Maternal Depression, Maltreatment History & Child Outcomes: The Role of Harsh Parenting

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**Current Knowledge**

**Maternal Depression, Maltreatment History and Child Outcomes**

- Well-established link between maternal depression and child outcomes (Brennan et al., 2002; Burke, 2003)
- Risk for depression is higher for mothers with a history of child maltreatment (Spatz-Widom et al., 2007)
- The Challenge:
  - Several studies examine these variables separately
  - Understanding pathways through which these relationships occur

**The Role of Harsh Parenting**

- Harsh parenting vs. abusive practices
- Psychological and Physical Aggression
- Theory:
  - Social Interaction Learning (SIL) Framework (Patterson et al., 2010)
  - Intergenerational Transmissions
- Relationship between Harsh Parenting and Maternal Depression
Figure 1: Proposed Mediation Models
Purpose of Current Study

(1) Secondary Analysis: Longitudinal Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect (LONGSCAN)

(2) Intentional selection of a subsample of mothers with reported depressive symptoms and child maltreatment history

(3) Test the known associations between maternal depression and child outcomes through the mediation of harsh parenting for children age 6 and youth age 12
Hypotheses

• Higher levels of maternal depression would be related to higher levels of internalizing (H1a) and externalizing (H1b) symptoms of children age 6 and youth age 12

• We expected that harsh parenting practices, specifically psychological (H2) and physical aggression (H3) would mediate the positive relationships between maternal depression and youth internalizing (H2a & H3a) and externalizing (H2b & H3b) symptoms.
Method

Sample:
• Mediation analyses conducted with two samples of at-risk mother-child dyads at separate time-points: Child age 6 (n = 325) and youth age 12 (n = 213) using data from LONGSCAN
• Mothers: 28% Caucasian (n = 92); 42% African American (n = 137); 5% Hispanic (n = 16); 25% Multiracial (n = 84).

Measures:
– Maternal Maltreatment—Caregiver History of Loss and Victimization (VICA)
– Maternal Depression—CES-D
– Harsh Parenting—CTS-PC
– Child Outcomes—CBCL (age 6)
– Youth Outcomes—YSR (age 12)
Multiple regression analyses conducted to test direct paths proposed in mediation model
• Nonviolent conflict tactics included for comparison
Results

(1) Positive, significant associations were found between maternal depressive symptoms and child internalizing and externalizing at age 6 and youth age 12.

(2) Significant, partial mediation established among maternal depression, child outcomes and harsh parenting for both ages.

(3) Non-significant findings for non-violent parenting practices (as expected).
Discussion

• **Strengths/Limitations**
  - Study represents a “fine combing” of variables selected for analysis
  - Extends literature to include maternal maltreatment history *in the context* of maternal depressive symptoms
  - Extension of children of older ages: child age 6 and youth age 12
  - Diverse representation of an at-risk sample
  - Limitations: CTS-PC requires clarity on harsh vs. abusive parenting practices; further representation of maternal depressive symptomatology beyond 7-day period (as measured in the CES-D)

• **Future Directions**
  - Onset & Variation in Maternal Depression
  - Type of Abuse History (Physical, Sexual, Psychological) on Maternal Depression
Clinical Implications

Clinical Assessment Process

• Consider maternal depressive symptoms as co-occurring in the development of negative child outcomes during the initial assessment process
• Psychoeducation on impact of maternal depression on parent functioning
• Treat parent and child mental health challenges simultaneously

Parenting Interventions

• The Triple-P Positive Parenting Program (Timmer et al., 2011)
  – Reduction in Maternal Depressive Symptoms
• The Parent-Management Training—Oregon Model (PMTO) (Patterson et al., 2010)
  – Reduction in Maternal Depressive Symptoms
• The Incredible Years (IY)
  – Parents with maltreatment history had a greater capacity for parenting practice improvement than non-maltreated parents (Hurlburt et al., 2013)
References


