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Returning to School After COVID-19:

Relationships Between Parental Stress and Resilience with Children's Mental Health Behaviors

Research Week Presentation

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Background of the Study: COVID-19 and Predictions of the Next Pandemic

- Experts predicted a mental health crisis from lockdowns in 2020 (Bartek et al., 2021; Browne et al., 2021; Fitzpatrick et al., 2020; Shuja et al., 2020; Vindegaard & Benros, 2020).
- Predicted long lasting effects for children (Singh et al., 2020; Waters et al., 2021).
- After lockdown, some children showed mental health symptoms while others did not (Achterberg et al., 2021; Carney et al., 2022; Dabravolskaj et al., 2021; Luthar, 2020; Soneson et al., 2022).

Background of the Study:

Lockdowns and Disruptions of Family Life

- Disruptions of children's routines such as school, sports, playtime with friends.
- Mitigation strategies were stressed
 - wearing masks, handwashing, and social distancing
- Families were confined to the home for
 - work, school, and play
 - added stress to all members of the family

(Ashworth et al., 2022; Idoiaga Mondragon et al., 2021; Munir, 2021; O'Sullivan et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2020).

Background of the Study:

Positive Consequences

- Forced lockdown provided time for families to bond.
- Parents as teachers
 - personally engaged with children.
- Families were able to spend quality time together
 - without distractions from outside activities and people (Achterberg et al., 2021; Carney et al., 2022; Cost et al., 2022; Cusinato et al., 2020; Imber-Black, 2020; Luthar, 2020; Soneson et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2021).

Background of the Study: Lockdowns Lifted

- Schools reopened with stringent requirements to keep children and teachers safe.
- Effected activities included:
 - mealtime, recess, walking in line, sharing materials, and sharing spaces
(Pattison et al., 2021).
- Mitigation methods at school were anxiety producing for some children and adults (Anderson et al., 2021; O'Toole & Simovska, 2021).

Background of the Study:

Mental Health and Behavior Issues

- Despite decreases in COVID-19 restrictions and illness, student anxiety and problematic behavior continue to increase.
- Anxiety and aggression are two of the significant issues post lockdown (Li & Zhou, 2021; Schwartz et al., 2021).

Background of the Study: Effects on the Children

- While some children are suffering with mental health issues, other children are showing no ill effects from lockdowns (Bartlett & Vivrette, 2020; Herbers et al., 2021; PeConga et al., 2020; Soneson et al., 2021; Teo & Griffiths, 2020).
- Studies suggest that parental resilience in the face of stress mitigated the harmful mental effects of lockdown (Bartlett & Vivrette, 2020; Herbers et al., 2021; PeConga et al., 2020; Soneson et al., 2021; Teo & Griffiths, 2020).
- Positivity and healthy parent coping skills are closely tied to the definition of parental resilience (Anderson et al., 2021; Capurso et al., 2021; O'Toole & Simovska, 2021).

Background of the Study:

Why does this matter?

- Children and their families experienced tremendous upheaval with COVID-19 lockdowns.
- Experts, school officials, and parents are concerned with new behaviors in children, such as anxiety and aggression.
- Could stronger parental resilience during the stress of COVID-19 lockdowns be related to the absence of mental health issues in their children?

Problem Statement

- Gaps in the current literature include the relationship of parental resilience under stress with the successful transition of children back to in-person school.
- The proposed age group of students 7-11 years old is overlooked in the literature.
- The current emphasis for young children in the literature focuses on the physical and health effects of the pandemic lockdowns.
 - Examples: extended digital device use and obesity (Breidokienė et al., 2021).

Research Questions

Research Questions for Parental COVID Stress

- RQ1: Does parental COVID lockdown stress as measured by the COVID Stress Scales (CSS; Taylor et al., 2020) relate to children's anxiety when returning to in-person schools as measured by the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED; Birmaher et al., 1999)?
- RQ2: Does parental COVID lockdown stress as measured by the COVID Stress Scales (CSS; Taylor et al., 2020) relate to children's aggression when returning to in-person schools as measured by the Outburst Monitoring Scale (OMS; Kronenberger et al., 2007)?

