that these were also characterized by instances of violence. This suggests that the mating process extends beyond individual circumstances and could endure over time. An example illustrating this is Case 403, where the mother has repeatedly experienced IPV, and the children have been subjected to various forms of child maltreatment, including physical violence and neglect. Both the mother and father have a history of violence. A Safe at Home employee summarizes in the report how the father describes the impact of his burdened past on his children and the mother describes her mating processes:

“Father says he has a burdened past and was placed out of home as a child. He feels really bad that his oldest sons were also placed out of home. He is aware of repeating patterns. Father says that his oldest sons are still not doing well. The son pees his pants and is not doing well in school. Father blames himself for this and feels guilty. Father would like to break the patterns, but finds it difficult at the same time. Mrs. says she knows she keeps choosing the wrong partners, but that the father is not violent towards her and is working on himself with a psychologist.” – Case 403 (mother, (step)father, three minor sons)

Sibling differences

Another theme that possibly manifested in these cases was *sibling differences contributing to intergenerational continuity of violence*. Within cases where sibling differences in behavior were

visible, the quality of the caregiving environment and other familial and situational factors such as parenting and economic situation, were usually the same. However, despite these similarities, one sibling exhibited behavioral issues or engaged in aggressive or violent behavior, while the other did not. A combination of factors potentially contributes to these differences, including different mental health issues and parent-child relationships, and, in some cases, differences in the level of support within the social environment, such as the influence of (parents of) friends or teachers. These sibling differences are shown in Case 68, where the father passed away a decade ago, and the minor son exhibits violent behavior towards his mother, while the sister does not. The son experiences (mental) health problems. The police reporter states:

“Mother and sister say that the son has not exchanged a word with them in almost half a year and does not eat with them. In particular, the sister indicated that she is afraid of the son because he has already used physical violence against her. She has been beaten and threatened several times.” –

Case 68 (mother, minor son, adult daughter)

Deprivation-related themes

In some cases, a theme of *socioeconomic position* was suspected to play a role. These families seem to struggle with financial stress, unemployment, or indebtedness. Often, these challenges may contribute to additional issues, such as problems with parenting, parentification, and difficulties in partner relationships. Moreover, in some cases, a lack of financial resources was mentioned to potentially prevent the partner and/or the children from seeking refuge in a safe environment, making them remain in violent situations.

Another theme that was potentially manifested in these cases was *situational risk factors*, in which the continuity was suggested to stem from various risk factors at the meso-level. One such risk factor could be living in a disadvantaged area, characterized by disputes among neighbors.

Additionally, a lack of social support and inadequate parenting practices was mentioned as risk factor

by a Safe at Home employee or someone who made the report. Furthermore, the parents in these cases were frequently young. For example, in Case 187, a young mother experiences mental health issues, unresolved trauma, and frequent problems with her mother, with whom she lives. A Safe Home employee concludes based on the alert made by a mental health care professional:

“Young mother with two young children (ages 2 and 3) who is now staying with her aunt. [Care organization] mentions that the mother would have personal problems and therefore has concerns about the pedagogical situation of the children.” – Case 187 (mother, two minor sons, grandmother, ex-partner grandmother)

A last theme related to deprivation is a *multi-problem situation*, a concept documented in literature as multi-problem families (Van der Steege & Zoon, 2015). In the cases where this theme was identified, various issues concerning mental health, parenting, quality of the caregiving environment, socioeconomic deprivation, social support, or substance abuse were found to play a role. The accumulation of these problems combined with a lack of protective factors, seemed to contribute to violence. An illustrative example of such a case is Case 130, wherein the mother has a history of past violence, the father struggles with addiction-related issues, and both children experience (mental) health problems. One of the Safe Home employees writes down based on a report made by the police:

“There is a lot of stress at home (no gas to bring the youngest to swimming lessons, oldest special education, new partner has ADHD, guidance [youth care] stopped, mother overburdened).” - Case 130 (mother, stepfather, father, two minor sons)

Structural violence

In some cases, a theme of *structural violence* seemed to play a role. In many cases, the violence was considered structural according to the criteria of Safe at Home, however, in some cases, the violence persisted over multiple different systems, such as prior relationships. This often was suggested to coincide with mental health problems, criminal behavior, and issues in the partner relationship. Such circumstances may contribute to a registration bias, where the intergenerational continuity of violence is more frequently identified in families with a history of such structural violence. However, in other cases, it led to the conclusion that, despite previous violence and signs of intergenerational continuity, this was not evident in the current report. For instance, in Case 379, a history of IPV exists between both parents, who also struggle with financial and mental health problems and are dealing with the challenges of a complicated divorce. The ex-brother-in-law of the father has made an alert to Safe Home, suspecting child maltreatment. However, Safe Home employees found no evidence of this, despite the history of IPV. A Safe Home employee concludes after their research:

