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Parental Efficacy, Experience of Stressful Life Events, and Child Externalizing Behavior as Predictors of Filipino Mothers' and Fathers' Parental Hostility and Aggression

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Abstract

This study assessed relations of parental efficacy, experience of stressful life events, and child externalizing behavior to Filipino mothers and fathers' parental hostility and aggression. Orally-administered surveys were conducted with 117 mothers and 98 fathers for the first year of data collection, and again a year later with 107 mothers and 83 fathers. Path analyses showed that mothers' report of child externalizing behavior predicted subsequent parental hostility and aggression. For fathers, child externalizing behavior and experience of stressful life events predicted parental hostility and aggression. Additionally, fathers' parental efficacy was found to moderate the relationship between experience of stressful life events and parental hostility and aggression. Results suggest that child externalizing behavior and experience of stressful life events have direct relations to parental hostility and aggression, while parental efficacy has a moderating effect to it. The differences between the results for fathers and mothers are explained in the context of distinct parenting roles and parenting in the local context.

Keywords

parental hostility and aggression; parental efficacy; stress; child externalizing behavior; Filipino parenting

Hostile and aggressive parenting is considered by many health care and legal experts as maladaptive and abusive, emotionally damaging, and contrary to the best interests of the child (Family Conflict Resolution Service, Canada, 2004). The cluster of hostile and aggressive behaviors includes harsh discipline, coercive parenting, and physical and verbal aggression such as corporal punishment, yelling, and threatening (Chang, Shwartz, Dodge, & McBride-Chang, 2003; Silk, Sessa, Sheffield Morris, Steinberg, & Avenevoli, 2004). In a review of parenting studies, Rohner, Khaleque, and Cournoyer (2007) referred to hostility as the internal psychological state of the parent, and to aggression as the observable behavior that results when parents act on the emotion of hostility. Rohner (1986) described aggression as any behavior that intends to hurt someone, be it physically or emotionally. Hostility is

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thus regarded as an affective facet and aggression is its behavioral component. It is for this reason that the two terms are taken together to describe the parenting practice of concern in this study.

Parental hostility leads to child aggression, delinquency, withdrawal and depression, among other behavioral and emotional problems (Chang, Shwartz, Dodge, & McBride-Chang, 2003), and can evoke feelings of fear, anxiety, and anger in children (Gershoff, 2002). Such adverse effects were found to persist unto adolescence (Gershoff, 2002).

Physical punishment, a behavioral manifestation of parental hostility and aggression, is not uncommon in the Philippines. In a recent study of 120 Filipino families, 71% of girls and 77% of boys had reportedly experienced mild corporal punishment (i.e., spanking, hitting, or slapping with a bare hand, on the child's hand, arm, or leg) while 9% of girls and 8% of boys had received severe corporal punishment (i.e. hitting or slapping in the face, head, or ears; beating with an implement; Lansford et al, 2010). Such behaviors could foreshadow harsher parent abuse, which is a growing social problem in the country (Marcelino, dela Cruz, Balanon, Camacho, and Yacat, 1998).

To prevent these negative repercussions, there is a need to identify factors which bring about parental hostility and aggression. Parenting is not the consequence of a single factor, but is a product of a system of relationships within and out of the family, personal beliefs, resources, and the societal context of the parent (Super & Harkness, 1997). This study considers multiple factors which predict parental hostility: child's externalizing behavior, parent's experience of stressful life events; and parental efficacy. Differences between mothers and fathers in these relationships are also examined.

Relationships Among Parental Hostility and Aggression, Parental Efficacy, Experience of Stressful Life Events, and Child Externalizing Behavior

Belsky (1984) conceptualized parenting as multiply-determined, and identified the parent's psychological resources, contextual sources of stress and support, and the child's characteristics, as influencing parenting behavior. Psychological resources refer to the parent's enduring characteristics which affect parenting and are the product of the parent's developmental history and personality. Child characteristics refer to the child's disposition which may also influence parenting. The contextual sources of stress and support refer to the environmental factors that shape parenting behavior.

Similarly, Grolnick (2003), in her review of the forces that influence parenting behavior, identified three types of pressure: pressure from above, from below, and from within. Pressure from above is the pressure from the environment such as work stress and economic pressure, while pressure from below refers to that which comes from the child, including temperamental characteristics, competence in school, or clinical diagnoses. Pressure from within, or internal pressure, refers to the parent's biological tendencies or characteristics.

Integrating Belsky's and Grolnick's models, this study simultaneously looks into three predictors of parental hostility and aggression, specifically, the child's externalizing

behavior as the child characteristic in focus (corresponding to pressure from below), the parent's experience of stressful life events as the aggregate influence of the different contextual sources of stress (corresponding to pressure from above), and parental efficacy as the parental psychological resource (corresponding to pressure from within).

Belsky (1984) also described parenting as a system that can be buffered against threats to its integrity derived from weaknesses in any of the aforementioned factors. For instance, parents who receive poor social support may not necessarily be weak in parenting provided that they have a strong psychological resource, perhaps a good personal disposition toward parenting. Belsky asserts that the parent's psychological resource is the most important determinant of parenting and the most effective buffering system of the parent-child interaction against stress. This study, therefore, looks into the possible moderating effects of parental efficacy on the relationship between experience of stressful life events and parental hostility and aggression, and the relationship between child externalizing behavior and parental hostility and aggression. Figure 1 shows the hypothesized relations among the variables.

