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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Links between parental affect, cognitions, parenting, and child outcomes

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**Links between Parental Affect, Cognitions,
Parenting, and Child Outcomes**

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Links between Parental Affect, Cognitions, Parenting, and Child Outcomes

Research suggests that parental affect has a significant influence on child outcomes, and that this is mediated by parenting style, and parent-child interactions. This thesis was an investigation of the critical factors which impact on child development, with particular focus on maternal affect, cognitions, and parenting.

A review was conducted of the literature investigating the impact of postnatal depression on child cognitive development from 1-16 years. Inconsistencies were apparent in the evidence, with some studies highlighting postnatal depression as a significant risk factor for child cognitive development, while for others this was the case only when an accumulation of postnatal depression and other risk factors occurred, such as chronicity of depression, security of attachment, and socioeconomic status. In several studies it appeared that a positive association was mediated through some aspect of mother-child interaction.

The processes involved in parenting were investigated in a study exploring the relationship between parental affect, attributions for child behaviour (child-centred responsibility attributions and parent-centred causal attributions), and inept discipline (laxness, over-reactivity and verbosity) in a community sample of parents commencing a behavioural parenting intervention. High levels of negative parental attributions were found, and mediational analysis indicated that associations between parental affect and parenting style were mediated by both parent-causal and child-responsibility attributions.

The treatment of choice for child behavioural problems is behavioural-based parenting interventions. However, engagement in evidence-based interventions may be impacted by a range of parent and family contextual factors. Brief telephone interviews explored parents' perspectives of what contextual factors impacted on their parenting. Parental interviews indicated awareness of parent and child factors, level of support, family factors, employment, and wider contextual factors. The importance of assessing and addressing parental attributions and parent and family contextual factors in order to tailor parent-training interventions for parents of children with problematic behaviour is discussed.