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Multi-level family factors and affective and behavioral symptoms of oppositional defiant disorder in Chinese children

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Previous studies have well-documented the significant linkage between family context and child psychological development, particularly in families with children having potential affective and behavioral problems, like ODD symptoms. A wealth of literature has identified numerous family factors that placed children at increased risk of developing ODD, including poor family function, low marital quality etc. The majority of these studies, however, focused almost exclusively on family factors at either one level or mixed levels. Different associations of multi-level family factors and child ODD symptoms remained unclear. Therefore, the objective of this study was to examine the linkages between family factors at the whole, dyadic, and individual levels and two dimensions (affective and behavioral) of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) symptoms in Chinese children. Participants comprised of 80 father-child dyads and 169 mother-child dyads from families with ODD children. Results indicated that multilevel family factors were differently associated with children's affective and behavioral ODD symptoms. All the family factors at the dyadic and individual levels were significantly associated with child affective ODD symptoms. However, only the most proximal factors (parent-child relationship and child emotion regulation, which were directly related to child) were significantly related to child behavioral ODD symptoms. The present study extends the current knowledge regarding the relationships between family factors and two dimensions of child ODD symptoms by testing the comprehensive multilevel family factors model. This study also recommends that future interventions for ODD children should consider the multi-level family factors to enhance intervention efficacy.

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