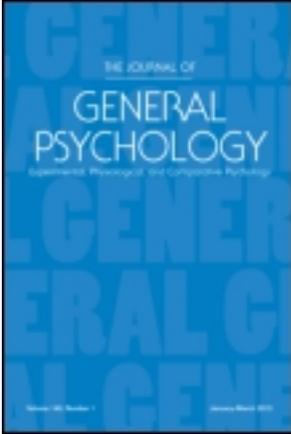


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You are Such a Bad Child! Appraisals as Mechanisms of Parental Negative and Positive Affect

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ABSTRACT. Although parent cognitions are considered important predictors that determine specific emotional reactions and parental practices, models on the cognitive strategies for regulating parental distress or positive emotions are not well developed. Our aim was to investigate the nature of cognitions involved in parental distress and satisfaction, in terms of their specificity (parental or general) and their processing levels (inferential or evaluative cognitions). We hypothesized that parent's specific evaluative cognitions will mediate the impact of more general and inferential cognitive structures on their affective reactions. We used bootstrapping procedures in order to test the mediation models proposed. Results obtained show indeed that rather specific evaluative parental cognitions are mediating the relationship between general cognitions and parental distress. In terms of the cognitive processing levels, it seems that when parents hold both low self-efficacy and parental negative global evaluations for the self/child, this adds significantly to their distress.

Keywords: cognition, cognitive styles, coping, parenting, stress

PARENTING A CHILD CAN BECOME AT TIMES DISTRESSING. Parental distress has been associated with dysfunctional discipline strategies, child non-compliance, child abuse, and various emotional problems during childhood (Ben-Porath, 2010; Dix, 1991; McKay, Paleg, Fanning, & Landis, 1996; Smith Slep & O'Leary, 2001). Also, it has been found that emotional support and nurturance diminish as parental distress increases (McKay et al., 1996). There is growing empirical support for the relevance of parental cognitions in parents' distress, parenting and child adjustment (Sheffield Moris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson,

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2007). Many studies have revealed that such cognitions as parental self-efficacy, parents' perceived control, and competence in the parenting role are negatively associated with parental distress and psychopathology (i.e., depression) (Coleman & Karraker, 1998; Cutrona & Troutman, 1986; Jackson & Huang, 2000; Teti, & Gelfand, 1991).

From the cognition-based models of parenting, parental cognitions are considered important predictors that determine specific emotional reactions and practices of the parent, apart from their general attitudes architecture (Bugental & Johnston, 2000; McGillicuddy-DeLisi, & Siegel, 1995). The literature recognizes that parent cognitions differ in terms of their *specificity*, *processing level* and/or *contents*. According to Murphey (1992), parent cognitions can be global in nature—cognitions that can be acquired vicariously, even by non-parents—or particularly in nature, referring to cognitions associated with the specific parenting role and child behavior. In terms of the content of parent cognitions, Murphey (1992) mentions *child*, *parenting*, and *parent* referring cognitions. For example, it has been shown that parents' attributions for their children's behavior relate both to parental emotional reactions to the behavior and to the parenting behaviors that follow misbehavior (Miller, 1995; Snyder, Cramer, Afrank, & Patterson, 2005). In addition to cognitions about their children or their parenting, there are the general cognitions that parents have about themselves (e.g., self-esteem, attributions for their own positive or negative events), which have been found (Bugental & Johnston, 2000) to influence their level of participation and involvement in treatments for their children, as well as their parenting abilities. For example, parents with low self-esteem who feel less confident in themselves generally may find it hard to enforce consequences, especially when faced with resistance from their child.

Parent's Levels of Cognitions and Parental Distress

The role of different levels of cognitions (i.e., inferential vs. evaluative) in generating distress (functional versus dysfunctional beliefs) is well documented (David, Schnur, & Belloiu, 2002). The appraisal theory of emotions states that emotional problems will only emerge in case of (1) a distorted representation that is negatively appraised and (2) a non-distorted representation that is negatively appraised (Lazarus, 1991; Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1993). Based on this classification, descriptive and inferential cognitions (e.g., attributions) are named surface cognitions, which are easily to access consciously, while the core cognitions, schemas and other meaning-based representations are named deep cognitions (more difficult to be accessed consciously; see David, 2004; Eysenck & Keane, 2000). The evaluative cognitions are defining the way in which surface cognitions are processed in terms of their relevance for personal goals (for details, see David, 2004; David & Szentagotai, 2006; DiGiuseppe, 1996; Ellis, 2003)

and are responsible for generating emotions (David et al., 2002; Gross & John, 2003).

