The Effect of Adaptability and Family Conflict on Child Externalizing Behavior
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INTRODUCTION

• Childhood externalizing behaviors are later risk factors for juvenile delinquency, adult crime, and violence (Farrington, 1989).
• Family conflict has been associated with higher externalizing behaviors in children (Pendry et. al, 2013).
• Boys show higher rates of externalizing behaviors than girls from childhood throughout adolescence (Lewinsohn et. al, 1993).
• This study aimed to advance the literature on the predictive nature of adaptability (child temperament) and family conflict on child externalizing behaviors. The role of gender in this interaction was also explored.

METHODS

Participants for the study were 302 5-year-old twins and 110 singletons who were part of the Southern Illinois Twins/Triplets and Siblings Study (SITSS; DiLalla & Jamnik, 2019). Parent report measures of adaptability, family conflict, and child externalizing behaviors were used for analyses.

RESULTS

• The significant interaction showed that boys in subsample 2 with high family conflict and low adaptability had the highest externalizing ($\beta = .33$, $p = .03$), and boys with low family conflict and high adaptability had the lowest scores on externalizing ($\beta = .43$, $p = .002$; Figure 1).
• This interaction was not significant for girls (Figure 2).

DISCUSSION

• These findings show that low adaptability may be a risk factor for boys even in low family conflict environments.
• This study also points to developmental gender differences in externalizing problems.
• Future research should examine other temperamental aspects such as negative affect and family conflict on externalizing behaviors.

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