Child Externalizing Behavior and Parental Hostility and Aggression

This study acknowledges that parenting is not unidirectional, in that the child can influence the parent in the same way that the parent can influence the child. Given the link between child externalizing behavior and harsh discipline (Gershoff, 2002), it is reasonable to hypothesize that the more externalizing behaviors a child exhibits, the more a parent will employ hostility and aggression. A child who exhibits negative behavior may unintentionally solicit more coercive control and punishment from the parent as the parent tries to regulate the child's behavior, a process known as evocative transaction (Caspi, 2000). Likewise, Scarr's (1992) theory of gene → environment effects asserts that children play an active and influential role in their interaction with the people around them by eliciting responses corresponding to their behavior, suggesting that children who are aggressive may elicit the same behavior from their parents.

To estimate the influence of the child's behavior on the parent, data for the child's externalizing behavior will come from the first year of data collection, while data for parental hostility and aggression will come from the subsequent wave of data collected in the following year. This strengthens predictive inference, albeit does not assume causal relations as the model does not control for parental behaviors in the first year.

Experience of Stressful Life Events and Parental Hostility and Aggression

Studies have indicated that parental stress and anxiety may have the greatest impact on harsh parenting (Conger et al., 1994). Parents experience stressful events from their marital relationship (Easterbrooks & Emde, 1988), poor socioeconomic and neighborhood conditions (Raikes & Thompson, 2005), and occupation (Crouter, Bumpus, Maguire, & McHale, 1999), which then affect their parenting. Filipino parents experience physical and emotional stress from financial costs of childrearing, problems in child discipline, health problems, and managing conflicts among family members (Bulatao, as cited in Medina, 2001; Hechanova-Alampay, 1997).

Parents who experience negative events may lack sufficient emotional resources to maintain a positive relationship with their child (Elder, Eccles, Ardel, & Lord, 1995). The experience of stress has been associated with parental punitiveness and use of corporal punishment (Gershoff, 2002; Grolnick, 2003). It is therefore hypothesized that the greater the parent's experience of stressful life events, the greater tendency for the parent to manifest hostility and aggression.

Parental Efficacy and Parental Hostility and Aggression

Parental efficacy is defined as the parents' confidence in their ability to parent their child effectively (Bandura, 1989, as cited in Pugh, 2004). Competent child care requires confidence in one's ability to appropriately respond to the child's demands and engage the child effectively. Jones and Prinz (2005) maintained that high efficacy was seen to be positively related to positive parenting styles such as induction and nurturance, while low efficacy is related to negative parenting styles, such as coercive discipline and corporal punishment. Efficacious mothers perceive themselves as having the ability to positively influence the development of their children, so mothers with high self-efficacy are more likely to use an effortful parenting style (Bandura, as cited in Pugh, 2004). Parents who are confident in their parenting abilities may be less inclined to use harsh parenting practices. With this, this study expects that parental efficacy will negatively predict parental hostility and aggression.

Parental efficacy as a moderator—This study additionally considers parental efficacy as a possible moderating variable between experience of stressful life events and parental hostility and aggression and between child externalizing behavior and parental hostility and aggression. The parent's psychological resource is considered as the most important determinant of parenting and the most effective buffering system (Belsky, 1984). This is because the parent's psychological resource first shapes and influences the parent's responses to the broader context (marital relations, occupation, social networks) of the parent-child relationship. To add, Vondra, Sysko, and Belsky (2005) emphasized efficacy as the linchpin, or the central cohesive source of support and stability, for a host of factors which influence parenting.

Day et al. (1994, as cited in Jones & Prinz, 2005) showed that parental efficacy overrides the effect of child behavior problems on the use of harsh parental discipline. A child who exhibits externalizing behavior may lead the parent to exercise greater, possibly excessive, hostility. However, if the parents believe that they can manage the child's externalizing behavior using appropriate behavior management, then less parental hostility can be expected. On the contrary, parents who have low self-efficacy may possibly intensify their hostility toward the child.

Parental efficacy is also hypothesized to moderate the influence of parent's experience of stressful life events on parental hostility. Low self-efficacy can exacerbate the influence of stress on parental hostility; conversely, high self-efficacy can buffer the influence of stress. Therefore, parents who experience high stress can bank on their efficacy to minimize hostile parenting behaviors. This is not unlikely as Bandura (1982) stated that self-efficacy beliefs

as a predictor of overt parental responses tends to be enhanced under stressful circumstances.

Differences Between Mothers and Fathers

Studies have claimed that sex-based parenting differences do exist (Dufur, Howell, Downey, Ainsworth, & Lapray, 2010), thereby necessitating that the relations among variables in the current study be considered separately for mothers and fathers. Moreover, fathers are significantly understudied as compared to mothers. For parenting and child externalizing behavior, Gryczkowski, Jordan, and Mercer (2010) claimed that many studies included information from mothers only or combined mothers' and fathers' reports. Because of this, not much is known about the relationship between externalizing behavior and fathers' behavior and how this relationship differs from the mothers'. Literature on maternal and paternal parenting stress is limited and contradictory (Putnick et al., 2010). When it comes to efficacy, Jones and Prinz (2005) maintained that paternal parental efficacy is understudied and less understood as compared to maternal parental efficacy.

In the Philippines, there is a sharp demarcation in fathers' and mothers' roles (Alampay & Jocson, 2011). Thus, aggregating mothers' and fathers' responses might not reveal the possible differences in patterns of relations. The father is the primary financial provider of the family and has a limited role in child-rearing as compared to the mother (Medina, 2001). Recently, though, fathers have been spending more time with their children (McCann-Erickson Philippines, 2006) and are expected to address misbehavior when the child becomes too difficult to manage (Liwag et al., 1999, as cited in Jocson, 2010). The mother, on the other hand, is the primary caregiver and is in charge of the child's everyday discipline and school management.

