
Does maternal depression really lower child well-being?

A comparison of parents' and children's (self-) assessment

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Session: Parents' characteristics & child well-being



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Parental Depressionen in the Media

- Parental Depression Associated With Increased Healthcare Utilization in Children and Adolescents Psychiatry Advisor
- Smoking, Depression in Parents Linked with ADHD in Children MD Magazine



1. How strong is the effect of maternal depression on their children's well-being?
2. Do mothers evaluate the effects of maternal depression on their children's well-being differently than the children themselves?



Effects of maternal depression on CWB

- Emotional and behavioral problems in children of depressed mothers: a school-based study in Southern Brazil Reyes et al. 2019
- Maternal depression: Associations between behavioral problems in school-aged children, organization patterns, adversities, and family environment resources Cilino et al. 2018
- Maternal Depression, Social Vulnerability and Gender: Prediction of Emotional Problems Among Schoolchildren Pieta, Loureiro, Pasian 2018
- Characteristics of mothers' depressive illness as predictors for emotional and behavioural problems in children in a Sri Lankan setting Rohanachandra, Prathapan, Wijetunge 2018

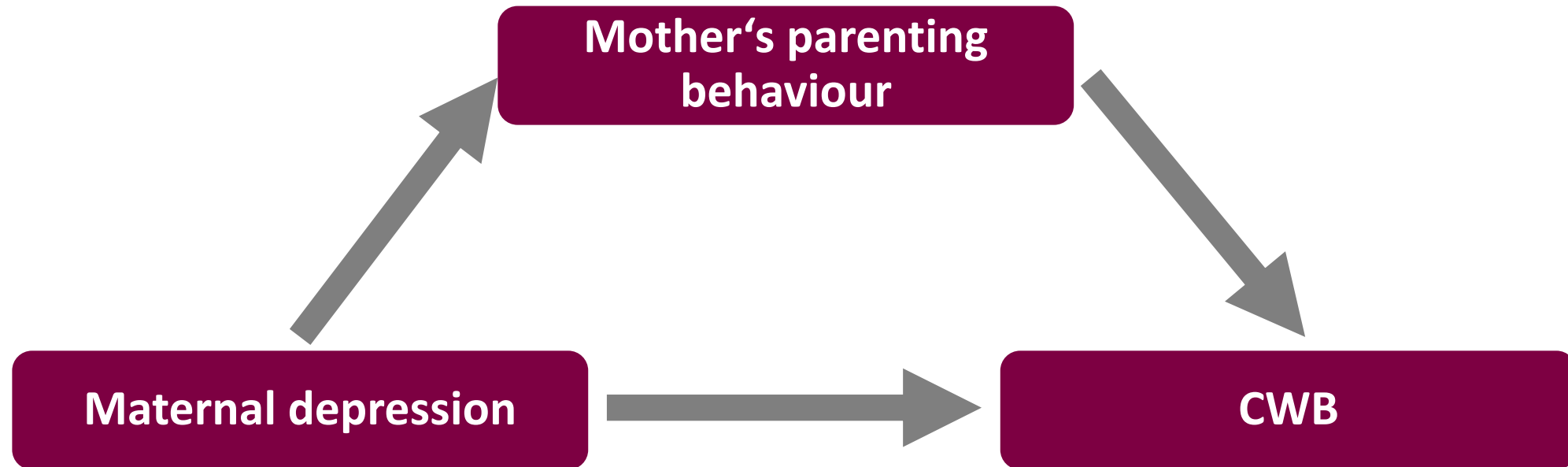


Effects of maternal depression on parenting behaviour

- Negative effect on co-parenting (less supportive, inter parental conflict) and development of family-level relations Tissot et al. 2017
- More negative parenting: negative affect, intrusion and criticism Ulmer-Yanic et al. 2018
- Less sensitive parenting behaviour and more negative emotions Muzik et al. 2017
- Maternal depression associated with hostility Bosquet, Egeland 2001



Parenting as mediating factor



Validity of parent's information

- Children as passive research objects, mostly objective descriptions of children's lives Ben-Arieh 2007
- Vast differences between parent reports and child reports Upton, Lawford, Eiser 2008
- Parents do not always report their children's emotions / well-being correctly Sweeting 2001
- Adolescents report more emotional and conduct problems than their parents Koskelainen et al. 2000



Sample selection



The German Family Panel (pairfam) waves 2 to 9

» children, anchor, partner

» observations included if

at least 2 observations in waves 2 to 9

transition into depression (transition out of depression excluded)



