



Parental Substance Use and Children's Emotion Regulation: An Exploration of Mediating Factors



Lilian B. Linton & Adrianna N. Richards, MA
Department of Psychology & Neuroscience

Introduction

- Children with parental substance use are at higher risk for a variety of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional problems.^{1, 12, 13}
- Children with parental substance use exhibit less successful cognitive and emotional functioning¹ and are more likely to develop a substance use disorder themselves.²³
- Emotion regulation is associated with enhanced physical and mental health and well-being and may help prevent some of the problems that children with parental substance use are more susceptible to.^{8, 16, 20}

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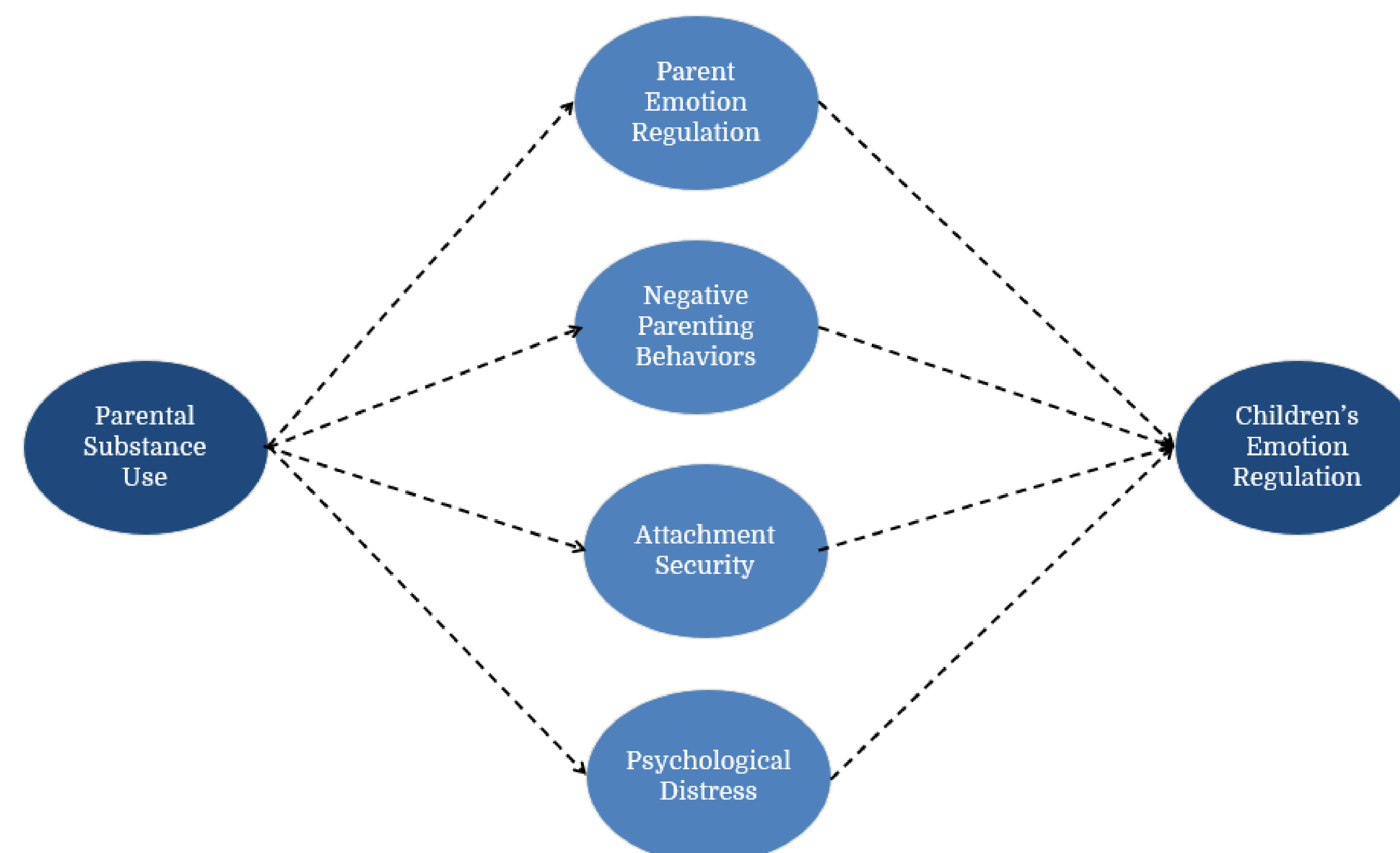
- Previous research has identified a direct negative link between parental substance use and children's emotion regulation.⁷
- This link appears to strengthen with the severity of parental substance use, with more severe parental substance use linked to higher emotion dysregulation.¹⁶
- Data suggests that this relationship is more complex and may be impacted by third variables such as emotion socialization¹⁷ and emotional engagement.¹⁵



Proposed Mediators of the Link between Parental Substance Use and Children's Emotion Regulation

- **Parent Emotion Regulation** is negatively linked to both parental substance use^{10, 19} and children's emotion regulation.^{4, 21}
- **Negative Parenting Behaviors** are more frequently observed in parents who use substances²⁴ and are linked to diminished emotion regulation abilities in children.¹¹
- **Attachment Security** between parent and child is positively correlated with children's emotion regulation,⁶ and negatively predicted by parental substance.³
- **Psychological Distress** often cooccurs with parental substance use,⁵ and psychologically distressed parents tend to raise children with poor emotion regulation abilities.^{9, 18}

Figure 1: Proposed Mediators of the Link between Parental Substance Use and Children's Emotion Regulation



Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

Strengths:

- Expanding beyond a direct link to include multiple potential mediating mechanisms
- Highlighting the role of the parent and the parent-child relationship

Limitations:

- Social desirability bias may particularly impact research on primarily illegal behaviors (e.g., substance use), especially for parents.
- Research on the direct link between parental substance use and children's emotion regulation is limited.
- Majority of work include White participants, while estimated illicit drug use is highest for multiracial and American Indian or Alaska Native people²

Future Directions:

- Exploring differential links between parents' use of various (or multiple) substances to determine link to children's emotion regulation
- Creation of substance use-informed parenting programs that focus on link between parents' and children's emotion regulation, positive parenting, attachment security, and mental health, and teach strategies that help develop children's emotion regulation

Conclusions

- This review adds to the discussion on parental substance use and children's emotion regulation through its proposed mediators.
- This review may inform mental health strategies and programs to foster emotion regulation capacities in children with parental substance use.
- Further research will help strengthen insight into the effect of parental substance use on children's emotion regulation and the impact of potential third variables.

Full Paper:



References:

