

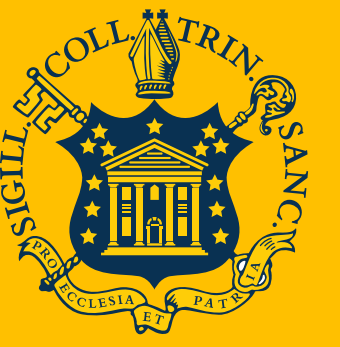
Examining the Impact of Familial Characteristics on Anxiety in High-Risk Children



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INTRODUCTION

Introduction: This study asked if specific family characteristics (interparental conflict, sibling relationships, and parental rearing behaviors) act as either risk or protective factors for the onset of anxiety symptoms for children of clinically diagnosed anxious parents.

Prior Research Findings:

- There are mixed results if marital conflict and childhood anxiety are related (Vasey, Dadds, & Vasey, 2001).
- Drake and Ginsburg (2012) found an indirect relationship for anxiety between quality of sibling relationships and marital conflict. We do not know of any previous research showing a direct link between sibling relationships and childhood anxiety.
- Parental rearing behaviors act as a strong risk factor for the development of childhood anxiety (Murray, Creswell, & Cooper, 2009).

The current study looked at the unexplored relationship among all three of the above variables prospectively in a single high-risk sample.

PARTICIPANTS

- 40 volunteer children (mean age = 8.94 years; 45% girls; 90% Caucasian) of parents who met the criteria for a wide range of anxiety disorders.
- Families were randomly assigned to either an intervention group (CAPS; n=20) or a control group (WL; n=20).
- Assessments were taken pre and post intervention and 6 and 12 months after the postintervention assessment.

METHOD

Data and Study Design:

- Data came from UConn Health's "The Child Anxiety Prevention Study" which developed an intervention program to lessen anxiety in high-risk children.
- IVs: Subscales of Child's Perception of Interparental Conflict (CPIC), subscales of Sibling Relationship scale, and subscales of Egna Minnen Beträffande Uppfostran (EMBU) at preintervention baseline
- DV: Child anxiety scores (ADIS_AnxdxtotCSR_YR) at one year after postintervention
- Gender and intervention group were controlled for.

Hypothesis 1: Child's Perception of Interparent Conflict (CPIC) will show a positive correlation with their anxiety scores.

CPIC subscales:

- 1) CPIC- Frequency of Conflict
- 2) CPIC- Perceived Threat



Hypothesis 2: Child's perception of Sibling Relationships will show a positive correlation with their anxiety scores.



Subscales:

- 1) Maternal/ Paternal Partiality
- 2) Companionship/ Involvement

Hypothesis 3: Child's rating of their parent's (1)overprotection/control and (2)rejection behaviors (EMBU) will have a positive correlation with their anxiety scores.

Subscales:

- 1) Overprotection/Control
- 2) Rejection

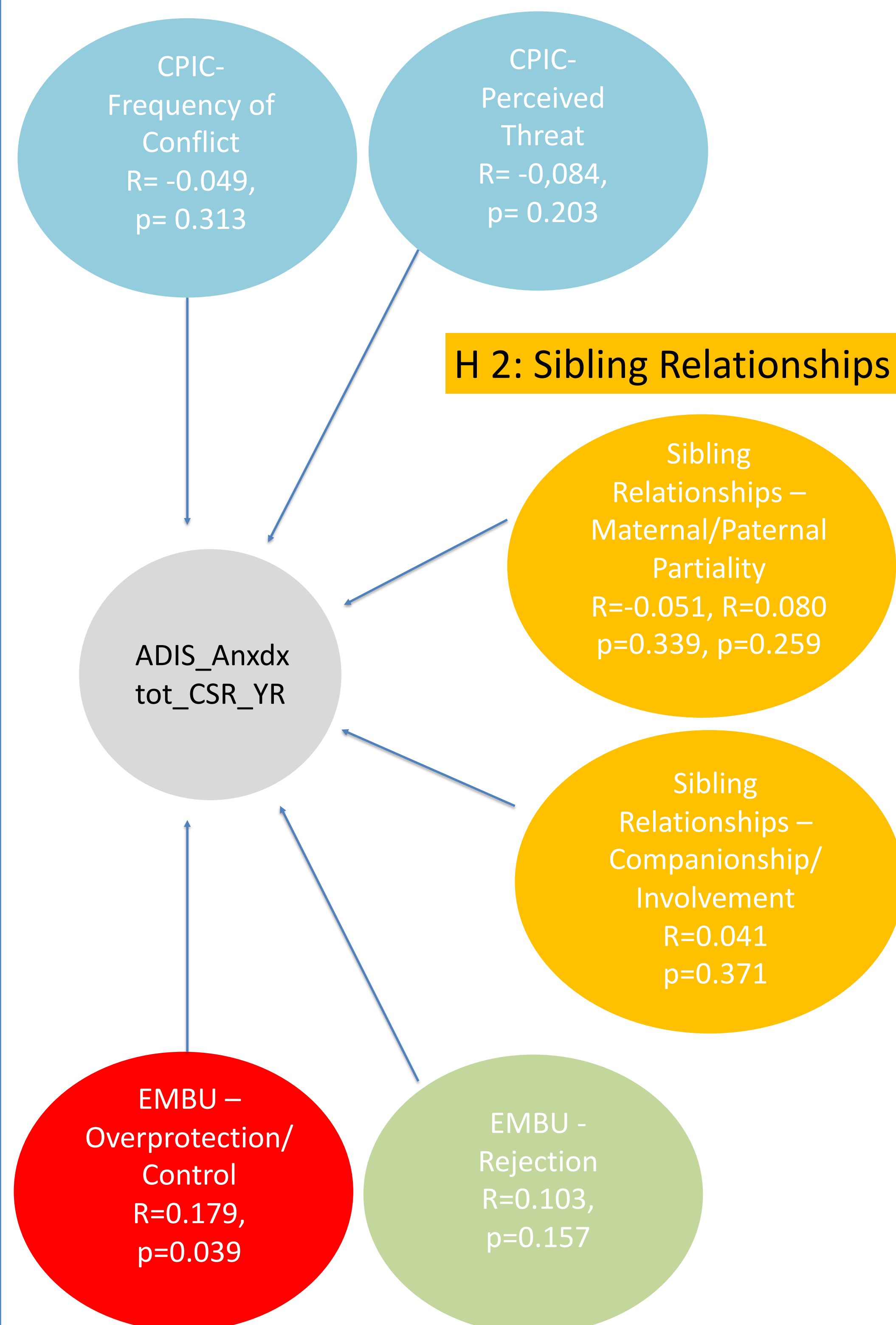


RESULTS

Using a Pearson Correlation, the study found:

- Hypothesis 1: No significant relationship
- Hypothesis 2: No significant relationship
- **Hypothesis 3(1): A significant relationship between parental overprotection/control and child anxiety scores (shown by red in diagram below).**
- Hypothesis 3(2): No significant relationship between parental rejection and child anxiety scores.

H 1: Child's Perception of Interparental Conflict



H 3: EMBU- Child (Parental Rearing Behaviors)

CONCLUSIONS

Hypothesis 1: Our results on the relationship between interparental conflict and child anxiety symptoms were consistent with the findings of Vasey, Dadds, & Vasey (2001) that marital conflict does not pose as a significant risk factor for the onset of anxiety symptoms.

Hypothesis 2: Our results found no relationship between sibling relationships and anxious symptoms; we are still unsure if it can act as a direct protective or risk factor for onset of anxiety symptoms. A potential reason for the null finding is that the older children may have perceived parental partiality and companionship/involvement differently than younger children.

Hypothesis 3(1,2): Our results were congruent with Cao, Qin, & Yu (2006) that there was no positive correlation between rejection and anxiety symptoms but there was for overprotection/control and anxiety symptoms. This suggests that overprotection/control may act as a risk factor more than the intervention group acts a protective factor. However, the intervention group was more of a protective factor than rejection was a risk for anxiety symptoms in children from this study.

Limitations:

- Sample and selection may have posed a limitation to investigate the relationship properly as half of the sample size was participating within a protective factor (intervention group).
- Age may have been a limitation due to the wide age range.

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