Sample



1,233 children (3,931 observations)

- » **age:** 8 to 16 years
- » **sex:** 51.7% boys; 48.3% girls
- » **composition of household:**

13.7% only children

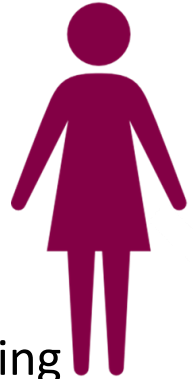
51.1% two-child households

35.2% 3 to 6 children

88.5% married parents



Depression and harsh parenting



Depression:

1. My mood is melancholy.
2. I am happy.
3. I am depressed.
4. I am sad.
5. I am in desperation.
6. My mood is gloomy.
7. I feel good.
8. I feel secure.
9. I am calm and composed.
10. I enjoy life.

Harsh parenting*:

How often do the following things happen between you and your child?

1. I criticize my child.
2. I yell at my child because he/she did something wrong.
3. I scold my child because I was angry at him/her.

State-Trait Depression Scales (STDS)

Measure to capture **depressive experiences** in

- » non-clinical samples
- » healthy respondents

* Items vary slightly for children's questionnaire



Child well-being



Strength & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

- » Screening of **child behaviour**
- » Answered by **parents** and **children** in pairfam

Emotional problems*:

1. I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence.
2. I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness.
3. I have many fears, I am easily scared.
4. I am often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful.
5. I worry a lot.

Conduct problems*:

1. I get very angry and often lose my temper.
2. I am often accused of lying or cheating.
3. I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want.
4. I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere.
5. I usually do as I am told.

* Items vary slightly for parents' questionnaire

0=Not true 1=Somewhat true 2=Certainly true



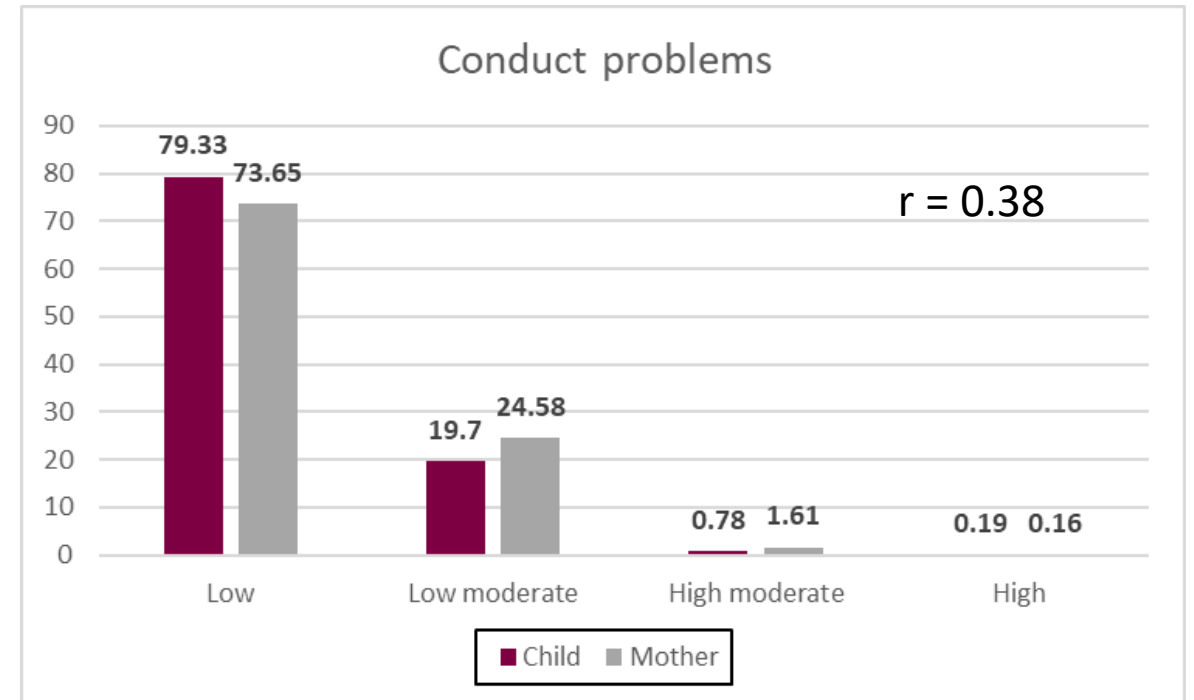
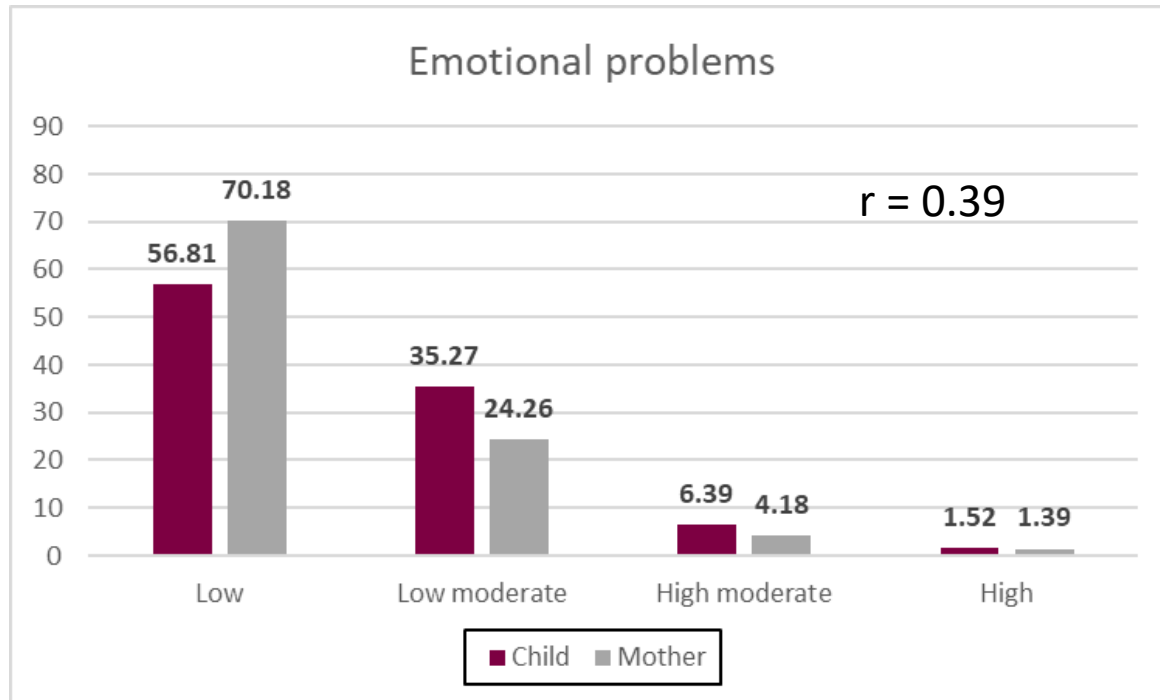
Descriptive statistics