Given the differences in parental roles, inconsistencies in the literature and insufficient research on fathers, this study explores differences between mothers and fathers with regard to the variables under investigation.

In summary, this study hypothesizes that child externalizing behavior and the parent's experience of stressful life events will positively predict parental hostility and aggression. Parental efficacy, on the other hand, is hypothesized to be negatively related to parental hostility and aggression. Furthermore, parental efficacy is expected to moderate the relationships between child externalizing behavior and parental hostility and aggression and experience of stressful life events and parental hostility and aggression.

Method

Participants

This study analyzed data from the Philippine component of the Parenting and Child Adjustment Across Cultures (PAC) project. PAC is the largest longitudinal and multicultural study to date that investigates the different dimensions of parenting and how they affect the child.

Data were drawn from parents surveyed in the first (Wave 1) and second (Wave 2) years. Nonrandom quota sampling was employed to capture a good representation of families in the urban population. To include parents from the different socioeconomic levels, participant recruitment was done through public and private schools, with low-income families as the target in public schools and middle and high-income families in private schools.

For Wave 1, 215 parents were surveyed: 117 mothers and 98 fathers. Around half (50.8%) of the sample belongs to the low income stratum, 35% to the middle income stratum, and 14.02% to the high income stratum. For Wave 2, the number of parent participants dropped to 188, specifically 105 mothers and 83 fathers. No systematic patterns of attrition were found. There were non-significant mean differences in the reports of parental hostility and aggression and child externalizing behavior between those who provided data in Wave 1 and those who did not in Wave 2, suggesting that the missing participants in Wave 2 did not systematically differ from parents who were retained. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the participants for Waves 1 and 2.

Procedure

Letters were sent to 1,810 parents through their 8-year-old Grade 2 and 3 children enrolled in 11 schools in Quezon City, Metro Manila. The letter informed them about the PAC study and asked them to indicate their interest in participating. From this number, 430 families expressed their interest to participate. Research assistants then contacted them through telephone calls and scheduled interviews until the target number of families was met.

A group of trained research assistants, all fluent in English and in Filipino and graduate students of the Ateneo de Manila University, was assigned per family to administer surveys to the mother and father simultaneously but separately. Parents were briefed on the goals of the project and were asked to sign consent forms. The questionnaires were then orally administered through structured interviews. The parents also chose to use the Filipino or the English version of the measures. Parents were presented with flashcards to aid them in answering the response scales. After approximately 10 to 14 months, the research assistants again contacted the same parents for the second wave of data collection.

Interviews lasted for 1 to 2 hours, and each participating parent was given a gift card as compensation for their participation.

Measures

Child externalizing behavior was obtained from Wave 1 data, while experience of stressful life events, parental self-efficacy, and parental hostility and aggression were obtained from Wave 2 data. The bilingual researchers conducted a process of translation and back-translation on all the measures to ensure linguistic and conceptual equivalency. Only the reports from the mother were used for the mother model, and only the reports from the fathers were used for the father model.

Parental hostility and aggression—Parents completed the Parental Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (PARQ/Control) (Rohner, 2005). It consists of 29 items which measure the parent's harsh discipline, punitiveness, coercion, and physical and verbal

aggression. It has 5 subscales: (a) warmth and affection, (b) neglect and indifference, (c) aggression and hostility, (d) rejection, (e). behavioral control. Parents indicated their degree of agreement to the statements (e.g., “I hurt my child’s feelings.”) using a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree. Only the 6-item hostility and aggression subscale was used in the analysis. The scale yielded Cronbach alphas of .673 for the fathers and .612 for the mothers.

Child externalizing behavior—Parents accomplished the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) (Achenbach, 1991). This is a 58-item questionnaire comprised of the following subscales: withdrawn, somatic, anxious/depressed, delinquent, aggressive, internalizing, and externalizing behaviors. Each item (e.g. “Lying or cheating”) is rated by the parents on a 3-point scale, from *not true* to *very often true* of their child. The 33-item externalizing behavior subscale was used for this study and yielded Cronbach alphas of .869 for the fathers and .862 for the mothers.

Experience of stressful life events—Parents were asked to identify the stressful events they have encountered in the past year out of a list of 19. Following a dichotomous yes/no format, the sums of the answers are computed, and more “yes” answers means a higher number of experienced stressful life events. Items include domestic, medical, financial, and marital events such as conflict with relatives, severe illness of a family member, loss of job, and separation.

Parental efficacy—Parents answered a 15-item questionnaire on emotional and parental efficacy. The parental efficacy subscale, which was used for this study, has 6 items. The items ask parents their beliefs about the extent of their influence on their children (e.g. “How much can you do to get your children to stay out of trouble in school”). Items are rated on a 5-point scale, from *not well at all/nothing* to *very well/a great deal*. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the subscale are .761 for the fathers and .750 for the mothers.

Results

Preliminary analyses did not indicate any significant differences between mothers and fathers on any of the variables. Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations among the variables. Parental hostility and aggression was positively correlated with child externalizing behavior for mothers and fathers, but was positively correlated with experience of stressful life events only for fathers. Parental efficacy was not found to be correlated with the variables, except for its negative correlation with experience of stressful life events for fathers. Experience of stressful life events was found to be positively correlated with child externalizing behavior, for both mothers and fathers.

