Maternal Language During Play with Infants at High-Risk for Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Background

- The way parents communicate with their child has an impact on child development.
- Synchrony, or the quality of interaction between two people, is associated with positive child outcomes in mother-infant interactions.
- Depression and parenting stress are greater in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) than in mothers of typically developing children.
- Maternal depression can negatively impact synchrony.
- Language use has been linked with depression.

Objective

- Investigate how maternal depression and parenting stress, maternal language, and synchrony are related to one another in the context of mother-infant dyads during play in which infants are at varying degrees of risk for ASD.
- High-risk (HR) infants have a biological older sibling with ASD.
- Low-risk (LR) infants have a biological older sibling who is typically developing.

Hypothesis

1. Mothers of HR infants will report greater parenting stress and depression and will use more first-person pronouns than mothers of LR infants.
2. Greater maternal depression and stress will predict more use of first-person pronouns, negations, and words reflecting negative psychological processes such as anxiety and sadness, and less confidence in language.
3. First-person pronouns and words reflecting negative psychological processes will predict lower synchrony between mothers and their 15-month-old infants.

Method

- This study used secondary data from a longitudinal study that included 32 mother-infant dyads recruited through various community organizations (15 HR; 17 LR).
- Maternal depression and parenting stress were assessed using the Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS) Depression Short Form (PSI-SF) and Parenting Stress Index (PSI-SF) using a video-recorded, mother-infant play session.
- Language use during play was input into the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC).
- This study used secondary data from a longitudinal study that included 32 mother-infant dyads recruited through various community organizations (15 HR; 17 LR).
- Language use has been linked with depression.
- The way parents communicate with their child has an impact on child development.

Results

Negations, Risk, Family, and Words Per Sentence varied significantly between groups.

LIWC VARIABLES

Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>L, eq, mine</th>
<th>229</th>
<th>.821</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>we, we, all, our</td>
<td>1,246</td>
<td>.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negate</td>
<td>no, null, none</td>
<td>-3,278</td>
<td>.040</td>
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PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>sad, anxious, depressed</th>
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<th>.109</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>crying, grief, sad</td>
<td>-1,337</td>
<td>.186</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feel</td>
<td>daughter, died, over</td>
<td>-2,743</td>
<td>.012</td>
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SUMMARY LANGUAGE VARIABLES

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Words/Sentence</td>
<td>(WPS)</td>
<td>2,221</td>
<td>.003**</td>
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Note. LIWC, Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count. *

References


Acknowledgments

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