

Abstract

Title: Effects of Gender Differences on Parental Tolerance of Child Disruptive Behaviors.

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Disruptive behaviors are among the most common reasons for the referral of young children to mental health clinics. However, even developmentally appropriate levels of disruptive behaviors (e.g., normal frequency of noncompliance, temper tantrums) can be annoying to parents of young children, which calls to attention the potential role of parent tolerance of disruptive behaviors. Parental tolerance has been defined as the degree to which a parent tends to be annoyed by their child's disruptive behavior. Parental tolerance can vary from neutral levels of tolerance to high or low tolerance for child misbehavior. A parent's tolerance of their young child's disruptive behavior may be partially determined by gender of both parent and child. The purpose of the current study is to examine the relation between parent and child gender, and parental tolerance of child disruptive behaviors. Participants were 160 parents with 3- to 6-year-old at-risk children (47.5% girls) who sought help with parenting. Tolerance was measured by the difference between parent ratings of intensity on 36 disruptive behaviors and whether each behavior was identified as a problem (resulting in a score of either high, normal, or low tolerance). A 2 (child gender) by 2 (parent gender) analysis of variance was conducted on the tolerance score. Results indicated that mothers and fathers differed in their tolerance of disruptive behaviors expressed by their children such that mothers were equally tolerant of boys and girls oppositional defiant behavior but fathers were more tolerant of boys oppositional behavior. Implications and future directions will be presented.