Regarding the levels of parent cognitions, it was proposed (Bugental & Johnston, 2000) that they may be concerned with (1) the ways things are perceived to be in the parent role (descriptive cognitions), (2) the perceived reasons for child behavior (inferential cognitions), (3) the way things “should be” with respect to the child (evaluative cognitions), or (4) the evaluation of one’s own competence as parent to deal with child behavior (self-efficacy cognitions). Early literature on parent cognitions was focused on parents’ inferential cognitions, more specifically on parental attributions for child behavior, expectations from children, and perception of one’s own abilities, which are currently largely referred to as parents’ perceptions of child behavior (e.g. Krech & Johnston, 1992; Richters, 1992; Webster-Stratton, 1990).

Research has shown that parent’s *attributions* for their children’s behavior (which are the most researched cognition to date) relate both to parental emotional reactions to the behavior and to the parenting behaviors that follow misbehavior (Snyder et al., 2005). Typically, parents become more upset by a child’s misbehavior if they view it as due to an intentional act of the child, a negative disposition of the child, or if they believe the child has the necessary knowledge to behave differently (locus of control). These affective reactions, it has been argued, mediate the link between parents’ attributions and parents’ behavior toward their children (Miller, 1995). Empirical support suggesting that this chain is a causal one was provided by Smith Slep and O’Leary (1998).

The literature conceptualizes the way parents estimate their abilities to cope with child behavior in terms of perceived *self-efficacy* (Bandura, 1989). Studies have revealed that parental stress and depression are negatively associated with parenting self-efficacy, or parents’ perceived feelings of competence in the parenting role (Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Cutrona & Troutman, 1986; Jackson & Huang, 2000). However, the relationship between parent self-efficacy and later conduct problems was found (Weaver, Shaw, Dishion, & Wilson, 2008) to be mediated by maternal depression, which suggests maternal depression as a potential disruptor of caregiver confidence in early childhood (Bariola, Hughes, & Gullone, 2012).

Several studies (Bernard, 2004; DiGiuseppe & Kelter, 2006; Grieger & Boyd, 1980; Joyce, 1995, 2006) focused on parental evaluative cognitions and examined the relationships between parental evaluative cognitions, in the form of *irrational cognitions/beliefs*, and unhealthy negative emotions. For example, Bernard and Joyce (1984) examined several parent irrational beliefs that have been shown to lead to extreme parent emotional responses. Concerning parenting, parent demands represent unrealistic expectations of events, of themselves as parents, or of others such as their children (DiGiuseppe & Kelter, 2006; Terjesen & Kurasaki, 2009). It was argued that parents who hold irrational demands might often experience anger and engage in unhealthy disciplinary practices (Bernard, 1990; DiGiuseppe

& Kelter, 2006; Ellis, Wolfe, & Moseley, 1966; Gavita, DiGiuseppe, & David, 2013).

Based on the findings about the negative impact of parent distress and psychopathology on child development, strong research efforts have been made in the literature towards understanding specific and general parental self-regulation processes (e.g., Gavita, 2011b; Gavita, DiGiuseppe, & David, 2013). Although the importance of specific parental cognitions in determining emotional parental reactions has been acknowledged (Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Gavita et al., 2013), no empirical studies have been conducted to date to establish their differential implication. Furthermore, there is a lack of understanding of the levels of cognitive mechanisms involved in parental general stress, or specific parental emotions (e.g., anger), and their interrelations (Gavita, David, Bujoreanu, Tiba, & Ionutiu, 2012; Gavita & Joyce, 2008; Gavita, Joyce, & David, 2011).