Path Analyses

Path-analytic models were tested using the path analytic procedure in the EQS 6.1 program (Bentler, 2001) to determine whether the obtained data fit the hypothesized relations among parental hostility and aggression, parental efficacy, child externalizing behavior, and experience of stressful life events.

To correct for non-normality, square root transformations were applied on fathers' report of Child Externalizing Behavior and mothers' Parental Hostility and Aggression, effectively reducing the z-value for skew from 5.098 to .463, and from 4.210 to 2.644, respectively. However, fathers' Parental Hostility and Aggression and mothers' Parental Efficacy remained significantly skewed even after transformation attempts. Given this, the father and mother models were tested using the Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square for robust estimations as it incorporates a scaling correction when assumptions of normality are violated (Satorra & Bentler, 2001). To test for moderation effects, interaction variables were created by centering the variables and then computing their cross-products (i.e., Child Externalizing Behavior X Parent Self-efficacy; Experience of Stressful Life Events X Parent Self-efficacy). The cross-products were then entered as variables in the models.

Model estimation for fathers—For the fathers, the independence model that tests the hypothesis that the variables are independent of one another was rejected, $\chi^2(15, N=83) = 26.54, p < .05$. The hypothesized model was then tested, and it showed a significant improvement in statistical fit, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(5) = 18.55, p < .01$. Other indices also show that the model fits the data adequately: model $\chi^2(10, N=83) = 9.32, p = .421$; non-normed fit index (NNFI) = 1.088; comparative fit index (CFI) = 1.000; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .000 (90% confidence interval .000 –.135). The final model showing the significant and nonsignificant paths among the variables, with standardized and unstandardized coefficients and standard errors (robust method), is presented in Figure 2. As predicted, child externalizing behavior at Wave 1 was associated with fathers' subsequent hostility and aggression. The fathers' experience of stressful life events was likewise associated with hostility and aggression. The fathers' parental efficacy had no significant relation with the outcome variable, but interacted significantly with experience of stressful life events to predict hostility and aggression.

To further understand the moderation effect, slopes were calculated expressing the relation between fathers' experience of stressful life events and child externalizing behavior at high (1 standard deviation above the mean; slope = .002; $t(83) = 0.29, p = .772$), moderate (at the mean; slope = .011, $t(83) = 3.20, p < .01$), and low (1 standard deviation below the mean; slope = .020, $t(83) = 5.48, p < .01$) levels of fathers' parental efficacy (Jose, 2008). These slopes suggested a significant relation between experience of stressful life events and parental hostility and aggression when parental efficacy is low and moderate. The slopes showed that parental hostility and aggression is significantly higher when the experience of stressful life events is high and parental efficacy is low or moderate. On the other hand, when parental efficacy is high, there is no significant change on the level of parental hostility even if there is a change in the level of experience of stressful life events.

Model estimation for mothers—For the mothers, the independence model that tests the hypothesis that the variables are independent of one another was rejected, $\chi^2(15, N=107) = 34.35, p < .01$. The hypothesized model was then tested, and it showed a significant improvement in statistical fit compared to the independent model, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(5) = 32.64, p < .01$. However, it showed poor fit indices: normed fit index (NFI) = .544, non-normed fit index (NNFI) = .562, comparative fit index (CFI) = .708. Modifications on the models were then

made on the basis of Langrange Multiplier (LM) Test and theoretical relevance. The LM test proposed that estimating an additional path between child externalizing behavior and experience of stressful life events would improve model fit. This is reasonable as the variables have a significant positive correlation, indicating that the more stressful life events the parents experience, the higher the reported child externalizing behavior. When the model was modified to include this path, the resulting fit was acceptable, $\chi^2(9, N=107) = 13.001, p = .163$, but the other indices still showed poor fit, normed fit index (NFI) = .621, non-normed fit index (NNFI) = .655, comparative fit index (CFI) = .793, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .066 (90% confidence interval .000 – .138). Further modification was done on the model on the basis of the Wald Test, which showed that dropping the path between parental hostility and aggression and the cross-product of parental efficacy and experience of stressful life events. This is reasonable as the results showed that neither parental efficacy nor experience of stressful life events predict parental hostility and aggression. When the path was dropped, the revised model showed significant improvement, $\chi^2_{diff}(5) = 30.80, p < .01$. Other indices also show acceptable fit, $\chi^2(5, N = 107) = 2.05, p = .842$, normed fit index (NFI) = .913, non-normed fit index (NNFI) = 1.432, comparative fit index (CFI) = 1.000, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .000 (90% confidence interval .000 – .078). The final model for mothers is shown in Figure 4. Only the parent's report of child externalizing behavior (at Wave 1) was found to be significantly associated with mothers' hostility and aggression (at Wave 2).

Discussion

This study found common and distinct relationships in the predictors of mothers' and fathers' parental hostility and aggression. First, the path from child externalizing behavior to parental hostility and aggression was confirmed in both models. The path from experience of stressful life events was also significant, but only for fathers. Likewise, parental efficacy was found to moderate the relationship between experience of stressful life events and parental hostility and aggression for fathers.

Child externalizing behavior, as hypothesized, is significantly associated with subsequent parental hostility and aggression for both mothers and fathers, affirming the evocative role the child plays in the parenting relationship. This evocative process suggests that the child is not a mere recipient of the parent's actions, but rather influences the parent's behavior in as much as the parent influences the child's. Children who are emotionally negative are at higher risk to be at the receiving end of parental hostility and aggression as their behavior elicits negativity from parents as well (Bates, Pettit, Dodge, & Ridge, 1998). A child who is difficult may inadvertently elicit more punitiveness from the parent as the parent tries to manage and correct the child's behavior. Testing the effect of the child on the parent using two different time periods strengthens this study's predictive inference. However, this does not necessarily establish causation as other factors may still account for the correlation, such as parental hostility and aggression from Wave 1, which was not controlled.