“Father has two assaults against mother as antecedents on his record. The mother has filed charges and says that the father has been in detention for this (...) The current report does not involve this situation; it is about concerns regarding the father and his son’s upbringing/care. Both parents indicate that they do not use violence against their son. Son has indicated spanking; Safe Home has been unable to refute or confirm this.” – Case 379 (mother, father (separated), minor son)

Mediating risk factors

Another theme that was suspected to play a mediating role was the *impact of alcohol or drug abuse*. In these families, one or more family members experience or have a history of alcohol or drug abuse or addiction, which often seems to coincide with mental health problems. In most families, care is involved, with a focus on addressing alcohol or drug use-related issues. Furthermore, it was written down that alcohol or drug use played a role in exhibiting criminal behavior, such as driving under the

influence or theft to support drug use. When one or both parents are involved in substance abuse, it seems to affect the quality of the caregiving environment, potentially contributing to violent situations. If a child is involved in substance abuse, he or she may be influenced by their social environment, where peers were found to normalize or provide access to alcohol or drugs. Case 382 illustrates how alcohol and drug use can worsen the quality of the caregiving environment and contribute to violence. The family is involved in IPV and the stepfather has a history of IPV and sexual violence. The children are exposed to the IPV. A Safe Home employee writes down, based on the alert of a neighbor:

“Mr. is currently in treatment with [care organization providing treatment for addiction]. According to the reporter, the father of Mr. also had an alcohol addiction and drank himself to death. Mr. would scream that he is worth nothing when he is under the influence of alcohol and drink himself to death as well. While interacting with the children, he would also be under the influence of alcohol. According to the reporter, he often gets into fights when he is under the influence. – Case 382 (mother, stepfather, two minor sons)

Another theme that was potentially manifested in these cases is *mental health dynamics*. In these families, one or multiple individuals seemed to struggle with mental health issues. Subsequently, care is often involved, either directed towards an individual or the entire family. These mental health problems may give rise to problems in the other subsystems of the family, namely in the parent-child relationship, partner dynamics, and parenting practices. Specifically, regarding parenting, parents in these cases possibly experience difficulties when both the child and the parent(s) have mental health issues. In such cases, managing the child's behavioral challenges could become more challenging as the parents have to handle their own issues. When multiple family members experience mental health issues, the complexity of caregiving seems to increase, making it potentially more difficult to address each person's needs separately. This dynamic is visible in Case

163, where both parents and the children have mental health problems, resulting in a situation of neglect. The psychologist treating two of the children explains how the parents' mental health problems influence the treatment of the children:

"The children (at least those in treatment with us, the minor son and adult daughter) are not getting treatment for their individual problems because of the problems at home regarding alcohol use and the behavior that results from this alcohol use." – Case 163 (mother, father, two minor daughters, one minor son, one adult daughter)

Breaking the cycle

Several themes could also be distinguished that included micro- or meso-level factors that potentially played a role in promoting intergenerational discontinuity of violence, for example in cases in which one child acted violently while the sibling did not. These factors can be seen as protective factors, which could prevent intergenerational continuity of violence or contribute to ending ongoing violent situations.

One theme that potentially played a role was the *availability of a safe place*. Often, this was manifested in cases where families were going through parental separation or where the child was acting violently against the parents. When a safe place was available, either through a care organization or within the social network, it potentially contributed to ending the violent situation and ensuring safety. However economic constraints, social isolation, or a lack of involved care were suspected to complicate efforts to find a safe place. In Case 236, the parents are involved in a complicated divorce, and cohabitation becomes unsustainable due to the frequent conflicts and incidents of child maltreatment. A Safe at Home employee writes about their living situation:

“Safe Home states that having both parents in one house is not safe for the children. As a result, Mr. indicates that he is not home often anyway and agrees to settle with the mother for now.” – Case 236 (mother, father (separated), two minor sons, one minor daughter)