The general aim of the present study is to investigate the relationships between different levels of cognitions involved in parental stress and satisfaction. More specifically, we are taking into consideration both general and specific parental evaluative cognitions shown to be related to parental distress, and analyzing the mediating effects of parental evaluative cognitions using Bootstrapping procedures for testing the indirect effects and standard error estimation. A partial mediation model is proposed, which includes parental evaluative cognitions and their contribution to distress. General irrational cognitive structures activate the specific irrational cognitions related to child or parenting, which in turn adds to parents' distress. We also investigated the interrelations among different types of cognitions in determining parental distress and satisfaction (e.g., inferential cognitions vs. evaluative cognitions). Based on the appraisal theories of emotion (Lazarus, 1991; David, Schnur, & Belloiu, 2002; Gross & John, 2003), we also tested if the impact of the parental inferential cognitive structures (low self-efficacy, external locus of control) on parental distress, and (conversely) satisfaction, is partially mediated by the parental irrational (positive association) and rational cognitions (negative association).

Method

Participants

Participants were 211 parents recruited based on school announcements in the public schools of the Cluj county in Romania, 89.2% mothers and 11.6% fathers, mean age 34.55 years old ($SD = 5.64$). Children were aged between 2 and 17 ($M = 6.80$, $SD = 6.20$), with 36.5% girls and 64.1% boys. No difficulties regarding child behavior were reported by the parents (based on the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA); Achenbach, 1991). We included only children scoring below the 93 percentile level, corresponding to normal population.

Measures

The Parental Stress Scale (PSS; Berry & Jones, 1995)

The PSS is an 18-item self-report scale for parents, describing positive themes of parenthood (i.e., emotional benefits, self-enrichment, personal development) and negative indicators (i.e., demands on resources, opportunity costs and restrictions). The PSS is used for the assessment of parental stress in parents (both mothers and fathers) of children with and without clinical problems. Parents are asked to rate each item on a 5-point scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) in terms of their typical relationship with their child. There are eight positive items which are reverse scored (e.g., “I am happy in my role as a parent.”, “I feel close to my child(ren).”), so that higher scores on the scale indicate greater stress. The Parental Stress Scale have good internal reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .83$ to $.85$; Berry & Jones, 1995; Gavita, 2011 based on this sample), and test-retest reliability ($r = .81$).

The Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC; Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978)

The PSOC is a 16-item measure assessing parents’ views of their competence, based on two subscales: (1) satisfaction with parenting role (reflecting the extent of parental frustration, anxiety, and motivation); and (2) feelings of efficacy as a parent (reflecting competence, problem-solving ability, and capability in the parenting role). The PSOC showed satisfactory psychometric properties (Cronbach’s alphas, $\alpha = .79$, $.75$, and $.76$ respectively; Johnston & Mash, 1989) both for its total score and subscales. We adapted the scale on Romanian population and we obtained adequate reliability coefficients (Gavita, 2011).

Predictor in the models proposed were considered: self-efficacy, measured with a subscale of the PSOC, and the general evaluative cognitions, measured with the General Attitudes and Beliefs Scale, and the Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire. The mediator variables considered were specific parental evaluative cognitions, measured with the Parental Rational and Irrational Beliefs Scale.

The PSOC-Efficacy subscale measures the degree to which a parent feels competent and confident in handling child problems (Johnston & Mash, 1989). Low efficacy levels were correlated with reports of child behavior problems (Johnston & Mash, 1989 ; Rodrigue, Geffken, Clark, Hunt, & Fisbel, 1994). In our study, we scored this subscale such that a high score means levels of self-efficacy. The efficacy score show a satisfactory level of internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .75$; Johnston & Mash, 1989).

General Attitudes and Beliefs Scale–Short Form (GABS-SF; Lindner, Kirkby, Wertheim, & Birch, 1999)

The GABS is a 26-item self-report measure of general irrational cognitive processes (e.g., demandingness, awfulizing, global evaluation, low frustration

tolerance). Items are cognitively worded and refer to both irrational and rational beliefs. Three scores can be computed: (1) an irrational beliefs score, a rational beliefs score, and a total irrational beliefs score (composed of the irrational beliefs score plus the reversed rational beliefs score). High scores indicate high levels of rational or irrational cognitions (DiGiuseppe, Leaf, Exner, & Robin, 1988). Adequate psychometric properties have been reported in the literature (Lindner et al., 1999). GABS-SF has also adequate psychometric properties on Romanian population (Cronbach's alpha, $\alpha = .81$; David, 2007).

Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire (USAQ; Chamberlain & Haaga, 2001)

The USAQ is a 20-item inventory (Cronbach's alpha = .72) generated from the rational-emotive behavior theory/therapy literature. Each item (e.g. "Being praised makes me feel more valuable as a person") is measured on a 7-point Likert scale (from Not at all true for me, to Almost always true for me). The USAQ assesses a specific rational belief (i.e., unconditional self-acceptance) that one fully and unconditionally accepts oneself, regardless of behavior, achievement, approval, respect, or love from others (Ellis, 2003). A high score indicates a high level of unconditional self-acceptance (some items are reversed for scoring). The USAQ has been adapted and has adequate psychometric properties on Romanian population (Cronbach's alpha, $\alpha = .73$; David, 2007).

The Parental Rational and Irrational Beliefs Scale (P-RIBS; Gavita, DiGiuseppe, David, & DelVecchio, 2011)

The P-RIBS is a 24-item measure reflecting rational and irrational processes. The items were constructed to reflect the four irrational and four rational processes [preferences and flexibility rather than demandingness (PRE); negative evaluations rather than awfulizing (BAD); frustration tolerance (FT) rather than low frustration tolerance (LFT); unconditional acceptance (UA), rather than global evaluation (GE)/self-downing (SD)], as measured by the general irrational cognition scales. The P-RIBS includes a guided imagery instruction, as a way to access parents' evaluative beliefs. Each item is assembled in a 5-point Likert format, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The P-RIBS can be scored as total score and three other subscales: Irrational Beliefs Subscale, Rational Beliefs Subscale, and Global Evaluations Subscale. The total score on the scale is obtained by summing all the items, with rational items reversely scored, with a high total score showing a high level of irrational beliefs. The scale has good psychometric properties (Cronbach's alpha = .73 in Romanian population), results showing a satisfactory level of internal consistency and test-retest reliability ($r = .78$; Gavita, DiGiuseppe, David, & DelVecchio, 2011).

TABLE 1. Means and Standard Deviations for the Measures Included in the Study

	GABS	P-RIBS	PSOC Efficacy	USAQ	PSS	PSOC Satisfaction
<i>M</i>	64.04	49.87	14.24	83.28	36.31	29.94
<i>SD</i>	13.16	8.18	4.19	12.01	9.09	8.04

Note. P-RIBS = Parental Rational and Irrational Beliefs Scale; PSOC = Parental Sense of Competence Scale; GABS = General Attitudes and Beliefs Scale; USAQ = Unconditional Self-Acceptance; PSS = Parental Stress Scale.

Procedure

Questionnaires were administered to parents using a strict protocol of directions regarding the ethical handling of the data (approved by the Institutional Review Board of the first author's University). Respondents were given an information sheet explaining the purpose of the study (i.e., to collect data about parenting) and providing details of data handling procedures, including their right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time. All parents signed informed consent forms, and the questionnaires were completed independently.

Results

None of the demographic variables (age, sex) were significantly associated with the dysfunctional parenting or parental distress (all $ps > .05$) and therefore were not included in subsequent analysis. Table 1 summarizes the mean scores and standard deviations for the measures in this study.

An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical analyses. We first tested the correlations among the variables of general and specific parental irrational cognitions, inferential parental cognitions, and parental emotions. Correlations among variables of interest are presented in Table 2. As expected when investigating similar constructs, we found moderate correlations between the different levels/types of cognitions and between the cognitions and parent's distress and satisfaction.

In order to test the indirect effect of the mediation, we used bootstrapping procedures resampled 5000 times and used the percentile method to create 95% confidence intervals. The bootstrap test of the indirect effect provides an estimated standard error and a confidence interval for population value. The preconditions for using the bootstrap are that (1) there exists an effect to be mediated and (2) the indirect effect is statistically significant in the direction predicted by the mediation hypothesis (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The indirect effect is significantly different from zero at $p < .05$, and thus mediation occurs, when zero is not in the 95% confidence interval. We chose the bootstrapping analyses against other formal

TABLE 2. Correlations Among the Parental Rational and Irrational Cognitions, General Rational and Irrational Cognitions Scales (GABS, USAQ), Inferential Parental Cognitions (PSOC), and Parental Distress and Satisfaction

Variables	P-RIBS RB	P-RIBS IB	PRIBS GE	P-RIBS	GABS RB	GABS IR	USAQ	
P-RIBS RB								
P-RIBS IB	-.18*							
PRIBS GE	-.27**	.56**						
PRIBS	-.64**	.68**	.65**					
GABS RB	.53**	-.05	-.36**	-.35**				
GABS IB	-.23**	.62**	.36**	.53**	.18*			
USAQ	.59**	-.47**	-.49**	-.60**	.50**	-.47**		
PE-PSOC	-.49**	.30*	.54**	.45**	-.54**	.32**	-.43**	
PS-PSOC	-.32**	.27**	-.32**	-.35**	-.42**	.34**	-.38**	.40**
PSS	.39**	-.52**	.39**	.62**	.63**	-.37**	.54**	-.52**

Note. All correlations are Pearson Correlations. **Correlations were significant at the .01 level (two-tailed). *Correlations were significant at the .05 level (two-tailed). P-RIBS IB = Parental Rational and Irrational Beliefs Scale–Irrational Beliefs Subscale; P-RIBS RB = Parental Rational and Irrational Beliefs Scale–Rational Subscale; P-RIBS GE = Parental Rational and Irrational Beliefs Scale–Global Evaluation Subscale; GABS IB = General Attitudes and Beliefs Scale–Irrational Beliefs; GABS RB = General Attitudes and Beliefs Scale–Rational Beliefs Subscale; USAQ = Unconditional Self-Acceptance; PSS = Parent Stress Scale; PE-PSOC = Parental Sense of Competence Scale, Efficacy Subscale; PS-PSOC = Parent Sense of Competence Scale–Parental Satisfaction Subscale.

approaches (i.e., Baron & Kenny, 1986) since it is considered to provide a more powerful strategy for testing mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

The Role of Parental General and Specific Irrational Cognitions in Generating Parental Distress

A number of bootstrap analyses were run to evaluate the indirect effect of the parental (versus general) rational and irrational cognitions in predicting parental distress. Specifically, bootstrap analyses estimated if there is an indirect effect of parent specific cognitions on parental distress, based on a 95% confidence interval (corrected and accelerated).

The general irrationality/rationality, measured with the GABS, and specific parental irrationality/rationality (P-RIBS) were significantly related to the parental stress (PSS). Bootstrap test shows in Table 3 that indirect effects are significantly different from 0 at $p < .05$, which are also represented in Figure 1. In the case of irrational beliefs, 81% of the total effect on parental distress is mediated by

TABLE 3. Bootstrap Analyses for the Indirect Effect of the Different Levels and Types of Cognitions in Predicting Parental Distress and Satisfaction

DV	PV	MV	Bootstrap test	SE	95% CI	ES
PSS	IBs GABS	IBs P-RIBS	.21	.06	.10; .34	.81
	RBs GABS	RBs P-RIBS	-.45	.21	-.96; -.10	.54
	USAQ	GE P-RIBS	-.22	.06	-.35; -.09	.42
	PE-PSOC	IBs P-RIBS	.17	.11	-.07; .41	—
	PE-PSOC	RBs P-RIBS	.25	.09	.05; .49	.66
	PE-PSOC	GE P-RIBS	.69	.18	.34; 1.02	.29
PS-PSOC	PE-PSOC	USAQ	-.21	.10	-.45; -.05	.30

Note. DV = Dependent variable; PV = Predictor variable; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval; ES = effect size of the mediation.

