

Goal

This study analyzed longitudinal secondary data, the National Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) I, on the problem behavior outcomes of 513 children who have been in long-term out-of-home care in the United States.

Why?

- Children in out-of-home care have usually experienced significant adversity in their lives, which may negatively affect their behavioral development.
- Understanding the processes underlying problem behavior development and identifying risk and protective factors that may benefit particular subgroups is needed (Shpiegel, 2016)

Hambrick et al. (2016): Advocacy for whether and for whom interventions work

Analytic method

- Conditional latent growth curve models to understand risk and protective factors associated with different trajectories of problem behavior
- Mediation path analyses to understand relationships between maltreatment severity and later behavior problems.

The data: NSCAW I

- A US national survey that covers a three- year time period.
- Children aged 0 to 14 years were selected into the sample at baseline (Wave 1) and followed over time. Data was then collected again 18 months after baseline (Wave 3), then 36 months after baseline again (Wave 4).

Risk and protective factors of behavioral trajectories

Early childhood group (ages 3-5)

Model	Variable	Intercept (Std. Estimate)	Slope (Std. Estimate)
1	Daily Living Skills	-0.636*	0.068
	Age at initial placement	0.356**	-0.521
2	Self-control	-0.488**	-0.001
	Cooperation	-0.281*	0.218
	Out-of-home care setting	-0.070	0.541*

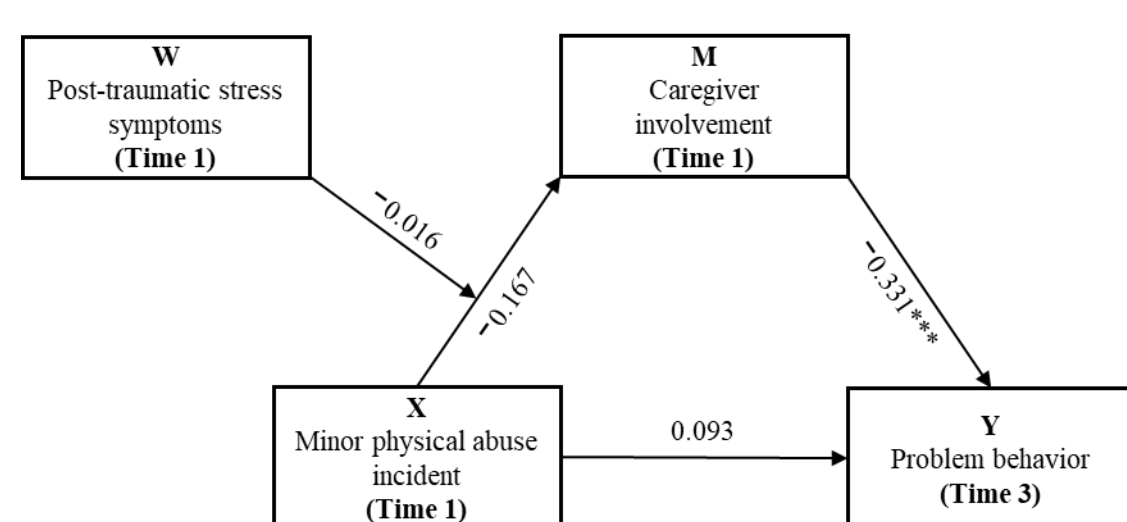
Middle childhood group (ages 6-10)

Model	Variable	Intercept (Std. Estimate)	Slope (Std. Estimate)
1	Daily Living Skills	-0.150*	0.134
	Age at initial placement	-0.546***	0.292
	School engagement	-0.167**	0.366**
2	Self-control	-0.511***	0.277
	Cooperation	-0.192*	0.211
	Out-of-home care setting	-0.049	0.373*
	Female gender	-0.095	-0.154