Another theme potentially manifested in these families that contributed to the discontinuity of intergenerational violence was the *role of bystanders*. Bystanders could assist individuals in violent situations by offering them support, and a safe space, or aiding them in leaving the violent situation and reporting the incident to either Safe at Home or the police. In Case 143, IPV and child maltreatment have persisted for several years. Mother tells Safe at Home how a friend intervened by helping mother contact the police:

“During the argument with the father, mother called a friend and left her phone on speaker and in her pocket, so that the friend could listen in. Friend also ended up calling the police.” – Case 143 (mother, father (separated), three minor sons, one adult son)

Furthermore, bystanders were mentioned to play a role in reporting incidents to Safe Home, thus facilitating support for the family. However, in some cases, this also could lead to conflict, as the reported family disagreed, potentially contributing to (further) social isolation. These bystanders could include individuals in the social environment, or professionals, such as teachers at the (pre-)school of the children. In Case 271, one of the sons witnessed violence between his mother and father, as well as his mother and stepfather, resulting in trauma. The professionals of his school inform Safe Home how they will support this family:

“School indicates that the oldest son is doing well in school. The school also has contact with the mother. The school notices that the oldest son needs structure and direction. School is able to provide

this to the oldest son well.” – Case 271 (mother, (step)father (separated), two minor sons, minor daughter)

The theme *sibling differences contributing to intergenerational discontinuity of violence* was potentially manifested in these cases and shares similarities with the theme *sibling differences contributing to the intergenerational continuity of violence*. Improved mental health, a more supportive social environment (for example, attending a different school or having different friends), and a healthier parent-child relationship may result in intergenerational discontinuity for one sibling while these factors differ for another sibling and could lead to intergenerational continuity. Moreover, the sibling relationship in itself can also be a protective factor, as a secure bond between siblings can mitigate the negative outcomes of experiencing violence.

Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to explore a deepening understanding of mechanisms that possibly contribute to intergenerational continuity of violence by investigating how different risk factors are manifested in the cases included in this study. By examining real-life cases of intergenerational continuity of violence, we offer insights into the possible dynamics underlying this continuity and show how they may unfold in practice. Our findings indicate that these mechanisms seem to involve a complex interplay between micro- and meso-level factors.

Intergenerational continuity was mentioned to play a role in four different ways in the cases. It was observed either through *a violent child, a violent adult*, or through the persistence of *other risk factors* that heightened the likelihood of intergenerational continuity of violence. A fourth theme involved *fear of intergenerational violence*, wherein Safe Home employees indicated that the situation could potentially lead to such continuity. However, it often remained unclear why this fear was mentioned in some cases and not in others. Given the limited number of cases in which this was noted ($n=7$), definitive conclusions cannot be drawn. Future research should examine more cases

where fear of intergenerational violence is noted or should investigate this issue through other methods, such as interviewing professionals.

We found that a *multi-problem situation* frequently seemed to play a role in the families, wherein an accumulation of various issues at the micro- and meso-level led to violence. This aligns with the concept of multi-problem families, which refers to families experiencing a combination of socioeconomic and psychosocial problems, such as challenges related to societal position, partner relationship, and upbringing (Van der Steege & Zoon, 2015). The accumulation of these problems makes them more difficult to manage and resolve, thereby impacting parenting and the caregiving environment and potentially leading to violence (Bodden & Dekovic, 2010).

Moreover, we found that *divorce-related dynamics* possibly played a role in intergenerational continuity in some cases, as it may coincide with economic deprivation, parenting stress, and other negative events within the family system. Together, this could increase the chance of adversity later in life. This process is known as the 'cycle of deprivation' (Baldwin et al., 2020; Leifer et al., 2004; Zamir, 2022). This research demonstrated that divorce-related dynamics seem to coincide with socioeconomic problems, social isolation, and a lack of a safe place, thereby contributing to intergenerational continuity. This suggests that divorce-related dynamics may be correlated with, or be part of, a broader cycle of deprivation.

Another mechanism potentially manifested in the cases, was *sibling differences*, indicating that intergenerational continuity could vary among individuals within a family. In these cases, differences in mental health, parent-child relationship and/or social environment were suspected to play a role, and their contribution could differ within the same family. This variability may suggest genetic differences and highlights the potential significance of genetics in the intergenerational continuity of violence, similar to what is observed in the intergenerational continuity of offending (Farrington, 2011). It was not possible to determine genetic differences, based on this qualitative study. Future research could focus on families where siblings experience different outcomes from

exposure to violence and compare both genetic and environmental differences between them, as has been done by Valgardson & Schwartz (2019).

