Mothers’ Attributions for Positive and Negative Child Behavior - Associations With Mothers’ ADHD Symptoms

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Abstract

Objective:
Previous research has shown that parent attributions for child behavior have important implications on the parent–child relationship. The current study investigates whether mothers’ level of ADHD symptoms is associated with their child-responsibility attributions for positive and negative child behavior.

Method:
Seventy-nine mothers of 6- to 11-year-old boys participated in this online study. Mothers completed questionnaires assessing their attributions, their ADHD symptoms, and their child’s behavior.

Results:
All mothers offered more child-responsibility attributions for positive behaviors than for negative behaviors. However, mothers with greater levels of ADHD symptoms did this to a lesser extent, blaming their child relatively more for negative behavior and giving their child relatively less credit for positive behavior.

Conclusion:
This is the first study demonstrating the association between mothers’ ADHD symptoms and child-responsibility attributions. It is possible that these relatively more negative attributions could be underlying some of the parenting difficulties reported by parents with ADHD.