Introduction

- Research supports that child temperament and parenting behaviors interact to predict subsequent child outcomes.
- The diathesis-stress model\(^1\) posits that vulnerable children (e.g., high negative affect [NA]) are more likely to experience poor outcomes in maladaptive contexts (e.g., exposure to negative parenting).
- The differential susceptibility model\(^2\) expands on this idea, and posits that susceptible children are also more likely to experience positive outcomes in adaptive contexts.
- The majority of work on these interactions has focused on adverse outcomes, such as internalizing and externalizing problems\(^3,5\).
- Limited research has examined similar interactions with respect to predicting adaptive outcomes.
- Behavioral approaches are a candidate outcome to examine, given it underlies the development of positive outcomes, such as motivation and positive emotionality\(^4,7\).
- To address this gap, the current study tested whether infant NA and negative parenting interact to predict behavioral approach.
- Additionally, we explored whether such an interaction better fit a diathesis-stress or differential susceptibility model.

Hypothesis

- It was hypothesized that:
  - Infant NA would moderate the inverse relation between negative parenting and subsequent approach, such that this relation would be stronger among more vulnerable children (i.e., infants who display higher NA).

Methods

- Participants:
  - 150 mother-infant dyads
  - Mothers: 63% White, 11% Hispanic, 10% African-American, and 15% Other; average age between 25-30 years

- Measures & Procedure:
  - Cumulative Risk Index – measured at 4 months postpartum
  - Infant Behavior Questionnaire – measured at 6 months and 12 months postpartum
    - Fear, distress to limitations, sadness, and falling reactivity subscales were aggregated to form the NA composite variable, to measure infant NA at 6 (and 12 months postpartum)
    - Approach scale was used to measure infant approach behaviors at 6 and 12 months postpartum
  - Unstructured Free Play Task – measured at 8 months postpartum
    - Mothers were asked to play with their children normally, without the use of toys.
    - The task was coded using the Parent Child Early Relational Assessment coding scheme.
    - Negative parenting was measured using five discrete codes: angry/hostile tone of voice, expressed NA, angry/hostile mood, displeasure/disapproval/criticism, and contingent responsiveness to child’s negative/unresponsive behavior

Data Analysis

- A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted with 12-month approach as the dependent variable
  - Infant sex, cumulative risk, and 6-month infant approach were entered as covariates on step 1
  - 6-month infant NA (standardized) was entered on step 2
  - 8-month negative parenting behavior (standardized) was entered on step 3
  - The 6-month NA by 8-month negative parenting behavior interaction effect was entered on step 4

Results

| Table 1 |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Interaction between 6 month NA and 8 month Negative Parenting Predicting 12 Month Approach |  |  |
| Steps | Predictors | Standardized Beta |
| Delta R | R² | | | |
| Step 1 | Dependent Variable = 12 month Approach | .08** |
| Gender | .01 | .02 | .02 |
| Step 2 | Cumulative Risk | .03 | .05 | .03 |
| 6 Month Approach | .20** | .26** | .28** | .28* |
| Step 3 | 6 Month Negative Affect | .03 | - .08 | -.11 |
| Step 4 | 8 Month Negative Parenting | .04* | - .07 | -.07 |
| 6 Month Negative Affect * 8 Month Negative Parenting | -.19* |  |  |  |

Discussion

- The current study investigated how infant NA and negative parenting interact to predict subsequent approach behavior.
- Results suggest that negative parenting behaviors may undermine the development of approach behaviors for infants with greater vulnerability (i.e., higher NA).
- This may be because NP reflects greater controlling behavior, which for vulnerable children who are high in NA, reduces the degree to which they are motivated to approach aspects of their environment.
- In addition, follow-up analyses revealed that this finding better fit a diathesis-stress model than a differential susceptibility model.

References


Contact Information

- Corresponding author: Jacob Holzman (jacob.holzman@niu.edu)
- Poster can be downloaded through the Emotion Regulation and Temperament Lab (www.niu.edu/emoterg)