Parental efficacy did not significantly correlate with nor predict parental hostility and aggression for mothers and fathers. This is contrary to Western literature which purports that efficacy is related to parenting behaviors (Pugh, 2004). Additionally, parental efficacy did

not significantly moderate the relationship between child externalizing behavior and parental hostility and aggression. This contradicts existing knowledge on how parental efficacy overrides the influence of child behavior problems on the use of harsh discipline (Day et al., 1994, as cited in Jones & Prinz, 2005). A possible explanation for these inconsistencies is that efficacy has been characterized as a domain-specific construct (Hastings & Brown, 2002); that is, the influence of efficacy varies for different behaviors in different contexts and that efficacy is meaningful in a particular area only if the gauge of parental efficacy also focused on that same realm. In this study, the measure for parental efficacy concentrated mainly on parents' sense of competence with managing their child's general behavior and schooling. This may not have corresponded to the competence demanded in coping with a child's externalizing behavior. Parents who are efficacious in helping children in their schooling may not necessarily be competent in responding to the child's misbehavior or preventing themselves from being hostile and aggressive. Significant relationships may be better observed if parental efficacy focused on the domain of child behavior management or management of one's hostility and aggression.

Although mothers' and fathers' reported experience of stressful life events did not significantly differ in this study, distinct parenting roles in the Philippine context may account for why experience of stressful life events evinced different patterns of results for fathers and mothers. Fathers' experience of stressful life events predicted parental hostility and aggression, and this is consistent with Grolnick's (2003) assertion that parents in stressful conditions become more hostile toward the child. The Filipino father's primary role of being the financial provider in the family (Medina, 2001) can partially account for this result. In this study, the most frequently reported stressful life events by fathers include "medical problems for close family members" (37.4%) and "death of other important person" (24.5%). The psychological distress brought about by the two events notwithstanding, hospitalizations and burial managements are costly commodities which require immediate financial allocation. Additionally, "money problems that made it hard to pay for basic living expenses" was frequently reported (23.8%). It is possible that the stress caused by the said events is mostly carried by the father, as he is the chief person expected to respond to these financial problems. With the pressure to respond to the family's needs, the fathers' experienced stress may spillover to their interactions with their children, given that the contexts of work and home are permeable (Shreffler, Meadows, & Davis, 2011). That the fathers' experience of stress predicts parental hostility and aggression is made more plausible as the fathers' interactions with children are more likely and circumscribed in the context of dealing with children's misbehavior (Liwag et al., 1999, as cited in Jocson, 2010).

Fathers' parental efficacy was also found to moderate the relationship between experience of stressful life events and parental hostility and aggression. This is consistent with Raikes and Thompson's assertion (2005) that the influence of stress on the parent's behavior can be buffered by efficacy. The most apparent interpretation for this finding is that parental efficacy is a very important resource for fathers that can alleviate the effect of stress on their parenting. Fathers, whose experience of stress influences their parenting, can bank on their efficacy to limit their hostile and aggressive disciplinary measures. Post hoc analysis also revealed that fathers who experience a high level of stress and have low parental efficacy are the most susceptible to resorting to hostility and aggression. This demonstrates how parental

efficacy can buffer the negative effect of stress on parenting, and how low parental efficacy can exacerbate the effects of stress on parental hostility and aggression.

Mothers' experience of stressful life events, on the other hand, did not significantly predict parental hostility and aggression. Even as the mothers' experience of stressful life events also includes "medical problems for close family members" (44.2%), "death of a close family member" (29.9%) and "money problems that made it hard to pay for basic living expenses" (29.9%), their parenting may not have been as strongly affected as the fathers since these events do not necessarily concern child behavior management and child-care, tasks which are expected to be foremost for Filipino mothers. Although Filipino mothers also get stressed by financial problems, they are not normally expected to resolve these. However, since this study measured experience of stressful life events and not the level of stress per se, whether mothers experienced less stress than fathers over similar events is equivocal.

Mothers' parental efficacy did not moderate the relationship between experience of stressful life events and parental hostility and aggression. This is contradictory to previous studies which claim that efficacious parents may perceive less parenting stress (Raikes & Thompson, 2005), which is then associated with less parental hostility and aggression. Given that the mothers' experience of stressful life events did not have a significant relationship with hostility and aggression in the first place, the moderating effect of parental efficacy may not be readily observed. In this case, there is nothing for parental efficacy to moderate or protect. That said, the absence of a moderating effect should not be misconstrued to imply that parental efficacy is not helpful for mothers. The notion remains that parental efficacy is a valuable psychological resource, and this could be particularly evident at times of enormous stress or in domains which concern the specific roles of mothers.

Contrary to previous studies, parental efficacy, overall, did not notably influence parental hostility and aggression. The unexpected findings on the apparently minimal influence of parental efficacy in this study possibly point to the differences in the parenting context in local and Western settings. Perhaps parental efficacy does not play as salient a buffering system as in Western contexts given that Filipino parents do not have to rely solely on themselves in child-rearing (Medina, 2001). Given that the Philippine culture is collectivist parents tolerate interdependence with other family members in child socialization (Greenfield & Suzuki, 1999, as cited in Keshavarz & Baharudin, 2009). The extended family helps ease child-rearing problems by providing economic and social support to the parents (Medina, 2001). Individualistic cultures, conversely, promote autonomy of self, looking after their own welfare (Oettingen, 1995) and the need for privacy (Hofstede, 2001). These cultural differences may also influence mothers' and fathers' parenting behaviors in varying ways. Adjacent to this is the assertion that lower levels of efficacy in collectivist groups do not always imply lower subsequent performance (Klassen, 2004). This inconsistency could imply that parental efficacy possibly operates differently for collectivist and individualist cultures. This notion remains to be tested, however. Nevertheless, the extended nature of the Filipino family could possibly serve as a more central resource and buffering system for Filipino parents.

