

The Effect of Parental Depression on Children's Problem Behavior

¹Chun-Ok Jang

¹Assistant Professor., Department of Social Welfare, Honam University, Korea
spring@honam.ac.kr

Abstract

For proper socialization of children the psychological and emotional state of parents that affect children is very important. Recently, while interest in various psychological behavioral problems of children has increased, various studies have been conducted on parental psychology that affects children's emotions. In particular, due to COVID-19, stress has increased throughout society, and it has made parental psychology and childrearing more difficult. Therefore, we aim to investigate the effects of psychological factors, among the variables of various parents that affect children's problem behavior in this study.

As a result of this study, it can be confirmed that there is a difference in the effect of parental depression on children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Parental depression had a significant positive effect on children's internalizing behavior with $\beta = .34$, $p < .001$. In other words, the higher the parents' depression, the higher the child's internalization behavior. And parental depression was found to have a significant effect on children's externalizing behavior, with $\beta = .81$, $p < .001$. This also means that the higher the parents' depression, the higher the child's externalizing behavior. Therefore, it can be seen that parental depression is an important factor influencing both children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors.

Keywords: Parents Depression, Children's Externalizing Behavior, Children's Internalization Behavior Parental psychology, Parental Emotions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Even in modern society where the perception of family has changed a lot, there is a function of the family that does not change. Among these things, the protection and socialization process for the healthy growth of children can be said to be an important function. Parents, who are the main guardians, have a great influence on children's socialization process. Parents' psychological and emotional states that affect children are very important for proper socialization of children.

Recently, as interest in various psychological and behavioral problems of children has increased, various studies on parental psychology that affect children's emotions have been conducted. In particular, due to COVID-19, stress has increased throughout society, making it more difficult for parents to take care of their children and their psychological state. These external environmental factors act as factors that stress the psychology of parents and cause various problems in their relationship with their children. In order to improve the relationship between children and parents, opinions on various methods were presented as a policy, and as a result, it was found that the number of children receiving psychological treatment is increasing [1][2].

Manuscript received: January 26, 2023 / revised: March 3, 2023 / accepted: March 13, 2023

Corresponding Author: spring@honam.ac.kr

Tel: +82-62-940-5244, Fax: +82-62-940-5244

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Social Welfare, Honam University, Korea

Copyright©2023 by The International Promotion Agency of Culture Technology. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>)

As a factor that increases the psychological treatment of children, various stresses that parents experience in raising their children, parental parenting methods, and children's temperament can be the causes. Parents with high lifestyle and daily satisfaction had low problem behaviors of their children, and parents with high parenting and education stress had high problem behaviors of their children. Therefore, when parents' psychological anxiety negatively affects their children's upbringing and reactions, it can cause difficulties in their children's social and emotional development and adaptability [1][3][4].

In previous studies, when parents' lifestyle and daily satisfaction were high, their children's problem behaviors were low, and when their parents' parenting and education stress was high, their children's problem behaviors were high. In addition, parents' psychological anxiety has a negative effect on their child's upbringing and response, and this case can give difficulties to the child's social emotional development and adaptation ability [2][3][4]. Negative parenting attitudes have been shown to have a significant effect on children's depressive symptoms in their relationship with their children [5][6]. These characteristics can be seen that parental depression affects their children's problem behavior [7].

In order to reduce the problem behavior of children, one of the various causes, the psychological problem of the main guardian raising the child, can be seen as very important. Previous studies have also shown that when parent-child relationships are controlled, maternal depression has a positively significant effect on adolescent depression [8]. A study on father's parenting behavior and psychological and social factors to solve behavioral problems in children's early school age [9] and a study on the mediating effect of children's self-worth and emotional control difficult due to mother's covert narcissistic tendency [10][11], it was found that parents' psychological factors have an effect on their children's behavior.

Therefore, in this study, among the various parents' variables affecting their children's problem behaviors, the psychological factor, depression, focuses on the influence on children and seeks to make policy and practical suggestions in the area of social welfare practice to reduce problem behaviors.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The subject of this paper is "Parents' Depression", "Children's Externalizing Behavior", "Children's Internalization behavior of "and the like were analyzed. Parental depression is the parental depression scale was adapted from the Kessler et al. (2002) depression scale by the Korean Children's Panel researchers. The items are "Have you felt anxious during the past 30 days?", "Have you felt lethargic during the past 30 days?", "Have you felt restless during the past 30 days?" etc. are included. The internal agreement between items (Cronbach' α) was .91 for mother's depression and .92 for father's depression.