Research Questions

Research Questions for Parental Resilience

- RQ3: Does parental resilience during lockdown as measured by the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS; Smith et al., 2008) relate to children's anxiety when returning to in-person schools as measured by the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED; Birmaher et al., 1999)?
- RQ 4: Does parental resilience during lockdown as measured by the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS; Smith et al., 2008) relate to children's aggression when returning to in-person schools as measured by the Outburst Monitoring Scale (OMS; Kronenberger et al., 2007)?

Research Questions

Research Questions for Parental Resilience as a Mediator

- RQ5: Does parental resilience as measured by the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS; Smith et al., 2008) mediate parental COVID Stress as measured by the COVID Stress Scales (CSS; Taylor et al., 2020) on children's post-lockdown anxiety as measured by the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED; Birmaher et al., 1999)?
- RQ6: Does parental resilience as measured by the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS; Smith et al., 2008) mediate parental COVID Stress as measured by the COVID Stress Scales (CSS; Taylor et al., 2020) on children's post-lockdown aggression as measured by the Outburst Monitoring Scale (OMS; Kronenberger et al., 2007)?

Purpose of the Study

- The purpose of this quantitative correlational study is to examine parental stress and resilience during the COVID-19 lockdown and its relationship to children's behaviors, specifically anxiety and aggression when returning to in-person school.



Overview of Methodology



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Participants

Participants

- Parents
 - Of students who are currently ages 7-11.
 - Whose children attended schools when lockdowns sent the children home.
 - In families that experienced extended lockdowns together.

Materials

Proposed Survey

- The questionnaire will consist of three sections.
 - The first section provides
 - the study description
 - informed consent.
 - In the second section parents will be asked to complete
 - demographic questions
 - » parental ages and the ages of the children.
 - » Race and ethnicity of both adults and children,
 - » adult educational attainment,
 - » Pre- and post- Covid job descriptions/ employment status.
 - One additional question regarding child's pre-lockdown mental health diagnoses will be used for exclusion criteria screening.

Materials

Proposed Survey

- The third section will consist of:
 - Pertaining to parent:
 - Brief Resilience Scale (BRS; Smith et al., 2008)
 - COVID Stress Scales (Taylor et al., 2020)
 - Pertaining to child:
 - The Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders (SCARED; Birmaher et al., 1999).
 - Outburst Monitoring Scale (OMS; Kronenberger et al., 2007).

