



# Externalizing Behaviors in Head Start Children: The Role of Caregiver Employment Status

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## Introduction

### PREVIOUS LITERATURE

- Major increases in maternal employment and an increased percentage of single-parent families make non-maternal child care an important factor in children's development (Clarke-Stewart & Allhusen, 2002).
- Individual differences in children's capacity for regulation at each developmental stage are important for the parent – child relationship and for understanding children's developing self-regulation (Blair, 2003).
- Children with employed mothers have relatively high levels of cognitive achievement (e.g., Ruhm, 2000).
- Results indicate that maternal employment largely is inconsequential to child well-being regardless of birth cohort (mothers employment status is not related to the well being of the child; e.g., Wills & Brauer, 2011).
- Empirical results indicate that maternal employment in the first year of a child's life has significant negative effects on White children's cognitive outcomes, and these effects persist to ages 7 or 8 for some children but not for others (e.g., Wills & Brauer, 2011).

### PURPOSE

- The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between working caregivers and Head Start children's externalizing behaviors within the classroom.

### HYPOTHESIS

- It was hypothesized that children of working caregivers would exhibit significantly more externalizing behaviors than children of non-working caregivers.

## Methods

### PARTICIPANTS

- A total of 49 Head Start children (28 females, 21 males) ranging in age from 3 to 5 years ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ).
- Caregivers of the children ranged in age from 20 to 51 years ( $M = 30.27$ ,  $SD = 6.99$ ).
- The primary Head Start classroom teacher of the child.

### MEASURES AND PROCEDURE

- Demographics Form, where parents provided information about the child's family and the parent's current occupation.
- Behavior Assessment System for Children – Third Edition, Teacher Report Scale-Preschool (BASC-3 TRS-P; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2015)
  - Child's externalizing behaviors subscale

## Discussion

### FINDINGS

- Results do not support previous literature, indicating that children of working parents do not necessarily exhibit more externalizing behaviors at school.
- Could be due to subclinical levels of externalizing behavior problems across the sample

### LIMITATIONS

- Only two caregiver groups (i.e., working or not-working)
- Small sample size of children with subclinical behavior problems
- Variability of non-working group (e.g., stay-at-home parent, disabled, unemployed)

## Conclusion

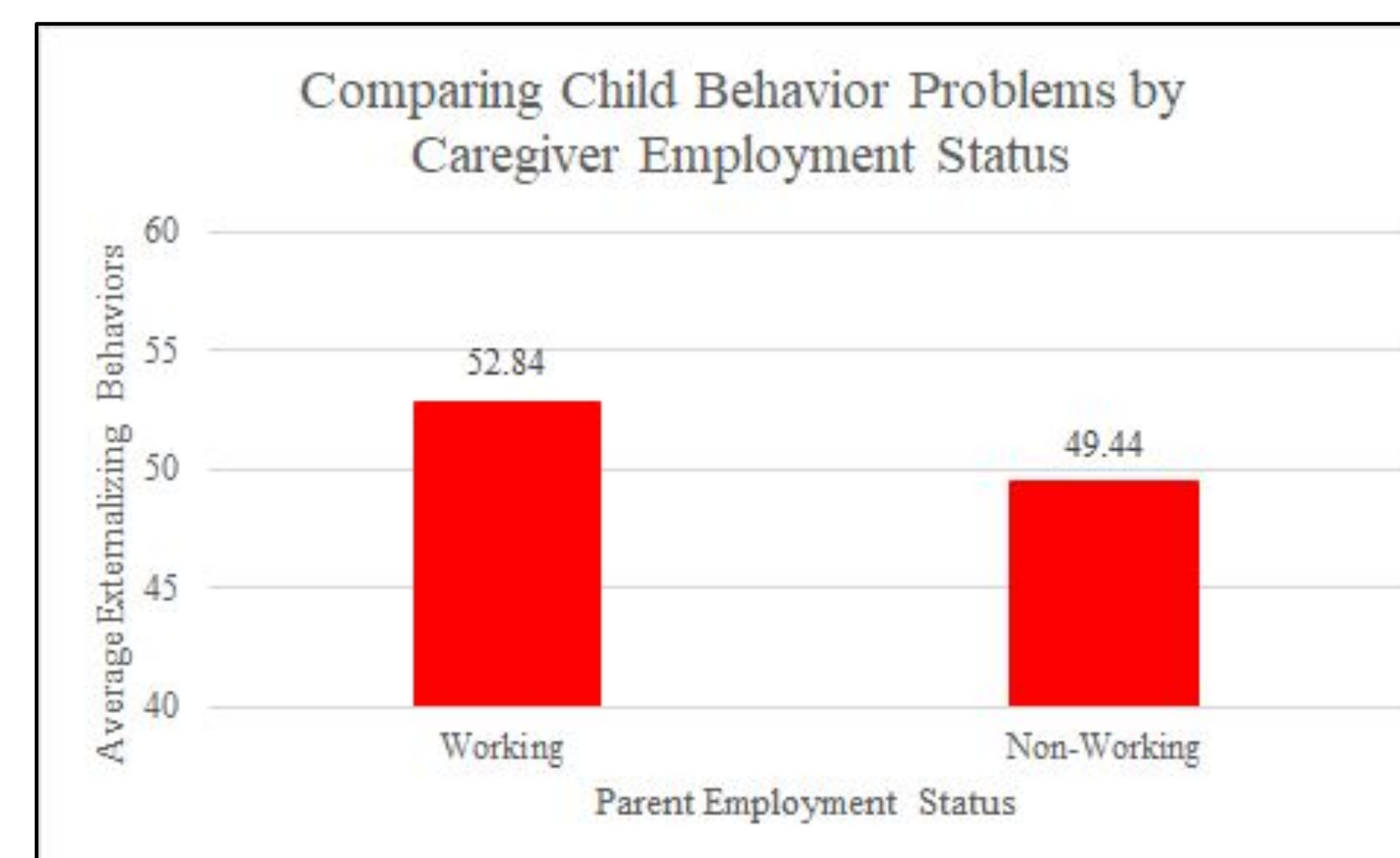
### FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- In the future, there should be more than just two groups of caregiver types because some caregivers may be unemployed for health reasons or other factors.
- Future studies should take different types of occupations and socioeconomic statuses into consideration.

## Results

### INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST

- An independent samples *t*-test was calculated with results indicating that child externalizing behavior problems did not significantly differ [ $t(45) = 0.72$ ,  $p = 0.29$ ] between working caregivers ( $M = 52.84$ ,  $SD = 11.19$ ) and non-working caregivers ( $M = 49.44$ ,  $SD = 18.48$ ).
- Results demonstrated that the working status of a child's caregiver did not indicate a significant difference in externalizing behaviors in the classroom.



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