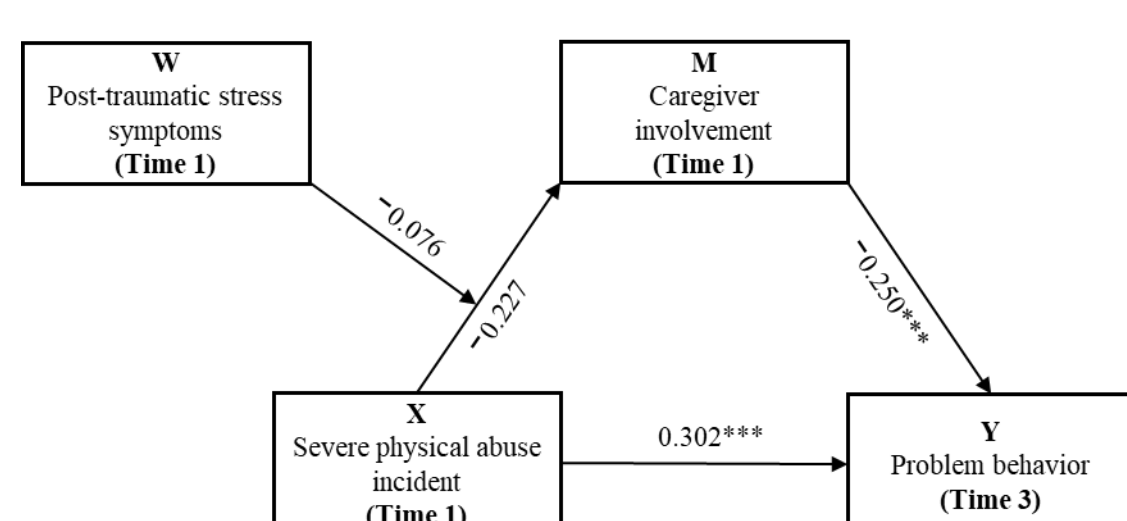
Adolescent group (ages 11-16)

Model	Variable	Intercept (Std. Estimate)	Slope (Std. Estimate)
1	Neighborhood community environment	0.150	0.290*
	Age at first out-of-home placement	-0.237**	-0.049
	Trauma	0.301**	-0.003

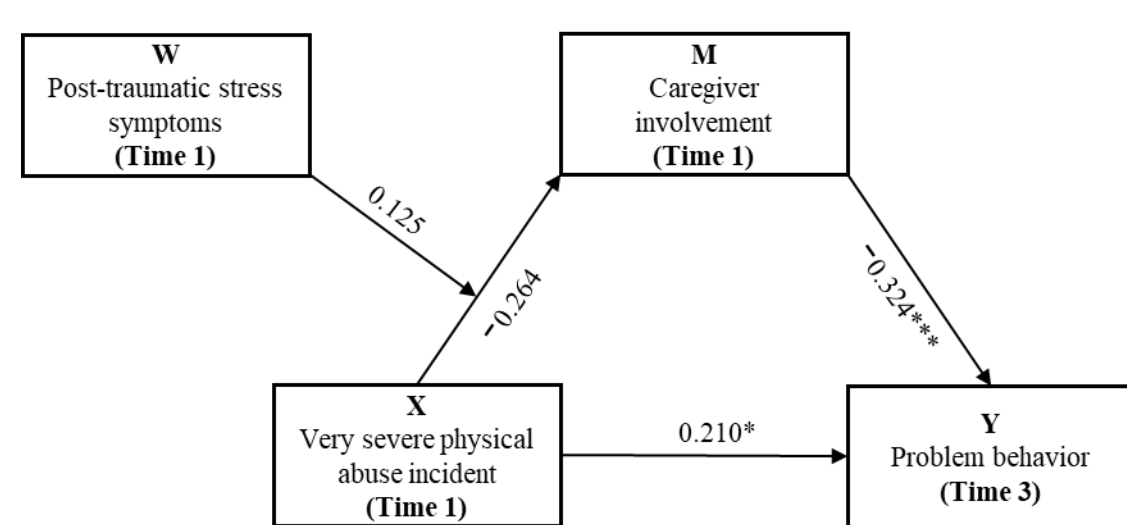
Protective mediating variable: Caregiver involvement