Procedures

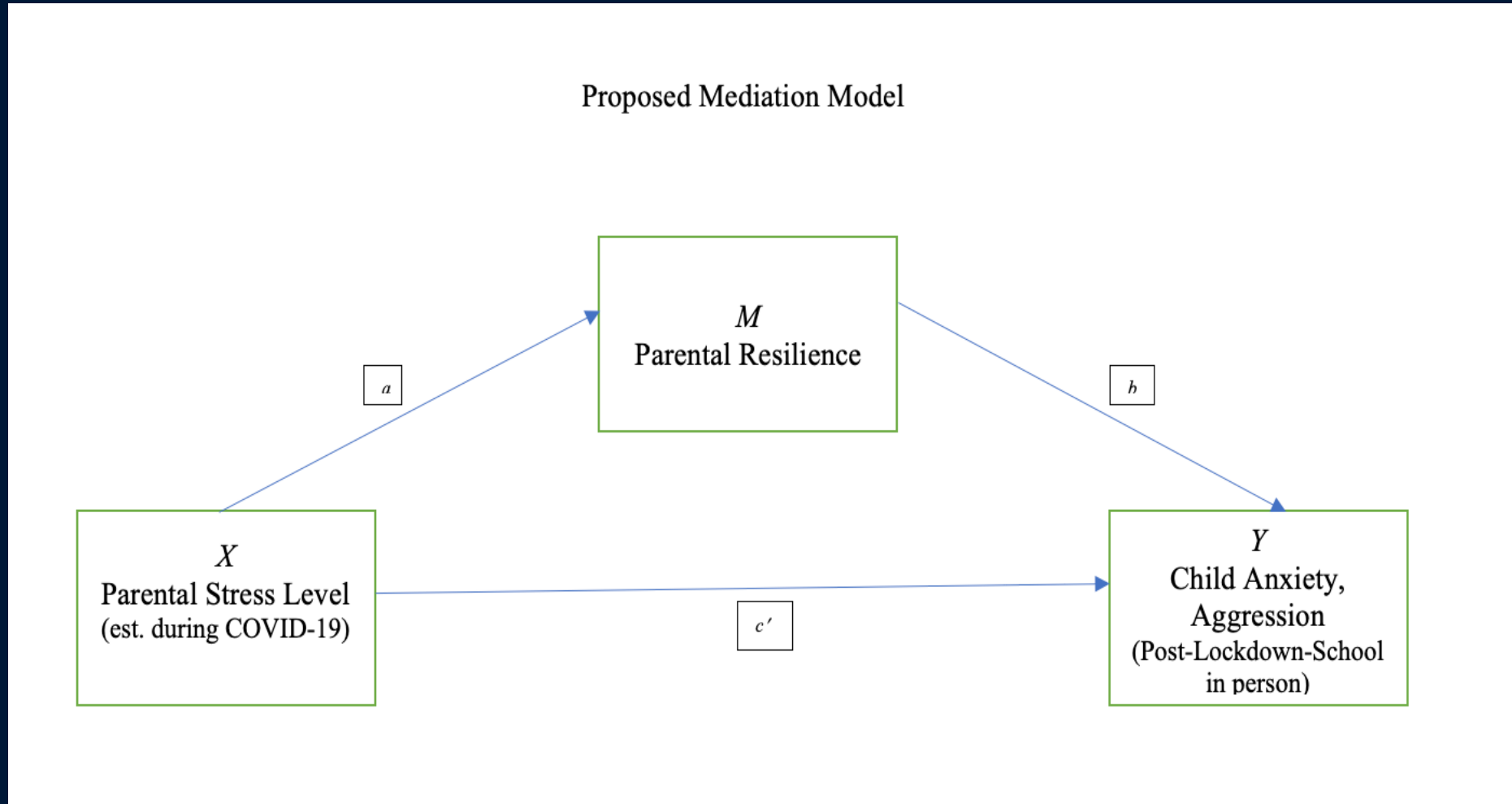
- School administration have been contacted for permission to recruit via district media pages.
- Parents will be recruited through the targeted schools' websites and social media platforms.
- Interested parents will receive a screening questionnaire via a live link on the school's media page.

Analysis

- The study will be a quantitative method study with a correlational design.
- The research questions focus on the relationship between parental resilience and their children's behavior, specifically anxiety and aggression.
- Mediation models will be used to help explain the action of parental resilience on parental COVID stress and children's post-lockdown anxiety and aggression

Figure 1

Proposed Parental Stress Mediation Model



Note. This Mediation Model Path Diagram Image was created by Christa P. Stanley.

Reflecting Forward

- The pandemic affects everyone differently.
- Children were removed from their routines and activities.
- Parents were left as the main caregivers and influencers of their children.
- The study stresses the role of resilience in relation to parents and their children's behavior.

Reflecting Forward

- Addresses literature gaps so researchers can take logical next steps to study interventions.
- Focuses on behaviors typically seen in children affected by pandemic-related or catastrophic events.
- The proposed study will explore whether there is a relationship between parents who were able to show more resilience under stress and their children's manifestation of anxiety and aggression after the COVID-19 lockdowns.

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