		\emptyset	SD	Min	Max
Mother	Depression (STDS)	1.73	0.50	1	4
	Harsh parenting	2.40	0.62	1	5
	Child Emotional problems	0.37	0.40	0	2
	Child Conduct problems	0.33	0.31	0	1.8
Child	Harsh parenting	1.94	0.70	1	5
	Child Emotional problems	0.49	0.40	0	2
	Child Conduct problems	0.31	0.27	0	2
N = 1,233 (3,931 observations)					



Differences: Maternal and child assessment



Covariates

Mother:

- employment status mother
- educational level mother
- married cohabitation vs. not married cohabitation

Child:

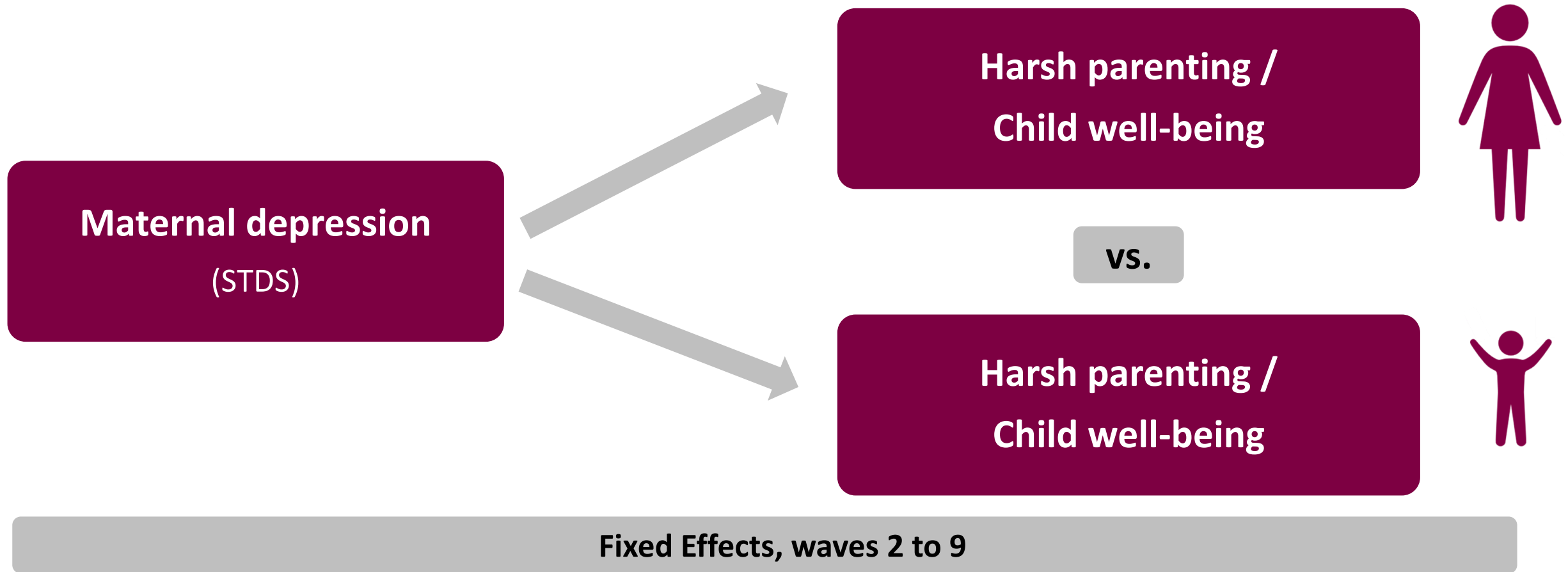
- age
- number of children in household



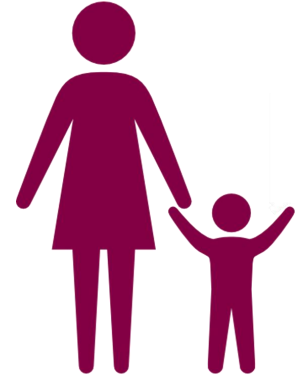
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Model



Effects of depression on harsh parenting



	Harsh parenting (mother)	Harsh parenting (child)
	Model 1	Model 2
Depression (mother)	0.09**	0.05
Constant	2.22***	2.07***

Covariates:

- Number of children in HH
- Age of children
- Employment status mother
- Educational level mother
- married vs. Not married

N = 1,109 (2,837 observations)

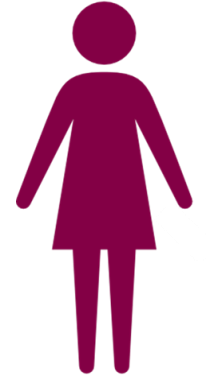
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Significant effect of maternal depression on harsh parenting when mother information is used – no significant effects when child reports are used

» **Effects differ**



Effects of depression on CWB – mother report



	Emotional problems	Conduct problems
	Model 3	Model 4
Depression (mother)	0.06**	0.04**
Constant	0.19***	0.29***

Covariates:

- Number of children in HH
- Age of children
- Employment status mother
- Educational level mother
- married vs. Not married

N = 1,233 (3,931 observations)

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Significant effect of maternal depression on emotional problems and conduct problems reported by mother

➤ Higher levels of maternal depression → higher levels of behavioural/emotional problems



Effects of depression on CWB – child report



	Emotional problems	Conduct problems
	Model 5	Model 6
Depression (mother)	0.03	0.01
Constant	0.96***	0.48***

Covariates:

- Number of children in HH
- Age of children
- Employment status mother
- Educational level mother
- married vs. Not married

N = 1,233 (3,931 observations)

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

No significant effect of maternal depression (reported by mother) on children's self-reported CWB

» Mothers evaluation of emotional and conduct problems and children's self-reports differ



Conclusion

- Differences between maternal evaluation and children's self-report
- Mothers: Increase of depression → increase in child emotional and conduct problems as reported by mother
- Children's self-perception does not show increasing emotional and conduct problems when mothers experience more depressive symptoms



» Findings vary depending on respondent



Conclusion

- » Effect of maternal depression on child well-being is not as strong as former studies indicate
- » Incorporate children as 'experts of their own lives' to conduct more reliable research → take their perceptions into account
- » Validity of parents' reports need to be discussed critically
- » Use child measures complementing not substituting



Thank you for you attention!

