

A Longitudinal Study of the Relation Between Family Functioning and Preschool ADHD Symptoms.

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Abstract

The present study examined the bidirectional relation between family functioning and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms across the preschool years. Participants included 197 (110 boys) 3-year-old children ($M = 44.14$ months, $SD = 3.43$; 60% White) with and without behavior problems and their parents who took part in a 3-year longitudinal study. Parenting, parent psychopathology, life stress, and child symptoms were assessed annually from ages 3 to 6. Cross-lagged models provided evidence for both parent and child effects for mothers. In particular, greater maternal overreactive parenting and life stress were predictive of more child ADHD symptoms, and greater child ADHD symptoms significantly predicted greater maternal life stress and depressive symptoms and lower warmth, controlling for child oppositional defiant disorder and parent ADHD symptoms. Child effects were evident for fathers' depression and life stress, but these did not remain controlling for paternal ADHD symptoms. Findings suggest that targeting child ADHD symptoms, maternal overreactive parenting, and maternal stress each hold promise for attenuating the negative mutual influence of child ADHD symptoms and family functioning over time.