A novel smartphone-based measure of parenting: Assessing positive and negative parental consistency and its links to child ADHD

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Introduction
- Parents of children with ADHD exhibit more negative parenting behaviors compared to children without ADHD symptoms.
- Parental consistency
  - The day to day (or moment to moment) follow-through of adhering to rules/standards of conduct for child’s behavior.
- Few studies have examined whether inconsistent positive parental behavior are also associated with child ADHD.
  - E.g. warmth, positive reinforcement
- Daily smartphone-based ecological momentary assessment (EMA)
  - Used to examine associations between consistency of positive and negative parenting and child ADHD symptoms.
- Interested in the role of the child’s sex as a potential moderator of the association between parental consistency and ADHD
  - Boys with ADHD tend to exhibit more externalizing behaviors compared to girls with ADHD.

Method
- Participants
  - 201 kindergartners and their parents
  - 55.2% male
  - 81.6% Caucasian
- Mobile Survey of Parent-Child Dynamics
  - Measures positive and negative parental consistency
  - A daily EMA survey delivered to parents’ smartphones each day for one week.
  - Questions about different aspects of positive and negative parenting practices
  - MSSD - mean square successive difference (MSSD) score
- Questionnaires
  - Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ)
    - Parent questionnaire that measures inconsistent discipline
  - Child Behaviors Checklist (CBCL)
    - Parent questionnaire that assesses ADHD symptoms (attention problems subscale)

Results

| Coef.  | Std. Err. | z    | P>|z| | (95% Conf. Interval) |
|--------|-----------|------|------|----------------------|
| MSSD   | 0.2073297 | 0.0902307 | 2.30 | 0.022 | 0.304809 | 0.3841786 |
| APQ    | 0.0343164 | 0.0151098 | 2.27 | 0.022 | 0.0047017 | 0.0639311 |

Discussion
- Parents who were more inconsistent in their expressions of warmth and positive reinforcement in response to their child’s behaviors exacerbated their child’s ADHD symptoms, but only among boys.
- Parents of boys may simply notice and acknowledge boys’ ADHD symptoms more than girls’, which in turn, might cause them to engage in less consistent positive parenting practices.
- Longitudinal (i.e., mediation) analyses are needed to examine whether these associations are causal.
- Parent-child interventions for ADHD should focus on encouraging greater consistency of adaptive parenting behaviors, and not just on reducing negative parenting behaviors.