Maternal Emotion Regulation: Links to Emotion Parenting and Child Emotion Regulation


**SUMMARY:** Mother-child dyads participated in a self-report and observational study examining the associations between mothers’ emotional regulation, parenting behaviors, and children’s emotion regulation. Observed maternal emotion regulation was negatively associated with unsupportive parenting. Self-reported maternal emotion dysregulation was positively associated with unsupportive parenting and child emotion dysregulation.

**KEY FINDINGS:**
- Maternal emotion regulation (as reported by the mother) was negatively associated with unsupportive parenting.
- Maternal emotion dysregulation was positively associated with unsupportive parenting and with child emotion dysregulation.
- Maternal emotion dysregulation was negatively associated with child adaptive emotion regulation.
- Parenting behavior partially mediated the link between maternal emotional regulation and child emotion regulation.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:**
Military professionals could:
- Facilitate support groups for military mothers struggling with emotional regulation
- Collaborate with other professionals in the field regarding ways to promote emotional regulation and supportive parenting among military parents

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:**
Programs could:
- Offer parenting classes focused on developing military parents emotion regulation skills
- Offer support groups to help military parents cope with parenting-related stress

**IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:**
Policies could:
- Continue to support parenting programs for Service members and their families
- Encourage professional development for service providers working with military families regarding implementing empirically supported parenting interventions

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METHODS

- Newspaper advertisements were used to recruit families where English was the primary language and the caregiver had lived with the child for the previous two years.
- The dyads were videotaped while completing four sequential interaction tasks (discussing conflicts they have); interactions were coded by researchers.
- Mothers completed questionnaires about their emotion regulation, parenting behavior, and their child's emotion regulation. Children completed a questionnaire about emotion regulation.

PARTICIPANTS

- Sixty-four mother-child dyads participated; the majority of families were Black (52%) or White (41%).
- The majority of children were female (59%) and the average age was 9.50 years (SD = 1.04 years).
- Most participants (92%) identified as the biological mother of the child; 44% were married or cohabitating and 36% were never married.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample consisted primarily of Black and White dyads; the findings may not generalize to other ethnic groups.
- The data are cross-sectional, and therefore causal conclusions are not appropriate.
- Composite scores of parenting were used; subscale scores would allow for a more nuanced description of the findings.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Investigate parental characteristics associated with supportive parenting behaviors among military families
- Examine how paternal emotional regulation influences child emotional regulation and coping
- Examine the effectiveness of parenting programs offered to military families aimed at enhancing parental emotional regulation skills

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS

Design

Appropriate Research Plan and Sample

Methods

Appropriate Measurement and Analysis

Limitations

Few

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