Several other findings emerged from our data. First, we found that *social learning* mechanisms could underlie intergenerational continuity of violence, for example by norm-setting behavior, as proposed in the literature (Besemer et al., 2017; Lünnehan, 2023; Wiertsema et al., 2022). Second, the process of *mating* was suggested to play a role in certain cases, where both parents experienced violence, trauma, or mental health problems, combined with other issues. The burdened pasts of both parents led to a variety of other problems, which could contribute to the intergenerational continuity of violence (Farrington, 2011; Herrero et al., 2018). A third mechanism identified was *socioeconomic position*, which may contribute to stress and parenting problems (Colman et al., 2009; Madden et al., 2015) and potentially also to relationship problems. Additionally, we found that *situational risk factors* could underlie the intergenerational continuity of violence, involving an accumulation of various meso-level risk factors, such as living in a disadvantaged area, disputes between neighbors, and parenting problems. These risk factors also played a role in mechanisms underlying criminal behavior, referred to as “environmental risk factors” (Farrington, 2011). Lastly, there were cases involving *structural violence*, where violence occurred in different contexts and (family-)systems. This could lead to a registration bias which could result in higher scrutiny of these families, possibly resulting in an increased likelihood of being reported and registered (Besemer et al., 2017). Moreover, this registration bias could lead to labeling and stigmatization, in which individuals involved in a violent situation are labeled as deviants and face problems stemming from the reaction of themselves and others related to the stereotypes attached to these labels (Becker, 1963; Valgardson & Schwartz, 2019). This may underlie intergenerational continuity of violence (Besemer et al., 2017). However, in some cases, Safe at Home concluded that violence was not occurring at the moment despite previous registrations, indicating mixed evidence regarding registration bias. Two mediating themes were also identified, which were potentially manifested in the cases in this study, namely *alcohol or drug use* and *mental health dynamics*. Both

themes possibly coincide with other issues, including involved care and decreased quality of the caregiving environment, mediating between different risk factors and intergenerational continuity of violence.

Besides factors contributing to intergenerational continuity, mechanisms were also identified that could potentially underlie intergenerational discontinuity. The *role of bystanders* seemed to be important, as they could provide social support, a contributing protective factor against violence (Bartlett et al., 2017; Li et al., 2011), and could support individuals to seek help or report the violence. Additionally, they could offer a safe place, another enhancing protective factor against (intergenerational continuity of) violence (Lassen et al., 2023; O'Brien et al., 2013). However, the willingness of bystanders to intervene depends on various factors, such as the severity and form of the violence and their closeness to the individuals involved (Van Baak et al., 2024). Bystanders can include people within the social environment and professionals, such as healthcare workers or teachers, who can provide care to those involved in the violent situation. Other protective factors that were found to play a role were *differences between siblings*, in which one sibling had more positive factors, contributing to discontinuity of violence, and the *availability of a safe place* for individuals seeking a safe place to escape the violent situation.

Limitations

While our data consisted of observations of real-life situations, thereby avoiding recall bias of self-report studies (Assink et al., 2018; Langevin et al., 2021), this study had several limitations. First, we relied on reports made by different individuals, such as bystanders, people involved in the violent situation, and professionals. This provided unique insights into the complex dynamics of the families from various viewpoints. However, this also meant that we depended on their information, influenced by their interpretations, perspectives, and roles. This could lead to a bias, for example, because individuals involved in violent situations could have different reports about what happened, and Safe at Home employees varied in the level of detail they included in their reports and

conclusions. Subsequently, relevant information could thus be lost due to reliance on second-hand sources. Moreover, this reliance on observations of real-life situations also meant that the data only captured the actual violence and issues at hand at that specific moment in time. It is unknown how the situation evolved after the last report to Safe at Home, and if individuals possibly started to act (more) violently at a later age.

In the analyzed cases, the presence of intergenerational continuity of violence might not be consistently documented. In some cases, this information is unavailable because older reports cannot be retrieved, or because it was not written down or asked out by the employee. Moreover, Safe at Home employees might not always recognize or anticipate the role of intergenerational patterns. Subsequently, there may be additional cases within the dataset that consider intergenerational continuity that were not analyzed in this study. However, it is also noteworthy that, based on the information available, the majority of the cases in this dataset ($n=190$) were not found to include intergenerational continuity. This is in line with previous research, that suggests that most individuals who experienced violence do not experience intergenerational continuity (Assink et al., 2018; Madigan et al., 2019). Previous studies also suggested that the type of violence played a role in intergenerational continuity of violence (Assink et al., 2018; Bartlett et al., 2017; Widom et al., 2015). However, the current study could not distinguish such patterns. The type of violence of the parents or previous generation was not always known or written down, hampering the ability to explore this using qualitative case file analysis.