Also, externalizing child's behavior in order to measure externalizing problem behavior, which is a child's problem behavior, the standardized scale of (11) was used based on the early childhood behavior evaluation scale. Externalizing problem behavior includes rule violation (17 questions) and aggressive behavior (18 questions). All items are scored on a 3-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (not at all) to 2 (frequently or a lot). Therefore, the higher the score, the higher the problem behavior of the child. The reliability (Cronbach's α) of each item of externalized problem behavior was .85 for aggressive behavior and .89 for rule violation.

Finally child's internalizing behavior is to measure internalized problem behavior, a standardized scale was used based on the infant behavior evaluation scale. Internalized problem behavior refers to overly controlled and internalized behaviors such as withdrawn and passive behaviors, emotional instability, and physical symptoms (Korean Children's Panel, 2020). The tool for internalized problem behavior consisted of 32 questions in total with 3 sub-items: anxiety/depression, somatic symptoms, and withdrawal/depression. All items are scored on a 3-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (not at all) to 2 (frequently or a lot). The higher the score, the higher the internalization problem behavior, and the reliability of each item (Cronbach's α) was .68

for somatic symptoms, .70 for withdrawal/depression, and .75 for anxiety/depression.

For the analysis of this study, it was analyzed using SPSS 26.0 and AMO19.0. First, frequency analysis was conducted to calculate the reliability coefficient of the general characteristics of the research subject and the test tool.

Second, the mean and standard deviation between variables were calculated, and skewness and kurtosis values were confirmed through descriptive statistical analysis to review normality, and correlations were analyzed. Third, the validity of each factor was reviewed through confirmatory factor analysis, and the absolute fit indices χ^2 and RMSEA and the incremental fit indices CFI, TLI, and NFI were examined to verify the fit of the model.

2.1 Research Hypothesis

- <Hypothesis 1> Parental depression will have a negative effect on children's externalizing behavior.
- <Hypothesis 2> Parental depression will have a negative effect on children's internalization behavior.

2.2 Design of Research Model

Figure 1 is the design of the research model created to verify the hypothesis proposed in this study.

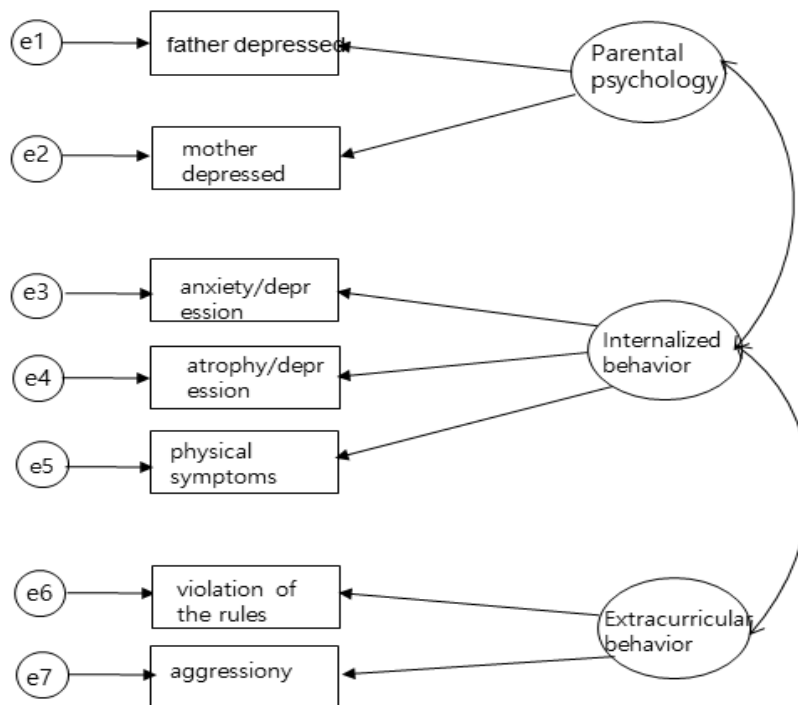


Figure 1. Research model

3. RESULTS OF RESEARCH

3.1 Descriptive Statistics of Parents' Psychology, Children's Internalization Behavior and Children's Externalization Behavior

Table 1 shows mother's depression, father's depression, children's internalizing behavior, and children's externalizing behavior. The mean of mother's depression was 1.90 (SD=.695) and the mean of father's was

1.84 (SD=.731). Looking at the problem behaviors of children, externalizing behaviors (M=0.13, SD=.170) showed a higher average than internalizing behaviors (M=0.11, SD=.150).

