

Public Abstract

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Title:The Role of Parent-Child Conversations and Attributional Biases in Childrens Prosocial and Aggressive Behaviors

The aims of the present study were to examine the relations between two dimensions of parent-child conversations and children's social behaviors and to assess the mediating role of children's attributional biases in these relations. 60 preschoolers (mean age = 4.92) and their mothers engaged in conversations about a recent time in which the child felt sad, mad, scared, and happy. Conversations were coded for maternal elaborations and maternal positive emotion content. Children also completed a storytelling task with researchers that assessed their positive and negative attributional biases. Children's prosocial tendencies and aggressive behaviors were assessed through teacher report.

A series of hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted. Results indicated that maternal elaborations marginally positively predicted children's prosocial tendencies. Children's positive attributional biases significantly positively predicted children's prosocial tendencies. However, attributional biases did not significantly mediate the relation between maternal elaborations and prosocial tendencies. Additionally, maternal discourse variables and children's attributional biases did not predict children's aggressive behaviors. Discussion will focus on the significance of both maternal discourse style and children's positive cognitions in fostering more prosocial tendencies towards peers in preschool aged children.