Furthermore, this research adopts an exploratory approach, enabling a deeper understanding of the dynamics within families and addressing the complex interplay of household and individual factors. This approach offers an in-depth insight into the mechanisms underlying intergenerational continuity (Madigan et al., 2019). However, it is important to note this may make it difficult to infer causality from our findings. Future research could possibly further enhance understanding by investigating the presence of these or other mechanisms in different populations.

Since this study is a case file analysis, the identified mechanisms primarily focus on social and environmental factors, while genetic factors are not explored. However, it is recognized that genes also contribute to the intergenerational continuity of violence. Previous research has emphasized the importance of genetic factors as contributors to violent behavior (Bridgett et al., 2015; Graf et al., 2017; Serpeloni et al., 2020). Therefore, future research could further focus on the genetic component in the intergenerational continuity of violence.

Finally, it is important to note the data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, consisting partly of reports filed during lockdown periods in the Netherlands. While this research did not focus on COVID-19-related information, it is possible that the pandemic may have influenced domestic violence situations, as people spent more time at home. Research examining the influence of COVID-19 restrictions on domestic violence has indicated an increase in reports to Safe Home, however, this increase cannot be directly attributed to the COVID-19 restrictions (Coomans et al., 2023; Eichelsheim et al., 2023; Schlette et al., 2022).

Implications for policy and practice

This study showed that mechanisms potentially manifested in the cases included in this study consist of a complex interplay of multiple factors that possibly contribute to the intergenerational continuity of violence, often indicating multi-problem situations. Interventions and policies could focus on addressing the various issues concurrently, for instance through interventions that address the family as a whole, such as multisystemic therapy, or by using interventions in which different care organizations collaborate in a multidisciplinary team to help families. One example of this is the MDA++ approach, which is implemented in several regions across the Netherlands. The MDA++ approach constitutes collaboration among agencies in various domains, including medical and mental health care, child and youth services, social work services, education, and the criminal justice system (Kunseler et al., 2023; Sondeijker et al., 2023).

Secondly, this study shows the importance of prioritizing support networks that can surround the family. These networks may consist of individuals within the family's immediate environment, including friends and relatives, as well as professionals involved in the lives of adults and children, such as teachers. Future policies should acknowledge the role of these various bystanders and involve them in interventions aimed at individuals experiencing violent situations.

Lastly, housing could be an important factor for individuals who want to escape violent situations. In instances where housing is unavailable due to financial constraints or limited availability, individuals may feel compelled to remain in violent environments. Policies aimed at breaking the cycle of intergenerational continuity could focus on facilitating access to a safe place. However, while housing availability is important, it should be noted that it is not the only prerequisite for safety. Given the complexity of violent situations, policies would be most effective if they address various interconnected factors concurrently.

Conclusion

Our results indicate that various mechanisms were potentially manifested in the families included in this study, contributing to the intergenerational continuity of violence. These mechanisms often consist of a complex interplay of different factors at both micro-and meso-level. Several different mechanisms may play a role in the intergenerational continuity of violence, such as social learning, multi-problem situations, and divorce-related dynamics. Certain mechanisms could also contribute to the discontinuity of violence, including the role of bystanders. Our findings contribute to the growing body of literature on intergenerational continuity of violence and can be seen as an explorative study into the mechanisms underlying such continuity.

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Appendix A

Final coding scheme

Table A1

Final coding scheme

Code	Description	Source
Gender	Code that describes the gender of all people involved in the case.	
Age	Code that describes the age at the time of the first report for all the people involved in the case.	
Family's cultural background	Cultural background of one or both parents or other people involved (e.g. country of birth). Also code other relevant information, e.g. language barriers or cultural norms. Code as an open code.	
Identity reporter	Code that describes the background of the person that files the report (e.g. neighbor, family member, professional). Code as an open code.	
Intergenerational	Intergenerational processes are mentioned, such as household dysfunction (substance abuser in household, mentally ill or suicidal household member, imprisoned or criminal household member, separated or divorced parents) or child maltreatment. It can also be	Hunt et al., 2017

that it is just described that someone has a
“burdened past”. Code as open code.