Table 1. Main parameters

(N=1,575)		
Variables	M	SD
Mother's melancholy	1.90	.695
Father's melancholy	1.84	.731
Children's Innate Behavior	0.11	.150
Children's Externalizing Behavior	0.13	.170

3.2 Correlation Analysis

The data used for the descriptive statistics and correlation analysis results of this study are the 8th year data, and all of the participants out of 1,598 were involved in the parental psychological factors used to conduct this study, such as depression, children's externalizing behavior, and internalizing behavior. 1,577 respondents were the subject of data analysis.

The average, standard deviation, kurtosis and skewness, and correlation of the measured variables were shown in Table 2. Parental depression was found to have significant positive correlations with their children's internalized behaviors, such as anxiety/depression, withdrawal/depression, and physical symptoms, and their children's externalized behaviors, such as rule breaking and aggression, also showed significant positive correlations. Anxiety/depression, an intrinsic behavior of children, showed a positive correlation with withdrawal/depression, physical symptoms, rule violation, and aggressive behavior. Atrophy/depression showed positive correlations with somatic symptoms, rule violations, and aggressive behaviors, and somatic symptoms also showed positive correlations with rule violations and aggressive behaviors. Finally, rule violation, an externalizing behavior, showed a significant positive correlation with aggressive behavior.

Table 2. Correlation analysis

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Parent psychology factors	-					
Atrophy/depressed	.229***	-				
Physical symptoms	.172***	.607***	-			
anxiety/depression	.198***	.481***	.397***	-		
Breaking the rules	.162***	.481***	.448***	.419***	-	
Aggression	.165***	.622***	.505***	.416***	.671***	-
M	1.870	.160	.106	.075	.064	.172
SD	.596	.180	.168	.136	.091	.188

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

3.3 Verification of Measurement Model and Structural Model

In this study, the effects of parental depression on their children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors were empirically analyzed. To secure validity between measurement variables that explains parental depression, children's internalizing behavior, and children's externalizing behavior by Confirmatory Factor

Analysis (CFA), and to conduct a structural model analysis based on this the goodness of fit of the research model was verified using the absolute fit index, χ^2 statistic, RMSEA, and the incremental fit index, CFI, TLI, NFI, etc. If the CFI is .90 or higher, it is acceptable and RMSEA is less than .10, it can be said that the data fit well [12][13][14][15]. The verification results showed $\chi^2=67.421$, $df=32$, $CFI=.965$, $TLI=.951$, $NFI=.983$, $RMSEA=.013$. Overall, the fit was relatively good.

Table 3. Structural model verification

Structural equation model	χ^2	df(p)	CFI	TLI	NFI	RMSEA
Research model (n=124)	57.047	11(.000)	.986	.966	.983	.044

The analysis results for the measurement model are shown in Table 4. The factor loadings of the measured variables in the measurement model were all significant at the significance level of .001.

Table 4. Factor loadings of the measurement model

Variables		B	S.E	β	C.R.
Parental psychology	Father Depression	1.000		0.412	
	Mother's depression	2.235	0.413	0.874	5.417***
Internalizing behavior	Atrophy/depressed	1.000		0.709	
	Physical symptoms	.660	0.032	0.576	20.450***
	Anxiety /depression	1.276	0.047	0.846	27.306***
Externalizing behavior	Breaking the rules	1.000		0.745	
	Aggression	2.499	.088	0.902	28.381***

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Figure 2 presents the structural equation model analysis results as a picture.