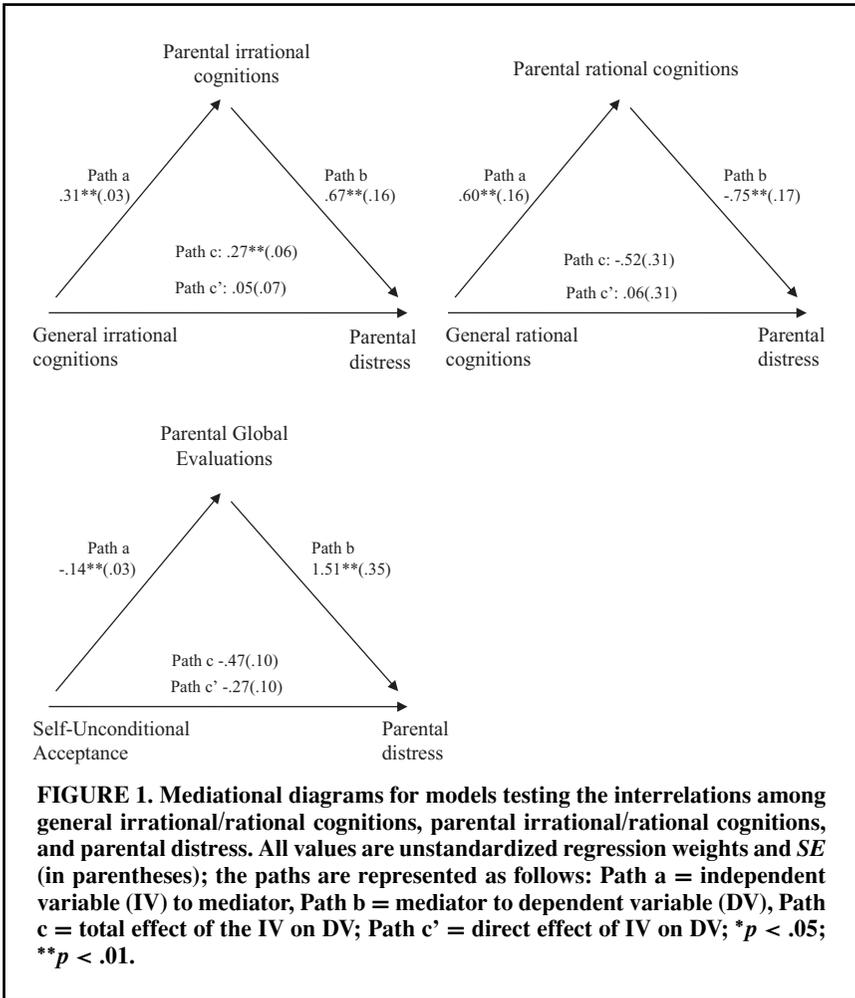
specific parental irrational cognitions. For rational cognitions, 54% of the total effect on parental distress is mediated by specific parental rational cognitions.

We also explored the mediational effect of specific parental unconditional acceptance (P-RIBS GE) for general unconditional acceptance (USAQ) and parental distress. We found an indirect significantly different from 0 at $p < .05$, with 42% of the total effect on parental distress being mediated by parental unconditional acceptance, and results are presented in Table 3.

The Role of Evaluative and Inferential Parental Cognitions in Generating Parental Distress

We further analyzed the associations between different levels of parental cognitions (evaluative [rational and irrational] vs. inferential cognitions) on predicting parental distress. Results of the indirect effect analyses are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2. The mediational role of parental irrational cognitions for the relationship between self-efficacy and reported parental distress was first tested. Bootstrap test estimated an indirect effect of not significantly different from 0 at $p < .05$, which is presented in Table 3. We tested whether parental unconditional acceptance (score reversed from GE-PRIBS) act as mediators for the relationship between parental self-efficacy and parental distress. Figure 2 represents mediation effect. The Bootstrap test is included in Table 3, which estimated an indirect effect significantly different from 0 at $p < .05$, and we found that 66% of the total effect on parental distress is mediated by parental rational cognitions.