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION

Number of children	The total number of children that are part of the family system that is described in the case. This also includes (step)children that are not officially registered at the address. Code as an open code.	Baldwin et al., 2020
Divorce	It is mentioned that the parents are divorced or separated.	
Blended family	The family is considered to be blended when it consists of two partners, the children that they have together, and one or more children they have had with other partners.	Berger, 2004
Single parent family	The family consists of one parent and one or more children that live with the parent. The other biological parent is either absent or lives at another address.	Berger, 2004
Psychopathology	For each involved person, code any information related to psychopathology. This can be a mental disorder, behavioral problems, or unusual behavior, such as anxiety, rage, or depression.	Friedman & Billick, 2015
Trauma	For each involved person, code any sign of suffering from trauma. This can be mentioned	Lünneman, 2019

	literally or symptoms can be mentioned, such as being hyperalert.	
Drug or alcohol use	For each of the involved persons, code whether they are engaged in unhealthy or excessive drug or alcohol use. Code as an open code.	Langevin et al., 2021
Criminality	It is mentioned that one of the persons involved participates or participated in criminal activities or shows criminal behavior.	
Sibling relationship	Something is mentioned about the sibling relationship, for example, that the violent situation is different for different siblings or that there is sibling conflict.	
Health	There is some information given about the physical health of the persons involved, such as a disease or handicap.	
Criminality	It is mentioned that one of the persons involved participates or participated in criminal activities or shows criminal behavior.	
CAREGIVING ENVIRONMENT		
Parent-child relationship	Something is mentioned about the parent-child relationship, it being for example an insecure or secure attachment or a good bond between parent and child. Code as an open code.	Friedman & Billick, 2015

Partner relationship	Something is mentioned about the partner relationship, for example relational problems, victimizing patterns, exploitative patterns or being emotionally close, having a positive relationship and supporting each other. Code as an open code.	Langevin et al., 2021 & Thornberry et al., 2012
Parenting	Something is mentioned about parenting, such as parenting style, poor discipline skills, parenting stress, or confidence in parenting (knowledge, skills, and comfort with parenting). Code as an open code.	Macguire-Jack & Nash, 2016; Thornberry et al., 2012
Quality of the caregiving environment	Something is mentioned about whether the parents can create a stable, warm, and sensitive caregiving environment, which is for example visible in the choices parents make, and how the child is in the center.	
SITUATIONAL FACTORS		
Economic situation	Something is mentioned about the economic situation, such as employment, education, poverty, or income. Code as an open code.	Euser et al., 2011
Social environment	Something is mentioned about the social environment, such as having enough social support, not having a lot of social support, or being socially isolated. Code as an open code.	Langevin et al., 2021; Bartlett et al., 2017

Social skills	Something is mentioned about the ability of one of the persons involved to engage in (anti)social relationships	
Safe place available	It is mentioned that one of the persons involved wants to go to a safe place, that a safe place is found, or that it is difficult to find a safe place.	
Education	Something is mentioned about school or academic development, such as a child doing good in school, dropping out, having less or more academic engagement. Code as an open code.	Haight et al., 2013
Potential consequences exposure	Potential consequences of exposure to violence are mentioned, for example, behavioral problems or criminal behavior that could be caused by experiencing violence.	
Fear of reporting	It is mentioned that someone has a fear of reporting a violent situation. This can be someone who reports, but indicates that they are scared to do so, someone who says that they have not yet reported because of fear, or any other situation in which fear is related to reporting.	

CARE HISTORY HOUSEHOLD

Careinvolved	Any information about the caregiving involved in the family, either before the Safe at Home report or currently involved caregiving. This also includes information about the type of care, whom the care was aimed at and whether it was voluntarily or forced. Code as an open code.	Younas & Gutman, 2023
Type of violence	For each person involved, code whether there are suspicions of violence, such as physical violence, emotional violence, sexual violence, emotional neglect (e.g. failure to provide basic needs, such as food and hygiene), exposure to IPV, IPV, elder abuse. Code as an open code.	Assink et al., 2018
Structural violence	It is indicated by the VT employee that the violence in this case is structural and why. This is an indication of the duration and frequency of the violence. Code as an open code.	LoCascio et al., 2021
Revictimization	Violence has occurred within another system, for example with a different partner.	