Indirect mediation effect (unstandardized): 1.782



Indirect mediation effect (unstandardized): 2.241

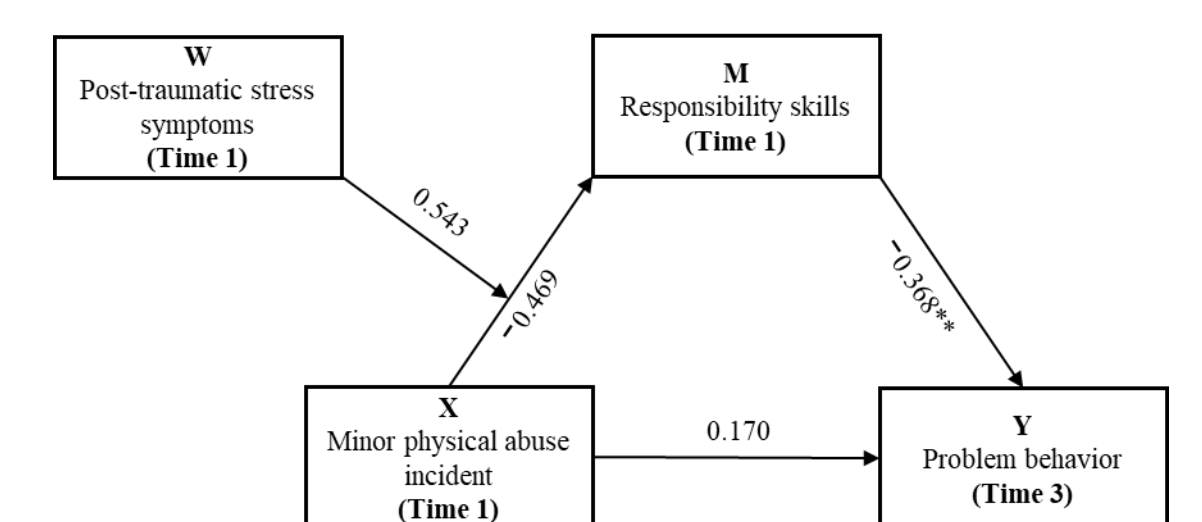


Indirect mediation effect (unstandardized): 4.175

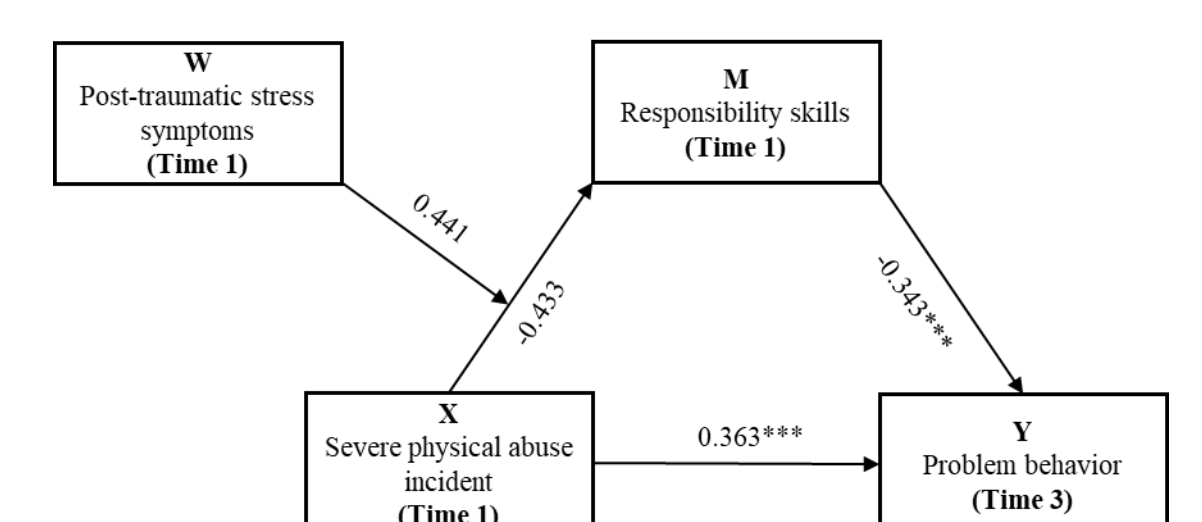
As presented on the left, the first model shows that minor physical abuse does not have a significant statistical relationship with later problem behavior, suggesting that the effects of minor physical abuse do not have a direct effect on behavior problems 3 years later. However, the second and third models show that incident of severe physical abuse and very severe physical abuse both have a significant effect on problem behavior at Time 3, respectively indicating a 0.302-unit ($p<.001$) and 0.210-unit ($p<.01$) increase in problem behavior outcomes over time.