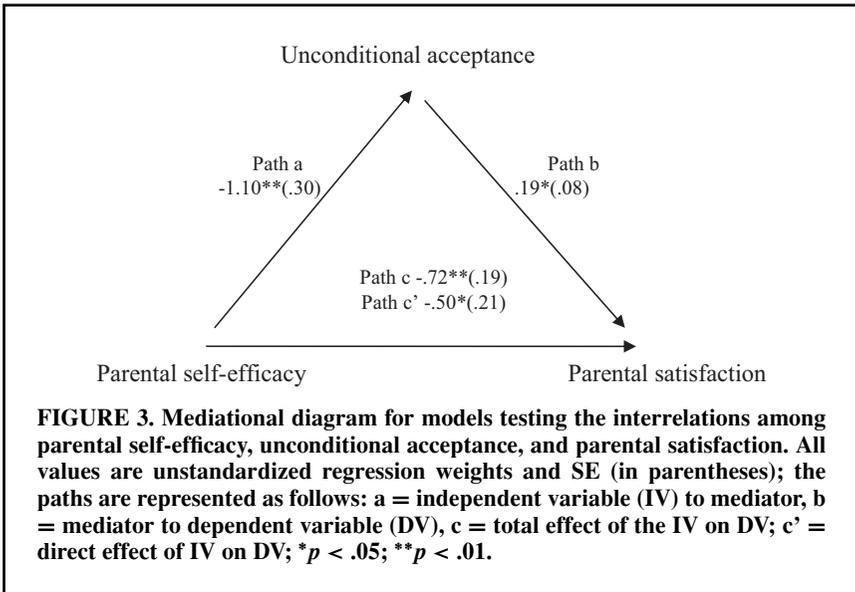
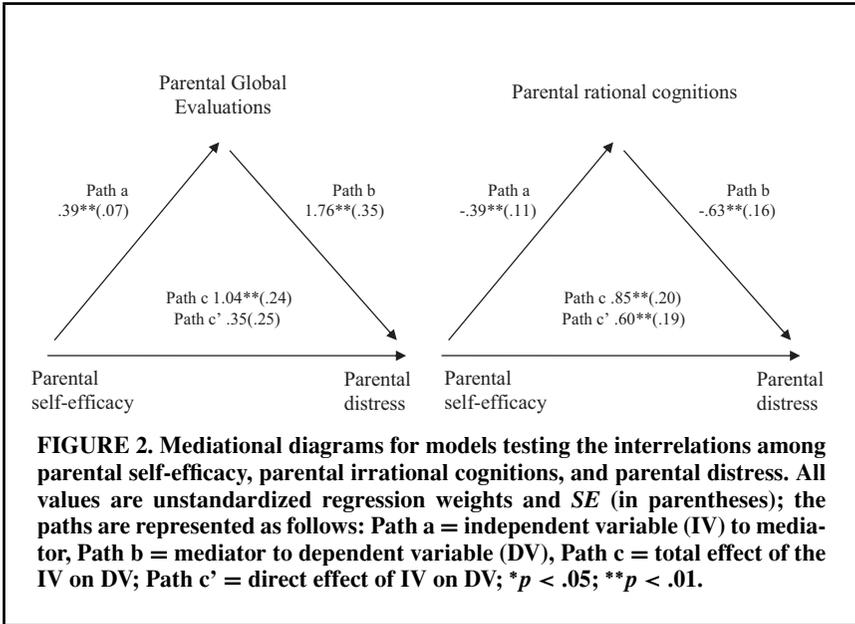
We conducted the same analysis with parental self-efficacy and parental rational cognitions as predictors and parental distress as dependent variable. Bootstrap test estimated an indirect effect significantly different from 0 at $p < .05$, with 29%



of the total effect on parental distress being mediated by parental unconditional acceptance.

The Role of Rational Cognitions in Parental Satisfaction

With parental self-efficacy as the independent variable, we tested the indirect effect of unconditional self-acceptance on parental satisfaction. Results are shown in Figure 3. Bootstrap analyses presented in Table 3 estimated an indirect effect of the self-acceptance cognitions on parental satisfaction significantly different from



0 at $p < .05$, with 30% of the total effect on parental satisfaction mediated by unconditional acceptance.

Discussion

Overall, the findings show that irrational cognitions mediate with high effect sizes the relationship between general irrational/evaluative cognitions and parental distress. More specifically, results suggest that although general irrational cognitive structures are an important vulnerability factor for parental distress, parental irrational cognitions are necessary in order to cause parental distress. For example, parents' irrational beliefs like "Things should be fair" are causing them to feel distressed through their specific parental irrational beliefs, like "My child should respect me all the time," or "I cannot tolerate my child to yell at me." These findings are in line with other models (Bugental, & Johnston, 2000; Gavita, DiGiuseppe, & David, 2013) suggesting that parental evaluative cognitions are very important in the architecture of parents' cognitions and have unique contributions in regulating parental distress, going beyond the general evaluative cognitions.

