Introduction & Hypotheses

- Infant frustration has been implicated in the subsequent development of childhood externalizing problems, making it important to understand factors that may contribute to early frustration.
- Three aspects of the home environment which may contribute to infant frustration are:
  - Maternal depression, as links between higher levels of maternal depression and increased infant negative affect, broadly, have been identified.
  - Maternal dyadic (relationship) adjustment (DA) with her partner, as associations between low relationship adjustment and increased frustration in older children, as well as higher levels of negative affect in infancy, have been identified.
  - Home chaos, as prior studies have found associations between increased home chaos and subsequent childhood anxiety and impulsivity.
- It is also possible that maternal depression may be related to increased infant frustration, indirectly, through DA and home chaos.

Method

- 85 mothers (mean age = 27.67, 30% self-identified as a racial minority, 21% were classified as falling below the poverty level based on family income to needs) and their infants took part in the present study.
- 57.6% of the infants were female.

Method Continued

- Four months postpartum, mothers completed:
  - The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS)
  - The Confusion, Hubbub, and Order Scale (CHAOS)
  - The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI–II)
- It was anticipated that:
  - Depression scores from each measure were standardized and averaged to create a global depression score.
  - The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) was used to measure maternal DA.
  - The Confusion, Hubbub, and Order Scale (CHAOS) was used to measure home chaos.
  - The Infant Behavior Questionnaire – Revised (IBQ–R) to assess infant frustration.
  - At 6 months postpartum, mothers completed:
    - Infant Depression (4 mo)
    - Maternal Dyadic Adjustment (4 mo)
    - Home Chaos (4 mo)
    - Infant Frustration (6 mo)

Results

Discussion

- Findings provide support for one, and perhaps two (DA and home chaos), pathways through which maternal depression may be related to infant frustration.
  - Consistent with previous research, maternal depression was linked to poor DA and home chaos.
  - Also consistent with previous research, maternal depression was linked to infant frustration, indirectly, through maternal DA.
- The findings of this study suggest that interventions for depressed mothers that target marital relationships and home management, in addition to the depression itself, may be of benefit in preventing increased infant frustration and later childhood behavior problems.
- One limitation of the current study is the reliance on maternal report for maternal DA, and home chaos, and infant frustration.
- Future investigations could consider measuring infant frustration using laboratory based methods of assessment.
- Future research should also potentially consider the direction of effects between maternal depression, DA, and home chaos as these contextual variables may also influence maternal depression.
- Potential child effects (e.g., infant frustration influencing maternal depression) also warrant consideration in future work.

References


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