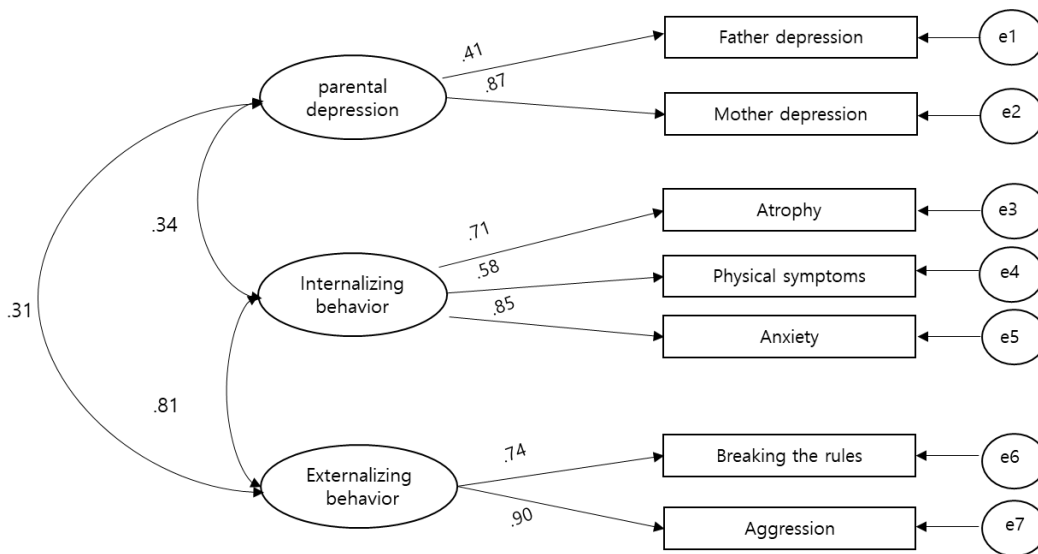


Figure 2. Analysis result of structural equation model

Table 5. Path coefficient of structural model

Division		B	β	S.E.	C.R.	
Parental psychology	→	Internalizing behavior	.012	.34	.002	4.964***
Parental psychology	→	Externalizing behavior	.006	.75	.001	4.870***
Internalizing behavior	→	Externalizing behavior	.007	.81	.000	16.889***

N = 124. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

As shown in Table 5 the model of this study was built with the structure of parental depression, children's internalizing behavior, and externalizing behavior. First of all, it can be confirmed that there is a difference in the effect of parental depression on children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Parental depression was found to have a significant positive effect on children's internalizing behavior, with $\beta = .34$, $p < .001$. In other words, the higher the parents' depression, the higher the child's internalization behavior. And parental depression was found to have a significant effect on children's externalizing behavior, with $\beta = .81$, $p < .001$. This also means that the higher the parents' depression, the higher the child's externalizing behavior. Therefore, it can be seen that parental depression is an important factor influencing both children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors.

4. CONCLUSION

This study used the 8th data of the Korean Children's Panel to confirm the influence of the variables of depression, a psychological factor of parents, on their children's internalization and externalization behaviors through structural equation model analysis. This study was intended to be helpful in presenting the factors to be considered in establishing a therapeutic plan for children's problem behavior.

As for policy suggestions, first, it is necessary to intervene at the policy level for preventive education and treatment counseling for parents' mental health, which has a significant impact on children's problem behavior. When a stressful situation occurs, a support system should be established to help any parent with a child to receive counseling. Second, various policy alternatives that can actively intervene should be sought by expanding the mental health part in the current family policy.

Practical suggestions are: First, since depression gets worse the more you hide it, education that can increase a proper understanding of depression and prevention campaigns that help you know your mental health level should be conducted.

Second, when depression occurs, a support system that can actively treat it is needed. Currently, access to family welfare centers is not easy for ordinary families to use. Therefore, publicity should be made so that anyone can easily use the Family Welfare Center.

Third, when a child's problem behavior occurs, a wide range of treatment methods must be established so that parents, who are the main caregivers, can also participate in the current treatment method, which only targets the child, to receive treatment. Since the results of this study cannot be generalized, follow-up studies are suggested as limitations.

First, this study examined the influence of parental psychological factors on children's internalization and externalization behaviors, focusing on depression. Therefore, it has a limitation of not examining various variables. In follow-up studies, these limitations should be complemented to examine the influencing factors

of various parental psychological variables. Second, follow-up studies are needed that can more clearly reveal the causal relationship of children's behavioral factors influenced by parental psychological factors through a longitudinal approach.

