Using latent transition analysis to test bidirectional effects between parenting and children’s emotion regulation
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Background
- Maternal parenting practices are known to profoundly influence the development of children’s emotional regulation (ER) development across the first years of life.
- Although it is established that children’s development influences parenting, few studies have examined bidirectionality between parenting and ER, particularly across time.
- No studies have utilized person-centered approaches to delineate bidirectional mechanisms between parenting and children’s development.

Method
- Sample: N = 2876, mother-child dyads (14-, 24-, 36-months and pre-k)
  Data from a large, longitudinal multi-site evaluation of Early Head Start.
- Measures
  Observed parenting: maternal sensitivity, stimulation of cognitive development, positive regard, detachment, intrusiveness, negative regard were observed via videotape during a free play task between parent and child at all four waves. Scores ranged from 1-7.
  Emotion regulation: Observed by researcher with Bayley Behavior Rating Scale (Waves 1-3) and Leiter-R (Wave 4).
- Analytic Plan
  • Latent Transition Analysis in Mplus 7.3.
  • Tested invariance of profile structures across time
  • ER was added as covariate, predictor, and outcome in single model.
  • Controlled for child sex and site.

Results
- Latent Profiles
  • Supportive (72.1 – 86.7%)
  • Good enough (9.9 – 24.5%)
  • Harsh (0.7 – 2.3%)
  • Detached (1.0 – 5.1%)

- Proﬁles at 14- and 24-months were invariant. Profiles at 36-months and Pre-k were invariant.

- Child effects
  - 14-24 months
    Supportive: +1 ER, Harsh: -1 ER
  - 24-36 months
    Supportive: +1 ER, Harsh: -1 ER

- Table 1. Standardized means ($M$) for 24-, 36-months, and pre-k ER by earlier parenting profile

- Discussion
  - Children’s ER skills reinforced positive parenting, and promoted it in toddlerhood. Children had little influence on Harsh parenting, or on movement out of Detached parenting. The influence of these parenting styles on children’s ER were unidirectional.

Conclusions
1. This study highlights the utility of LTA for studying bidirectional effects with person-centered methods.
2. Able to examine how bidirectional effects vary by subgroup and across time.
   - Children’s ER skills reinforced and altered parenting differently by developmental age.
   - Supportive parenting’s influence on children’s regulation waned with time.

Future Directions
2. Research: Probing influence of harsh parenting on children’s ER, particularly given stability and change in parenting style membership.

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