The findings of this study suggest that the relations between child characteristics, experience of stressful life events, parent's psychological resource, and parenting behavior may differently affect mothers and fathers, given differences in parental roles. Particularly, this study advances how mothers' and fathers' similar experiences of stressful events may have different effects on their parenting. It follows then that gender or role-specific approaches and measures in studying mothers and fathers could better explain differences and similarities in parenting behavior.

Knowing that parental efficacy can ameliorate fathers' tendencies to employ hostility and aggression over their children, interventions may focus on strengthening parents' sense of efficacy. Likewise, the findings of this study suggest that it would be beneficial if fathers be assisted in coping with the stresses they experience. Walker (2000) claimed that studies on role expectations and demands and parenting difficulties have often been studied with respect to mothers. Gottman (1996) suggests that, in part, the experience of stressful life events weighs more heavily on men as they are less likely to report or express stress and obtain the necessary assistance. Moreover, the workplace may not always support fathers in dual career marriages. Given the greater involvement of fathers in family life in recent years, social and occupational supports for fathers are warranted so that they can be equipped in their efforts to be a good partner in childrearing.

The results of this study must be considered in the context of its limitations. As the participants for this study were all from Metro Manila, the results and implications of the study may not be generalizable to the rest of the Philippines. In addition, this study used parent self-reports and is vulnerable to social desirability and other biases. Despite using data from two subsequent years, the study only speaks to correlation rather than causality between child externalizing behavior and parental hostility and aggression, as other variables were not controlled. It is possible that the level of parental hostility and aggression caused the level of child externalizing behavior for that same year. Longitudinal studies will better establish the direction of the relationships. Since this study only included parents of 8 – 10 year old children, future research endeavors should consider parents of children of a different developmental stage. This is so because parenting poses different challenges to the parents at different developmental stages and ages of the child (Shreffler, Meadows, & Davis, 2011). Future studies are also recommended to use measures of parental efficacy which are more domain-specific.

Overall, this study found that child externalizing behavior has a direct relation to Filipino parents' hostility and aggression, and the different effects of experience of stressful life events on mothers' and fathers' hostile and aggressive parenting underscore their respective parenting roles in the local context. The findings regarding parental efficacy in this study point to the need for more domain-specific ways of measuring it, with sensitivity to the possibility that parental efficacy operates differently in the extended Filipino family, than in Western contexts.

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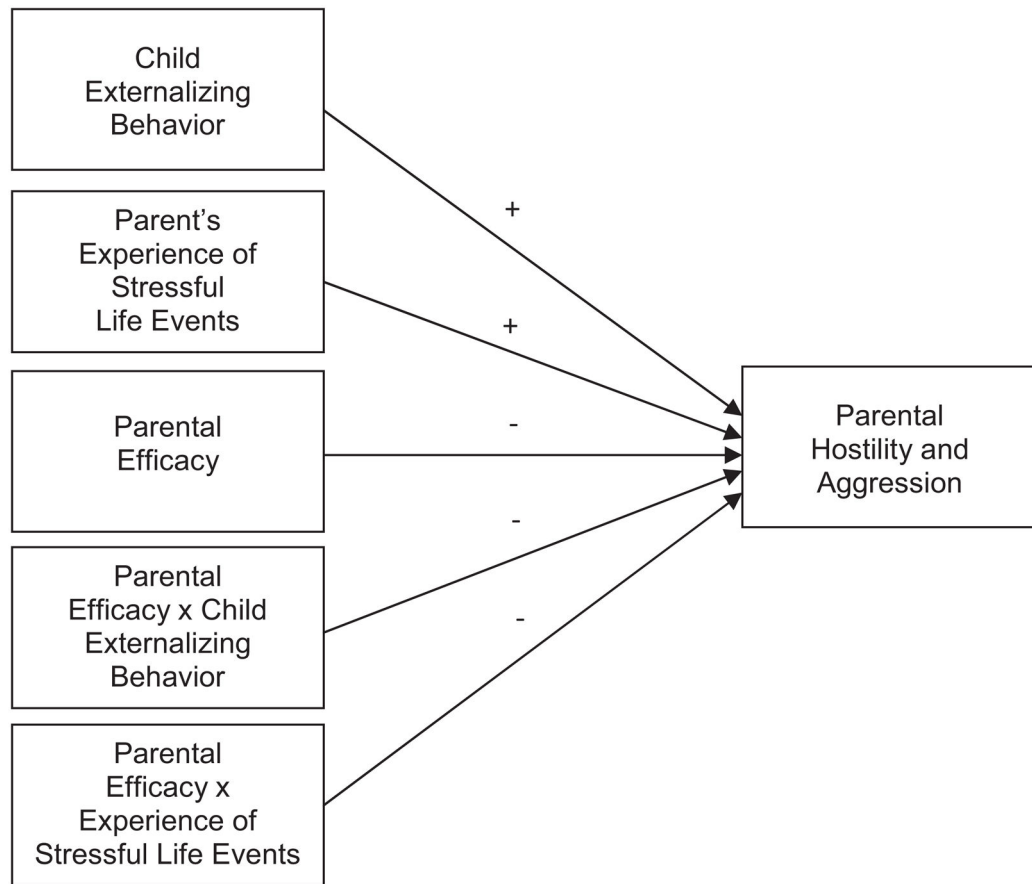


