

INTERNALIZING SYMPTOMS AND PARENTING SKILLS OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH EXTERNALIZING BEHAVIOUR: THE IMPACT OF ATTRIBUTIONS AND PARENTAL ROLE



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Introduction

Parental factors such as parental attributions impact the development and maintenance of externalizing behaviour in children [1].

Parental Attributions: A parent's explanation for the cause of their child's behaviour can be maladaptive if the parent believes that their parenting behaviour causes the behavioural difficulties (**parent-causal attributions**), OR that their children's behavioural difficulties are intentional by their child (**child-responsible attributions**) [2].

Parents with poorer mental health make more maladaptive parental attributions [3]. In addition, parents with maladaptive attributions have more lax or overreactive parenting [3].

Research Questions

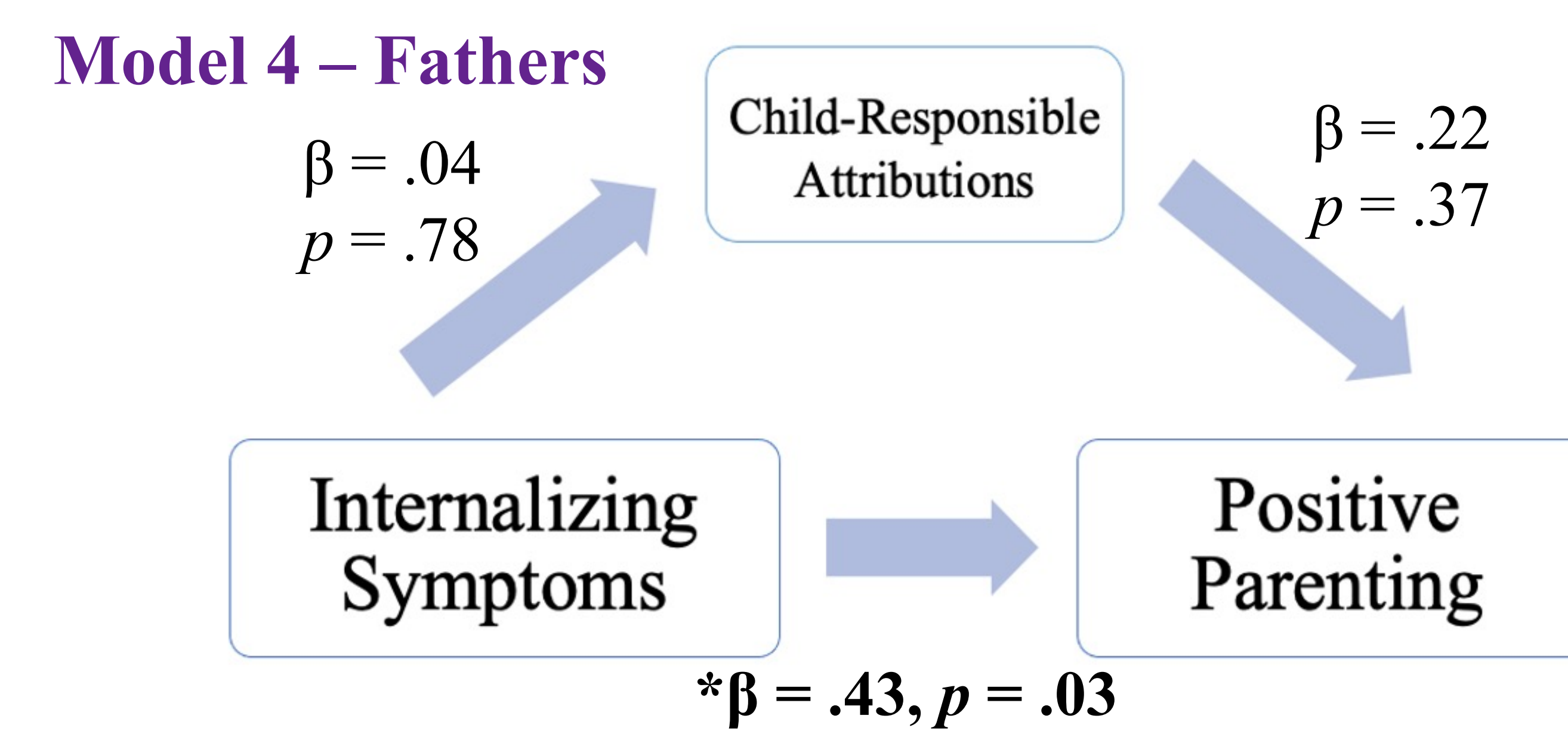
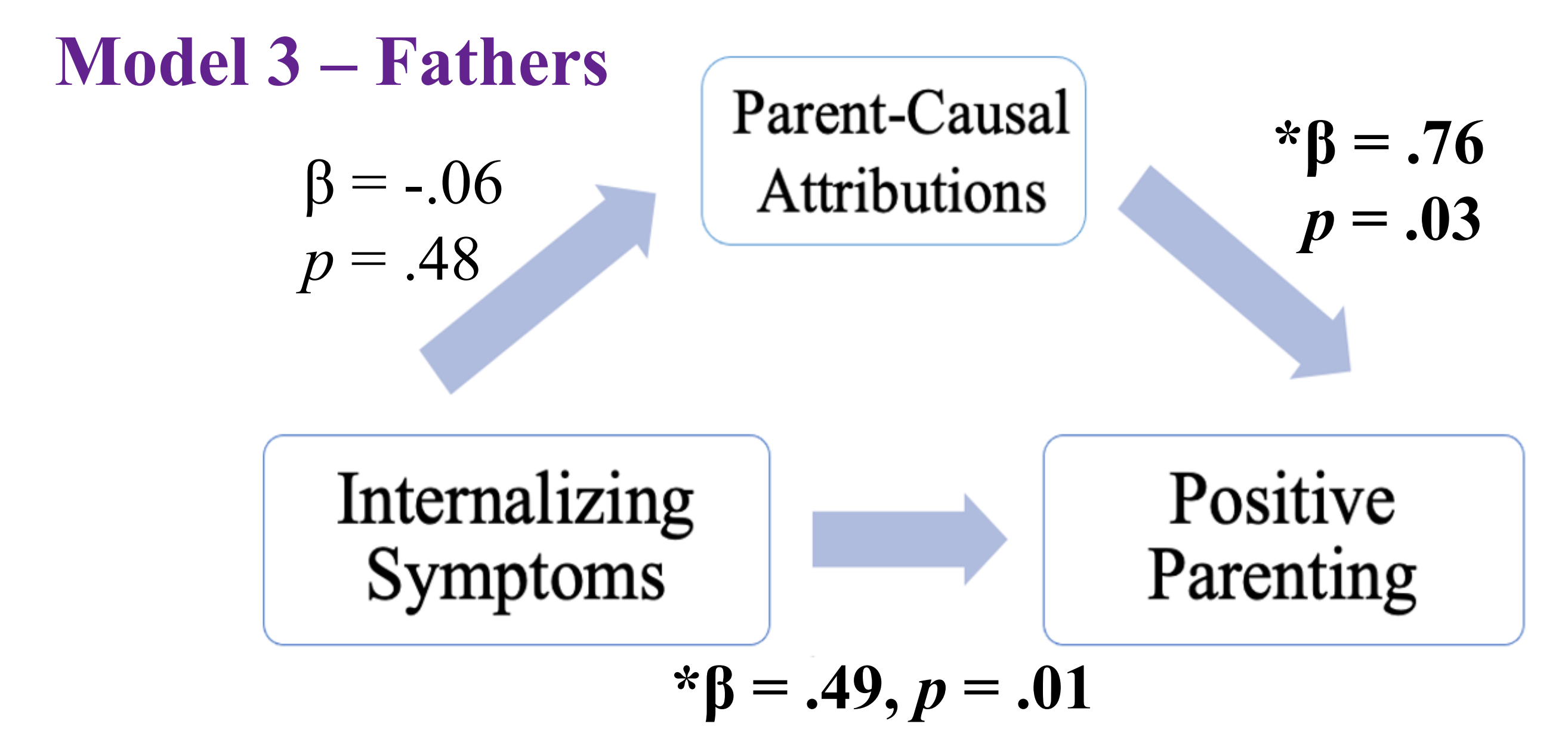
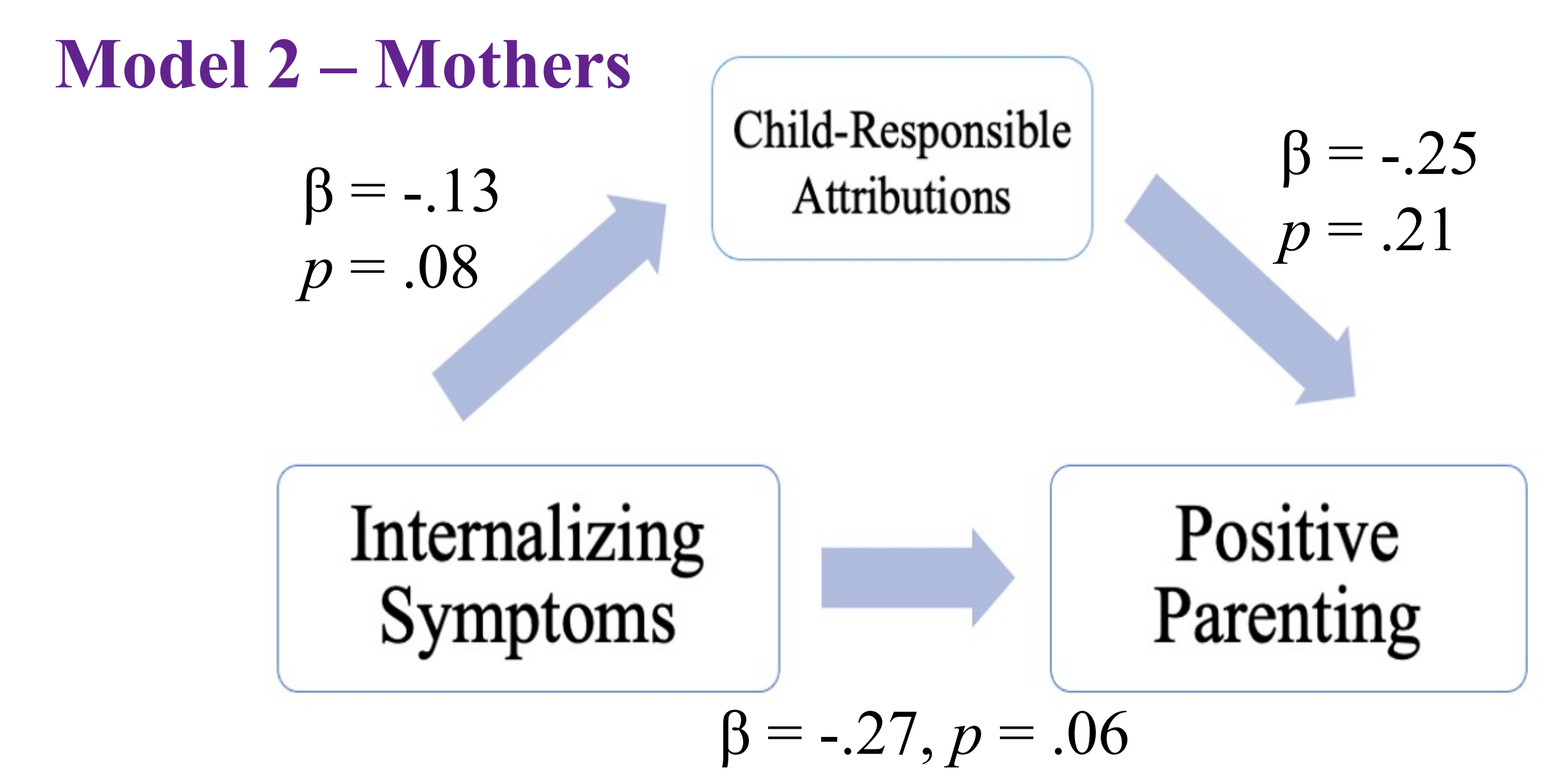
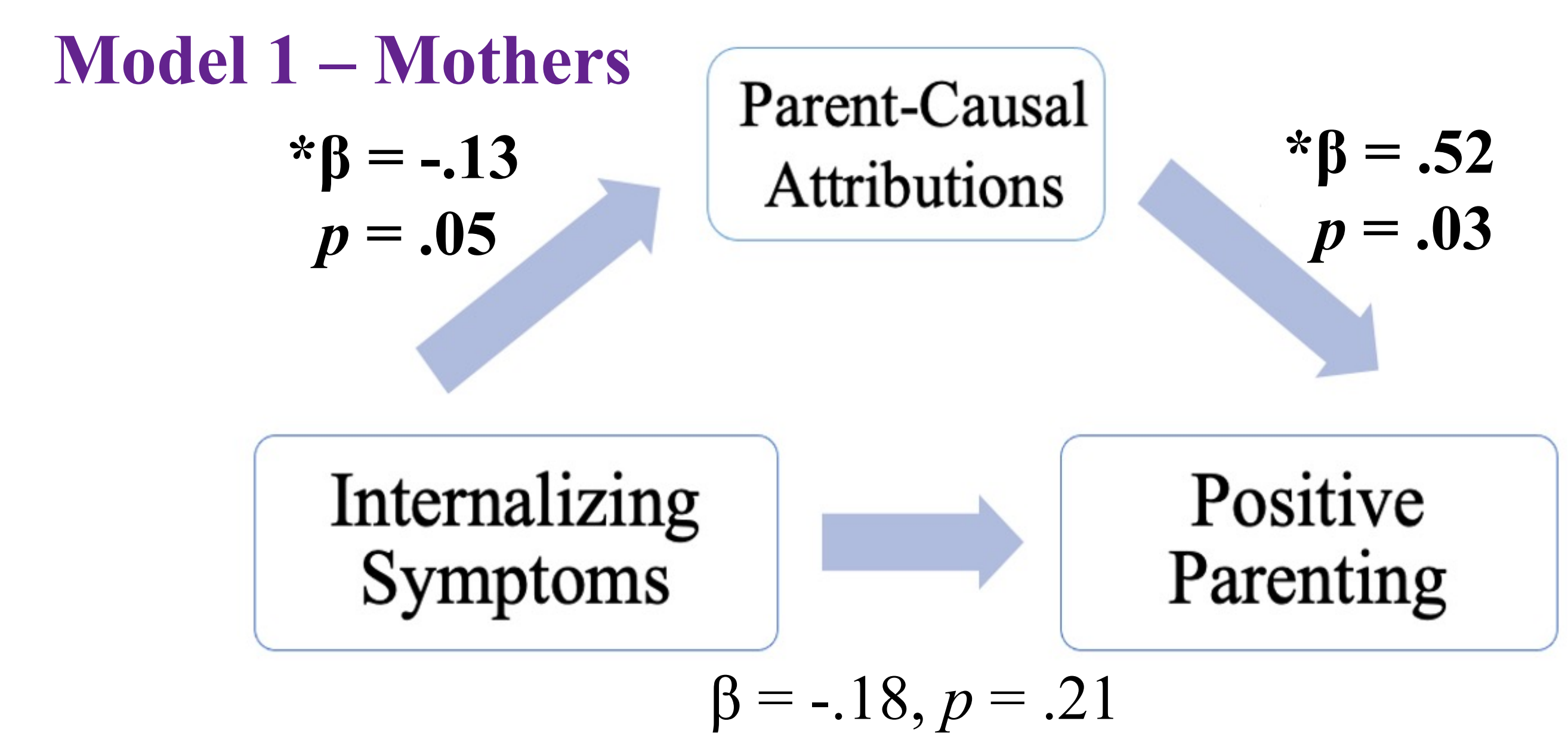
- 1) Is there a relationship between **parent internalizing symptoms and parenting skills**?
- 2) Is the relationship between parent internalizing symptoms and parenting skills **mediated by parental attributions**?
- 3) Is the relationship between parent internalizing symptoms, parental attributions, and parenting skills **differently expressed in mothers and fathers**?

