

Examining Whether Maternal Distress And Pregnancy Complications May Be Viewed As Environmental Sensitivity Factors In A Cohort Of Syrian Refugee Children

Laidlaw Undergraduate Leadership and Research Programme

Environmental Sensitivity theory states that earliest experiences combine with genes to make a person more attuned ('sensitive') to their environment. Strongly positive or strongly negative early experiences may lead to a child being more environmentally sensitive. Highly sensitive children are expected to **thrive more in positive environments** but to **suffer more in negative environments**. This study assesses whether maternal psychological distress and pregnancy complications experienced while in-utero may be viewed as Environmental Sensitivity factors, ie. if experiencing maternal psychological distress or complications in utero will make a child more sensitive to their environment, and thus more receptive to an intervention.



Intervention

We Love Reading
Shared book-reading intervention

Average Age
6.3 years

Assessment:

Predictor → **Maternal Distress**
Kessler-6
n = 284

Predictor → **Pregnancy Complications**
Dichotomous question
n = 102

Outcome → **Literacy**
Holistic Assessment of Social and Developmental Outcomes
- Literacy (Direct Assessment)

Analysis

Multiple Linear Regression with an interaction term (secondary data analysis)

Results

The treatment status * maternal psychological distress interaction term was **non-significant**, $p = 0.801$

The treatment status * pregnancy complications interaction term was **non-significant**, $p = 0.55$.

Implications

Maternal Distress → Research should make use of varied statistical methods and control for the cumulative effects of adversity.

Pregnancy Complications → Research should examine specific complications in pregnancy and their relation to child outcomes.

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