Figure 1.
Hypothesized relations among variables

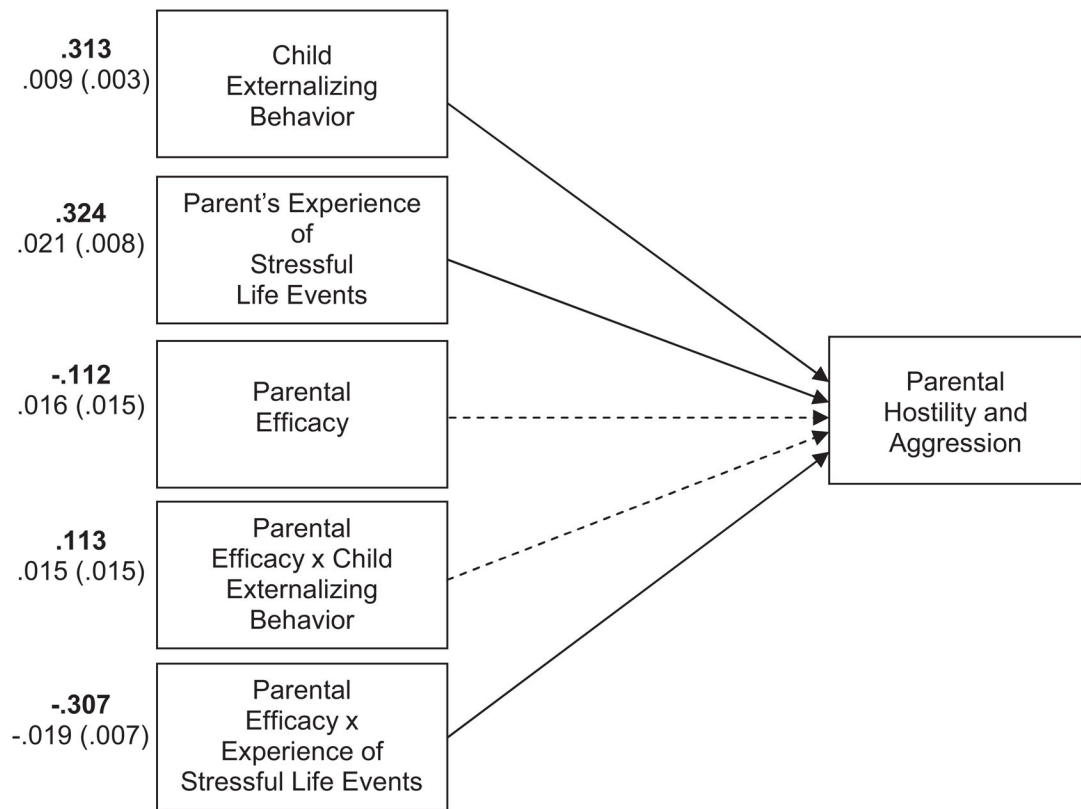


Figure 2.

Final path model of predictors of fathers' parental hostility and aggression, with standardized (bold) and unstandardized coefficient estimates (values in parentheses are standard errors). Paths with solid lines are significant at $p < .05$, $\chi^2(10, N=83) = 9.32, ns$; NNFI = 1.088; CFI=1.000; RMSEA=.000.

