



# The Cycle of Depression: Depressive Symptoms from Caregivers to Preschool-Aged Children

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## Introduction

### Background

- Children of mothers who endorse depressive symptoms are also more likely to exhibit depressive symptoms (Gaffery, Tillman, Barch & Luby, 2018).
- Literature suggests maternal and paternal depression both are likely to cause negative outcomes in their children (Kane & Garber, 2009).
- Children who have mothers with depression are more likely to exhibit psychopathology later in life (Gaffery, Tillman, Barch & Luby, 2018).
- Parents who have depressive symptoms have been found to have children who endorse more internalizing and externalizing behaviors than their peers (Conners-Burrow, Swindle, McKelvey & Bokony, 2015).

### Gaps in the Literature

- While there is ample evidence suggesting maternal depression can impact a child, there is limited research assessing other types of caregiver's (e.g. fathers, grandparents) impact of depressive symptoms on their children.

## Purpose & Hypothesis

- The purpose of this study is to determine if depressive symptoms in different types of caregivers is associated with depressive symptoms in their preschool-age children.
- It was hypothesized that caregivers with depressive symptoms would be associated with children's depressive symptoms, and this relationship would be observed in all types of caregivers.

## Methods

### Participants

- Participants included 3,564 Head Start caregivers and their children from the Head Start Impact Study ("HSIS", 2002-2006).
- Caregivers were split into three categories: mothers ( $N = 3,247$ ), fathers ( $N = 151$ ), and other ( $N = 166$ ).
- The other type caregivers consisted of grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, stepparents, foster parents, parent's partner, and adoptive parents.
- Caregivers ranged in age from 16 to 78 years ( $M = 28.91$ ;  $SD = 7.34$ ).
- The majority of children were identified as Hispanic (37.6%).

### Measures and Procedures

- Participants completed two measures:
  - The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, a 20-item self-report measure of symptoms associated with depression (Radloff, 1977).
  - An abbreviated version of the Child Behavior Checklist, a parent report that measures a broad range of function in children, including depressive symptoms (Achenbach, 2011).
- In order to test the hypothesis of whether caregiver depressive symptoms and child depressive symptoms were associated across caregiver type, a Chi-Square analysis was conducted.

## Results

### Finding 1

- There was a significant relationship between mothers who endorsed severe and moderate depression for themselves and endorsed depressive symptoms some of the time for their children,  $X^2(6, N = 3,564) = 124.79, p < .01$ .

### Finding 2

- The relationship between fathers who endorsed depressive symptoms for themselves and their children was found to be insignificant; however, a significant relationship was found between fathers who endorsed depressive symptoms for themselves and did not endorse depressive symptoms for their children depressive symptoms,  $X^2(6, N = 3,564) = 23.350, p < .01$ .

### Finding 3

- The other caregiver category did not have any overall significant interactions  $X^2(6, N = 3,564) = 12.053, p > .05$ .

## Table

Caregiver Type		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Mother	Pearson Chi-Square	124.790 <sup>a</sup>	6	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	119.616	6	.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	100.041	1	.000
	N of Valid Cases	3247		
Father	Pearson Chi-Square	23.350 <sup>a</sup>	6	.001
	Likelihood Ratio	23.124	6	.001
	Linear-by-Linear Association	15.640	1	.000
	N of Valid Cases	152		
Other Types of Caregivers	Pearson Chi-Square	12.503 <sup>d</sup>	6	.052
	Likelihood Ratio	12.625	6	.049
	Linear-by-Linear Association	5.723	1	.017
	N of Valid Cases	165		

## Conclusions

- The results of the current study supported the hypothesis that caregiver depressive symptoms can predict depressive symptoms in their preschool-aged children (Gaffery, Tillman, Barch & Luby, 2018); however, this relationship was consistently associated with all caregiver types.
- This suggests that environmental factors, in addition to genetic predispositions, may play a significant role in explaining the relations between caregiver and child depressive symptoms.
- Although this study does not show that fathers' depressive symptoms have impact on their children's depressive symptoms (most likely because of the sample size), other studies show that they may be impactful (Kane & Garber, 2009).

### Limitations & Future Directions

- The caregiver sample consisted of 93% mothers and 7% of other types of caregivers. Future studies should be more inclusive of different types of caregivers.
- Future studies should use more targeted measures for looking at preschool-aged children's depressive symptoms.

## References

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