Methods

Population: 135 parents of children with elevated levels of externalizing behaviours who were clinic-referred.

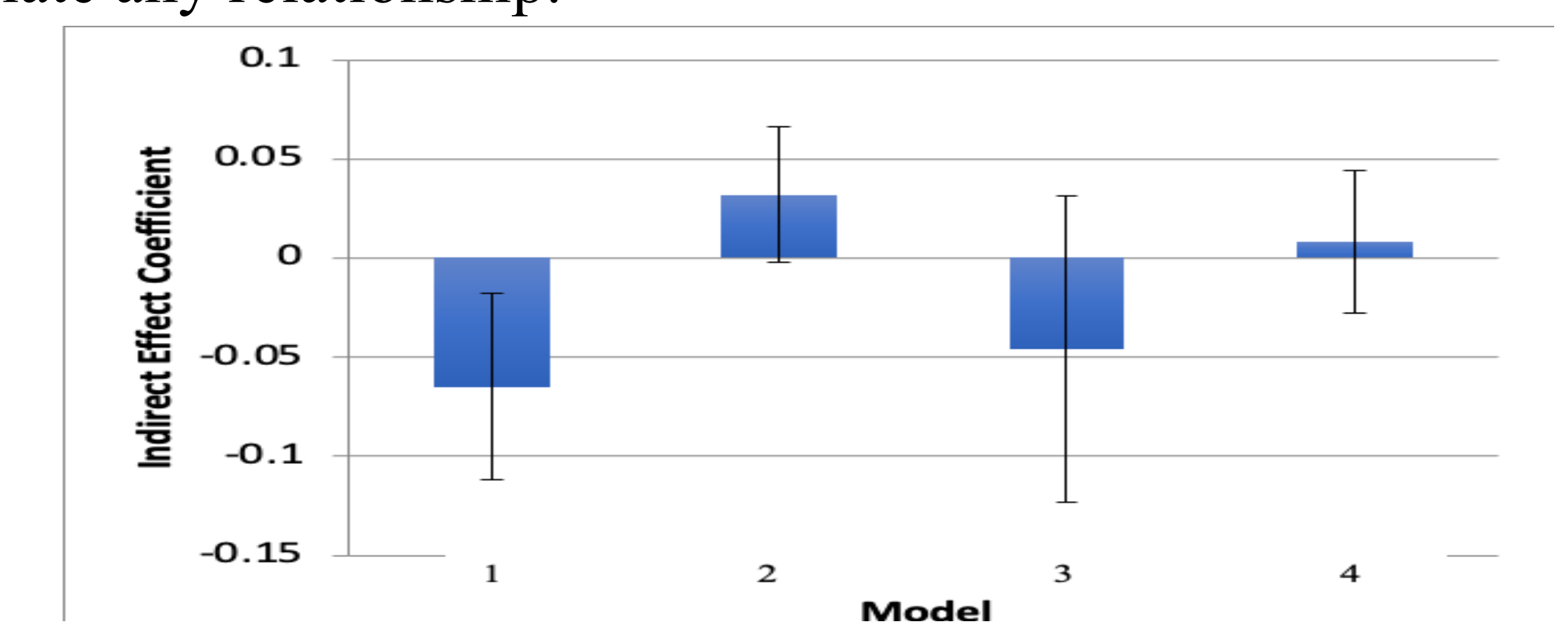
- Measures:**
- **Parent Cognition Scale [2]:** Measures extent to which parent blames themselves or their child.
 - **Alabama Parenting Scale – Short Form [4]:** Measures three dimensions of parenting skills (including positive parenting).
 - **Global Appraisal of Individual Needs – Short Screener [5]:** Includes the Internalizing Disorder Screener, which assesses parental symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Results



Results (continued)

Results revealed that parental attributions do not significantly mediate any relationship.



Discussion

- Findings suggest that the **more** internalizing symptoms a mother reports, the **less** she blames herself for her child's behaviour.
- In addition, the **more** a mother or father blames themselves for their child's behaviour, the **more** adaptive parenting skills they displayed.
- Mothers reporting **fewer** internalizing symptoms exhibit **more** positive parenting, while fathers reporting **more** internalizing symptoms exhibit **more** positive parenting. This suggests that mental health is exhibited differently by mothers and fathers.
- Fathers who report **higher** rates of parent-causal attributions exhibit **more** positive parenting practices.

Implications

- Maintenance and development of externalizing behaviour in children
- Tailoring Parent Training programs in treatment for children with externalizing behaviour for mothers and fathers
- Guiding further research on the differences in mental health experiences according to gender and/or parental role.

References. [1] Havighurst, S. S., Radovini, A., Hao, B., & Kehoe, E. C. (2020). Emotion-focused parenting interventions for prevention and treatment of child and adolescent mental health problems: a review of recent literature. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 33(6), 586-601. <https://doi.org/10.1097/ycp.0000000000000647>. [2] Snarr, J. D., Slep, A. M. S., & Grande, V. P. (2009). Validation of a new self-report measure of parental attributions. *Psychological Assessment*, 21(3), 390-401. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016331>. [3] Leung, D. W., & Slep, A. M. S. (2006). Predicting inept discipline: the role of parental depressive symptoms, anger, and attributions. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 74(3), 524-534. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.74.3.524>. [4] Shelton, K. K., Frick, P. J., & Wootton, J. (1996). Assessment of parenting practices in families of elementary school-age children. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 25(3), 317-329. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15374424jccp2503_8. [5] Dennis, M. L., Feeney, T., Stevens, L. H. (2006). Global Appraisal of Individual Needs-Short Screener (GAIN-SS): Administration and scoring manual for the GAINSS Version 2.0.1. Bloomington, IL: Chestnut Health Systems. http://www.chestnut.org/LI/gain/GAIN_SS/index.html.