Despite these limitations, this study is expected to contribute to increasing the effectiveness of various policy and practical measures for parents' psychological health, as parents' psychological factors have a significant influence on their children's internalization and externalization behaviors.

REFERENCES

- [1] <https://www.ibabynews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=46633>.
- [2] S. Y. Bang, S. H. Choi, S. H. Lee and H. J. Hwang, "Impact of Psychological and Behavioral Variables of Parents from Low Income Families upon Children's Problematic Behaviors : Comparison between Two-parent Families and Single-parent Families," *Korean Journal of Childcare and Education* 9, pp. 157-179, 2013. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14698/jkce.2013.9.5.157>
- [3] J. Lee, J. Kim, E. Park and H. Kang, "The Effect of Mother-Child Interaction on a Child's Sleeping Hours: The Mediation of a Child's Smart Media Use," *Korean Journal of Childcare and Education*, vol. 13, no. 6, pp. 163–179, Dec. 2017. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14698/JKCCE.2017.13.06.163>
- [4] Y. -H. Kim and D. -K. Kim, "A Meta-Regression Analysis of Parental Factors on Adjustment and Maladjustment of Preschool Children," *Journal of Early Childhood Education & Educare Welfare*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 255-282, 2017. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22590/ecee.2017.21.3.255>
- [5] A. Kujawa., K. B. Arfer., M. C. Finsaas., E. M. Kessel., E. Mumper and D.N. Klein, "Effects of Maternal Depression and Mother-Child Relationship Quality in Early Childhood on Neural Reactivity to Rejection and Peer Stress in Adolescence: A 9-Year Longitudinal Study," *Clinical psychological science: a journal of the Association for Psychological Science*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 657–672, 2020. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167702620902463>
- [6] J. L. Silberg, H. Maes and L. J. Eaves, "Genetic and environmental influences on the transmission of parental depression to children's depression and conduct disturbance: an extended Children of Twins study," *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry, and allied disciplines*, Vol. 51, No. 6, pp. 734–744, 2010. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2010.02205.x>
- [7] J. W. Han., J. M. Kim and H. Lee, "The effect of parental depression on the problem behaviour and academic performance of children with asthma," *Nursing open*, Vol. 7, No. 5, pp. 1597–1605, 2020. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/nop2.542>
- [8] H. J. Jeon, "Epidemiologic studies on depression and suicide," *Journal of the Korean Medical Association* 2012, Vol. 55, No. 4, pp. 322-328, 2012.
- [9] I. -J. Chung and M. A. Pak, "The Effect of Maternal Depression on Adolescent Depression: Verification of Compensatory Effect of Social Relationships," *Korean Journal of Family Social Work null*, Vol. 39, pp. 241-267, 2013. DOI:10.16975/kjfs.2013..39.008
- [10] S. -R. Kim and C. -S. Park, "A Study on the Effects of Self-esteem of Fathers with Young Children on Parenting Stress: Focused on the Mediating Effect of Marital Satisfaction and Depression," *Korea Journal of Family Welfare*, Vol. 23, No.2, pp. 215-233, June 2018. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13049/kfwa.2018.23.2.4>
- [11] H. Lee and J. M. Kim, "The Effect of Mothers' Reactions to Children's Negative Emotions on the Children's Problem Behavior: The Dual Mediating Effects of Ambivalence over Emotional Expressiveness and Belief about Emotional Expression," *Journal of Families and Better Life*, Vol. 40, No.

4, pp. 15-33, 2022.

- [12] Y. -A. Kim, J. Lee, S.-J. Moon, Y.-J. Kim and G.-J. Oh, "Standardization Study for the Korean Version of the Child Behavior Checklist for Ages 1.5-5," *Korean Journal of Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 117-136, 2009. DOI:10.15842/kjcp.2009.28.1.007
- [13] R. B. Kline, *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (4th ed.). Guilford Press. 2016.
- [14] C. -O. Jang, "Study on Adolescent psychological adjustment for neglected family," *The International Journal of Advanced Culture Technology*, Vol. 6 No. 2, 2018. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17703/IJACT.2018.6.2.30>
- [15] C. -O. Jang, "Study on Mediation Effect of Support System in Job Stress and Coping Behavior of Social Workers," *The International Journal of Advanced Culture Technology*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2019. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17703/IJACT.2018.6.2.30>