



Mother's Control and Negative Emotions as a Serial Mediators between Adolescent's Difficulties and Mother's Fearful Attachment

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BACKGROUND

Individuals and the environment reciprocally affect each other. These bidirectional effects can also be seen among family members (Kerr et al., 2021; Neece et al., 2012) – it is known that parent's emotions or parenting practices can affect a child's behavior and that child's behavior can influence parenting practices, parent's emotional difficulties or romantic relationships (Kerr et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2009).

Meanwhile, mothers, who are often more involved in parenting than fathers, can face various difficulties in raising a child, especially during the child's transition to adolescence, which is full of the child's behavior and emotional changes (Meier et al., 2018; Kerr et al., 2021). These changes, which mothers need to control and navigate through, can affect the mother's emotions (Kerr et al., 2019; Neece et al., 2012).

However, it is unclear how it also can affect a mother's attachment, related to emotional health and the ability to build and maintain relationships (Kerr et al., 2021).

AIM

This study sought to investigate the indirect effect of adolescents' internalizing and externalizing difficulties on mothers' fearful attachment through mothers' psychological control and mothers' negative emotions.

RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

Results indicated partial mediation where the child's internalizing difficulties predicted the mother's fearful attachment through the mother's psychological control and negative emotions ($b = .301$, 95% CI [.157, .446]). Full mediation was found when the child's externalizing difficulties predicted the mother's fearful attachment through the mother's psychological control and negative emotions ($b = .249$, 95% CI [.086, .411]).

These results highlight the importance of adolescents' emotional and behavioral difficulties experienced by mothers and their possible bidirectional negative effects on children or other's family members as well (Kerr et al., 2019; Neece et al., 2012).

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METHODS

Participants correspond to a sample of **166** mothers of 5th – 8th grade students. The mean age of participants was 40.20 years (SD = 5.76).

During the study mothers were asked to fill the questionnaires' scales, assessing:

- child's externalizing and internalizing difficulties (Goodman, 1997);
- mother's psychological control (Barber et al., 2005);
- mother's negative emotions (Meier et al., 2018);
- mother's fearful attachment (Van Oudenhoven, Hofstra, Baker, 2003).

Serial mediation analysis was performed using SPSS.