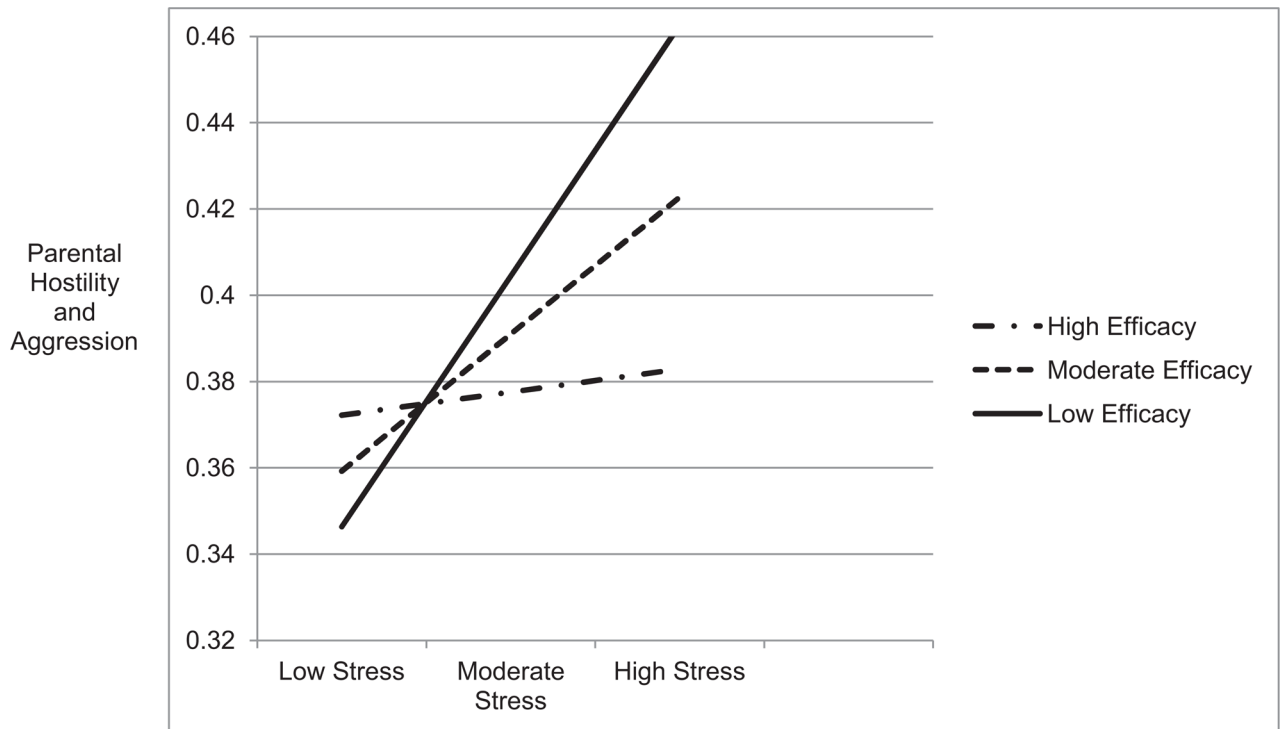


Figure 3. Relations between fathers' parental hostility and aggression, experience of stressful life events, and parental efficacy.

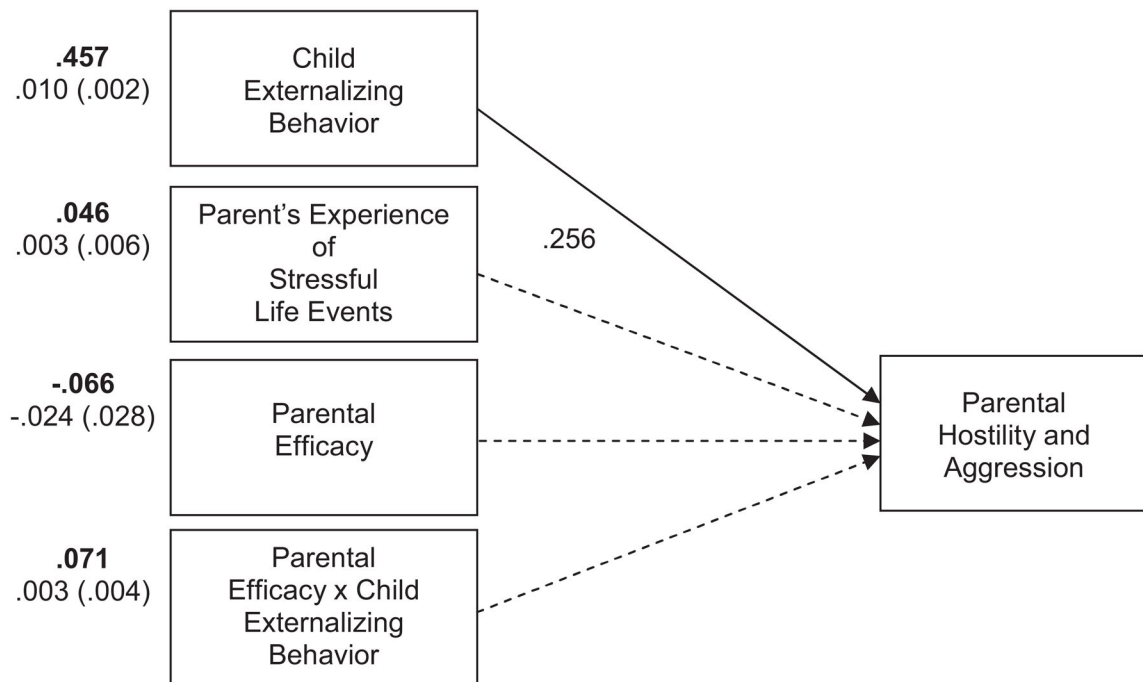


Figure 4.

Final path model of predictors of mothers' parental hostility and aggression, with standardized (bold) and unstandardized coefficient estimates (values in parentheses are standard errors). Path with double-headed arrows represents non-directional covariances. Paths with solid lines are significant at $p < .05$, $\chi^2(5, N=107) = 2.05, ns$; NFI = .913; NNFI = 1.432; CFI = 1.000; RMSEA = .000.

Table 1

Wave 1 and Wave 2 Participant Characteristics

Variable	W1%		W1 M (SD)		W2%		W2 M (SD)	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Age (years)			40.26 (7.33)	37.94 (6.23)			40.80 (7.29)	38.73 (6.39)
Education (years)			13.72 (3.67)	13.60 (4.11)			13.34 (3.63)	13.47 (3.80)
Child Age (years)			8.02 (.34)				9.10 (.45)	
Child Gender								
Male							50.5	
Female							49.5	

Note. F = Father, M = Mother

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
FATHERS' REPORT										
1. Hostility and Aggression	1.45	0.47	1				.191			
2. Child Externalizing Behavior	12.05	7.44	.445*	1				.423*		
3. Experience of Stressful Life Events	4.58	2.88	.426*	.312*	1				.343*	
4. Parental Efficacy	4.19	0.54	-.164	-.160	-.240*	1				.016
MOTHERS' REPORT										
5. Hostility and Aggression	1.48	0.39					1			
6. Child Externalizing Behavior	13.32	7.29					.465*	1		
7. Experience of Stressful Life Events	4.42	2.59					.138	.256*	1	
8. Parental Efficacy	4.48	0.44					-.105	-.105	.055	1

Note.

* Correlation significant at the 0.01 level