

# Parenting, attachment, and problem behaviors in preschoolers

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## Introduction

Attachment security during the preschool years is crucial because it is a period of developmental progresses on social and emotional development.

- Specifically, children who insecurely attached with their mothers displayed more problem behaviors than children who securely attached with their mothers (Booth, 1994).
- Mothers of securely attached children were found to use responsive and sensitive parenting, but mothers of insecurely attached children were found to use harsher parenting.
- Although previous research showed the links between parenting, attachment security, and child problem behaviors, there is less clarity in the link between **maternal parenting efficacy, attachment security, and child problem behaviors**.
- To address this research gap, the present study aims to examine **direct and indirect effects of parenting efficacy, harsh parenting, child attachment security and child problem behaviors**.

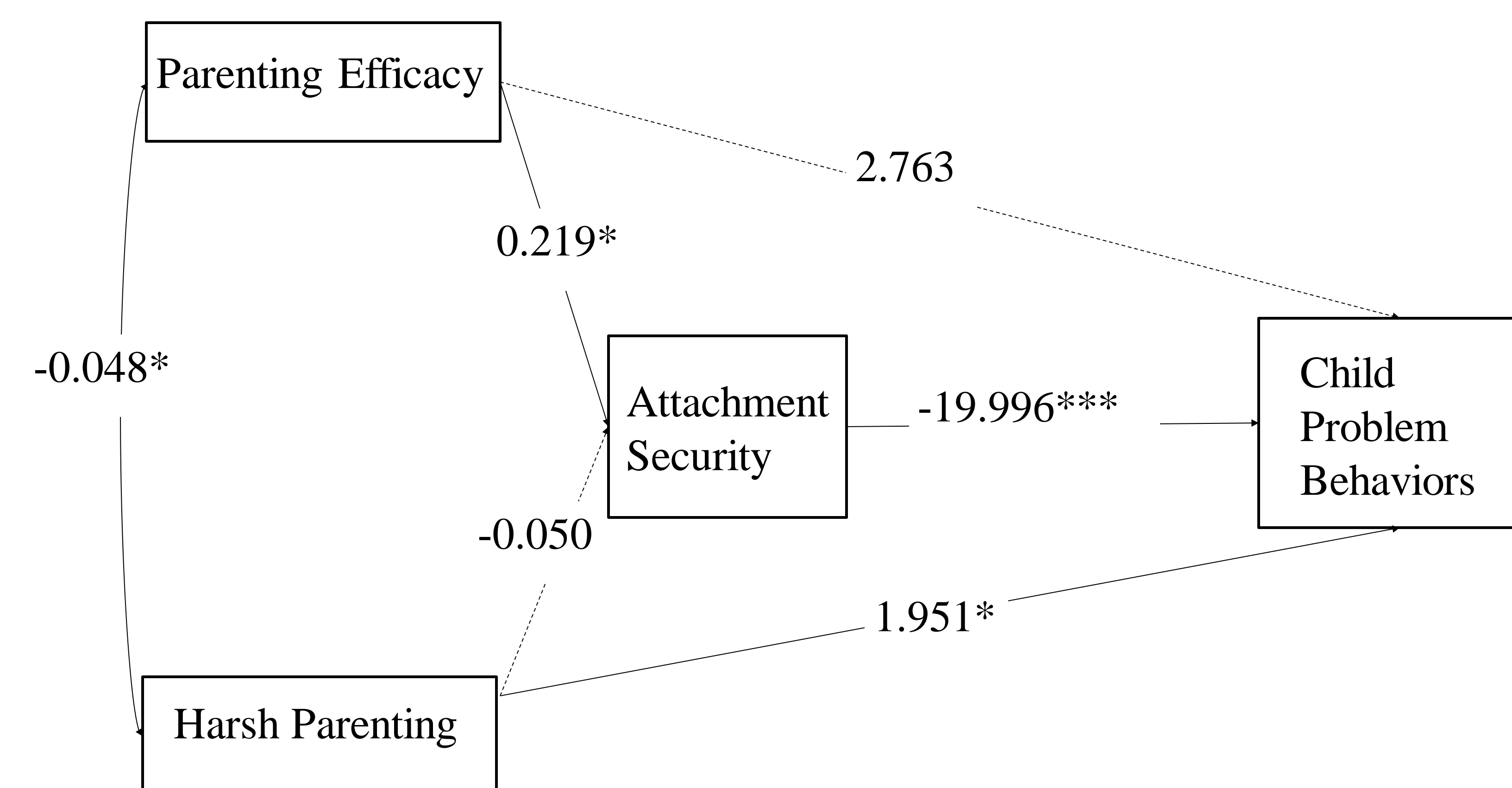
## Methods

Participants (N=60 dyads: 60 mothers and 60 children) were drawn from a larger study, for whom written parental consent and child assent were received. Mothers reported their parenting self-efficacy, harsh parenting, and child problem behaviors; and completed 90 card sorting during a lab visit regarding the child's behavior using the Attachment Q-set (AQS).

## Research Questions

The aims of this study is the following:

- Is there any direct effects of parenting efficacy on preschool children's attachment security and problem behaviors?
- Is there any direct effects of harsh parenting on preschool children's attachment security and problem behaviors?
- Are there any indirect effects of the link between parenting efficacy and preschool children's problem behaviors through attachment security?
- Are there any indirect effects of the link between harsh parenting and preschool children's problem behaviors through attachment security?



Indirect effect from parenting efficacy to child problem behaviors:  $b = -4.373$ ,  $SE = 1.903$ , 95% CI[-7.503, -1.242],  $p = 0.019$

Figure 1.

*Direct and indirect effects of parenting efficacy, harsh parenting, preschool children's attachment security, and problem behaviors*

## Results

Model fit indices included a chi-square of 2.513 with 5 degrees of freedom, a Comparative Fix Index of 1.000, a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation of 0.000 (95% CI = 0.000, 0.119), and a Standardized Root Mean Square Residual of 0.036, which indicated a good fit to the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

A path model revealed that there were significant direct effects between parenting efficacy and preschool children's attachment security ( $b = 0.219$ ,  $p < .05$ ); attachment security and problem behaviors ( $b = -19.996$ ,  $p < .001$ ); and maternal harsh parenting and problem behaviors ( $b = 1.951$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

In addition, there was a significant indirect effect of maternal parenting efficacy on preschool children's problem behaviors through child attachment security ( $b = -4.373$ ,  $SE = 1.903$ , 95% CI[-7.503, -1.242],  $p = 0.019$ ).

## Conclusion

In sum, the findings highlight the mediating role of attachment security in preschoolers in the linkages between problem behaviors through parenting efficacy and harsh parenting. The present study shows the indirect link between parenting efficacy and problem behaviors.

## References

Booth, C. L. (1994). Predicting social adjustment in middle childhood: The role of preschool attachment security and maternal style. *Social Development*, 3(3), 189-204.



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