Protective mediating variable: Responsibility

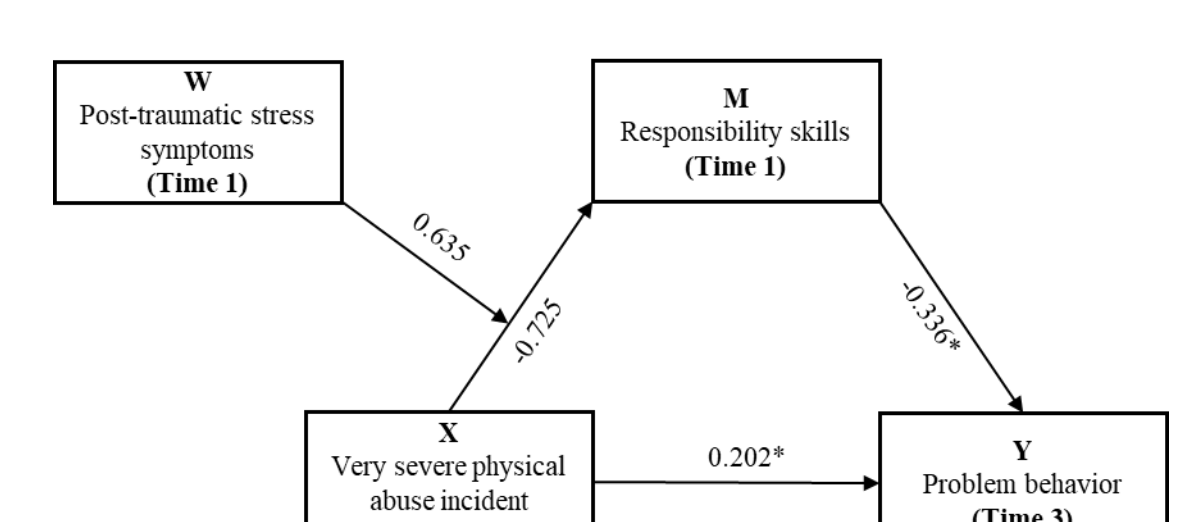
As shown on the right, minor incident of abuse does not have a significant effect on later problem behavior outcomes. However, both severe and very severe incidents of abuse are associated with increased levels of problem behavior at least three years later. Again, the indirect mediation effects are all statistically nonsignificant for the three models, which indicates there is no significant mediation effect detected between abuse incident, responsibility skills, and later problem behavior.



Indirect mediation effect (unstandardized): 5.582



Indirect mediation effect (unstandardized): 5.877



Indirect mediation effect (unstandardized): 11.802

Contributions of the study

- The study contributes to the body of evidence on risk and protective factors by demonstrating that out-of-home care setting, school engagement, poor neighborhood community environment, and child-perceived caregiver involvement were risk and protective factors for behavior problems for children in out-of-home care.
- This study also makes an important contribution to knowledge about the effects of socioemotional skills and the involvement of caregivers in the positive behavioral development of children in out-of-home care.

Implications

- Better quality data on socioemotional skills and behavioral problems should also be collected or identified to replicate the findings of this thesis and others.
- The identified protective factors, though probably not in isolation, may mitigate the effects of adversity that children in long-term out-of-home care have experienced, on behavioral outcomes.
- While limited by the scope and quality of the data available, the findings of this thesis are significant and will be important if they can be replicated in future studies.
- Future studies should incorporate more distal influences on children's behavior at the exosystem or macrosystem levels that shape the proximal microsystem.