In terms of the types of cognitions involved in the regulation of parental distress, we found that the effect of parental self-efficacy ("cold" cognitions) on parental distress is partially mediated by parental irrational beliefs ("hot" cognitions), which have been conceptualized as evaluative cognitions or appraisals (Gross & John, 2003). This means that distress will be higher in parents having a low self-efficacy when they are also presenting a high level of irrational parental cognitions. When parents consider that they have low efficacy to handle their child behaviors, and they also believe that the child should not misbehave, they will experience a high level of subjective distress.

Parental global evaluations (as a distorted appraisal) were found to mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and parental distress, with a medium effect size. This means that when parents are globally rating their child based on their hard-to-manage behavior, they will feel distressed. However, when parents hold a high level of self and child acceptance, it can be associated with lower parental distress even if the parent has a low parental self-efficacy. It seems that a nonjudgmental (avoiding global evaluations) attitude in parents can function as a resilience factor for negative affect. In turn, rational parental cognitions, such as flexible appraisals, can work as resiliency factors, since we found that it partially mediates the relationship in parents between low self-efficacy and reported distress.

Extensive research data have linked parental distress with low parenting self-efficacy, or parents' perceived feelings of competence in the parenting role (Coleman & Karraker, 1998; Cutrona & Troutman, 1986; Jackson & Huang, 2000; Scheel & Rieckmann, 1998; Teti, O'Connell, & Reiner, 1996). To our knowledge, this is one of the few studies that connect the emotion regulation literature to parent research and supports the role of flexible evaluative beliefs (unconditional self and child acceptance and parent rational beliefs) as resiliency factors for the impact of

low parental self-efficacy on parental distress. Inferences need to be appraised in order to stem emotions (see David, 2003; David, 2004; Lazarus, 1991), and our results bring support for this path in parental distress. In addition, rational cognitions seem to be important resiliency factors mediating the impact of negative parental inferential cognitions on parent distress.

An important contribution brought by this study is the investigation of the cognitive structures involved in parent positive emotions—parent satisfaction. We found that parents' unconditional self-acceptance partially mediates the impact of low self-efficacy on parental satisfaction. This means that even when parents think they cannot handle their child behavior, they can still be satisfied in their role if they can accept themselves and their children as complex and valuable human beings.

Our findings point toward a proximal effect of parental rational/irrational cognitions on both parent negative and positive affect, as proposed by the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (Ellis, 1962; Gavita, 2011; Gavita et al., 2013). However, most of the current parenting programs focus on changing parental inferential cognitions (like increasing parent's self-efficacy, changing biased attributions; see Gavita & Joyce, 2008), and only a few programs focus on reducing distress by changing parents' irrational cognitions (Gavita et al., 2013). Results related to the integration of such focus in parent programs are, however, promising in terms of both child and parent outcomes (Gavita, 2011; Gavita et al., 2012). Future studies could further investigate if and how the integration of our findings within parent programs can influence their effects.

A first important limitation of our study is that the majority of our sample were mothers (89%), and thus our conclusions cannot be fully generalized to parents. Results rely solely on one parents' self-report, and future studies should investigate shared attitudes in family. Another limitation of our investigation, in the relationship between parental satisfaction and parental efficacy, is that both constructs were scored as subscales of Parental Sense of Competence Scale (Johnston & Mash, 1989). Items of both subscales seem to be cognitively saturated so that satisfaction is rather a cognitive rather than an emotional concept. Future studies should also use different instruments to measure the causality path between parental appraisals and self-efficacy on parental satisfaction. Also, there is a need to take into consideration the relationship between parental emotion-regulation strategies and child psychopathology.

More research needs to be done to ascertain which kinds of cognitions relate most closely to parenting in stressful situations (Potier & Day, 2007). Although interventions aimed at changing child behavior by intervening at a parent behavioral level have had favorable outcomes (Maughan, Christiansen, Jenson, Olympia, & Clark, 2005), parents who are experiencing unhealthy negative emotions such as anger, depression, guilt, or anxiety are known to engage in more maladaptive parenting processes (Dix & Reinhold, 1991). Our results could have important implications on the ways cognitive-behavioral parental interventions need to be

designed and the types of cognitions that are to be addressed in order to affect parental distress and obtain long-lasting results.

AUTHOR NOTES

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