The Cycle of Depression: Depressive Symptoms from Caregivers to Preschool-Aged Children
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Background
- Children of mothers who endorse depressive symptoms are more likely to exhibit depressive symptoms (Gaffery, Tillman, Barc & 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, Barc & 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 caregivers’ (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
- 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 (Achenback, 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, $X^2 (6, N = 3,564) = 23.35, p < .01$.

Finding 3
- The other caregiver category did not have any overall significant interactions $X^2 (6, N = 3,564) = 12.05, p > .05$.

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

Table

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