

Predicting inept discipline : the role of parental depressive symptoms, anger, and attribution

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Abstrak

Relations among parents' psychological difficulties (i.e., depressive symptoms, overt anger), dysfunctional attributions for child misbehavior, and inept discipline were investigated in a representative community sample of 451 mothers and 449 fathers. Depressive symptoms and anger were hypothesized to relate to discipline via their link with parents' attributions. Path analyses revealed that depressive symptoms predicted parent-centered causal attributions (i.e., stable, global, and dispositional), which, in turn, related to laxness. Depressive symptoms also predicted child-centered responsibility attributions (i.e., controllable, intentional, and negative), which, in turn, related to overreactivity. Anger predicted overreactivity directly. The patterns of relations were similar for fathers and mothers. The importance of addressing parents' psychological difficulties and dysfunctional attributions in interventions for families with disruptive children is discussed.