

Book of Abstract

30° Congresso dell' Associazione Italiana di Psicologia

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Prima edizione 2022 Padova University Press

Titolo originale: Book of Abstract. 30° Congresso dell'Associazione Italiana di Psicologia

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Università degli Studi di Padova
via 8 Febbraio 2, Padova
www.padovauniversitypress.it

Progetto grafico: Padova University Press
Impaginazione: Padova University Press

ISBN 978-88-6938-316-8



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PARENTAL FLOODING AS MEDIATOR IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDREN EMOTIONAL/BEHAVIORAL DIFFICULTIES AND RESILIENCE IN TIMES OF COVID-19

Marcella Caputi (Università di Trieste), Ludovica Giani (Sigmund Freud University Milano), Barbara Forresi (Sigmund Freud University Milano), Simona Scaini (Sigmund Freud University Milano)

With a 3-wave study, we explored whether parental stress during COVID-19 pandemic helps to shape the link between child emotional and behavioral difficulties and resilience. A survey targeting Italian families with children aged 5-10 years was conducted online. Time 1 (June 2020) was completed by parents of 158 children (48% boys, mean age = 7.4 years; SD = 1.8 years); 68 and 49 parents respectively completed Time 2 (December 2020) and Time 3 (June 2021). We hypothesized that parental ability to handle family conflicts would mediate the relationship between children's difficulties and their resilience in the unfolding of the pandemic. Results of mediation analyses showed that Time 1 child difficulties were associated with Time 2 higher parental flooding ($b = -.45$, $s.e. = .22$, $p = .04$) and Time 2 high parental flooding was related to Time 3 decreased child resilience ($b = .09$, $s.e. = .04$, $p = .03$). The direct effect of early children's difficulties on their later resilience was not significant ($b = -.08$, $s.e. = .07$, $p = .23$), as parental flooding fully mediated their relationship ($b = -.09$, $s.e. = .05$, 95% C.I. = $-.1993$, $-.0052$). Knowing that children's difficulties interact with parental stress in determining resilience during stressful periods can guide tailored interventions.