PARENTAL STRATEGY FLEXIBILITY IN TODDLER FRUSTRATION CONTEXTS: GENDER DIFFERENCES AND OTHER CORRELATES

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ABSTRACT

Emotional regulation skills are a critical piece of socioemotional development and are related to a host of positive life outcomes. However, boys face additional societal pressures to suppress or mask emotions, which can lead to emotional dysregulation and externalizing behaviors like aggression. Both emotional dysregulation and externalizing behaviors are linked to larger concerns, such as intimate partner violence. Despite extensive research on parental regulation strategies, a key piece of the development of emotion regulation, little is known about whether or how the strategies parents use to help manage their children's emotions vary by gender, especially in toddlerhood.

This study explores the strategies that mothers and fathers use to help their toddlers manage their emotions and whether these strategies differ based on perceived child gender. The goals were to identify the types and frequencies of strategies used, if some strategies were used more frequently than others, and if so, which ones, and if gender differences in parental strategy use can be observed as early as toddlerhood. Participants included 166 primarily white, highly educated parents (83 mother-father pairs) and 112 mother-toddler pairs, who were videotaped and observed during a frustrating wait task.

The results revealed that both mothers and fathers predominantly used Distraction to help their toddlers cope with frustration, accounting for 38% (SD = 0.28) of mothers' and 37% (SD = 0.16) of fathers' regulatory attempts. No significant differences in strategy use were found based on child gender (p = > .05). Although minor differences were observed, they were nonsignificant and of negligible effect size. These findings suggest that parental emotion regulation strategies are consistent across child gender in toddlerhood. However, gendered emotional norms may emerge later as children enter peer environments. Future research should explore how these strategies evolve as children grow, particularly during adolescence when boys may face more intense social pressures.

This thesis is dedicated to Mom and Dad.
Thank you for everything you did to get me here.

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INTRODUCTION

Emotion socialization, which refers to the way that parents, caregivers, and other socializing agents teach children to understand, manage, and express their emotions in social contexts (Eisenberg et al., 1998), plays a pivotal role in shaping children's emotional development. Being conscious of how children learn to navigate and make sense of their emotional worlds is essential to nurturing their development into well-adjusted adults. Early childhood, in particular, represents a powerful period for socialization, as it lays the foundation for lifelong patterns in how emotions are understood, expressed, and regulated, as well as how gender norms and expectations are internalized and performed (Colson & Dworkin, 1997; Martin & Ruble, 2004; Lippard & La Paro, 2018; Noroña-Zhou & Tung, 2020; Slot et al., 2020; Brazzelli et al., 2022). Emotion socialization practices can differ based on the child's perceived gender, as parents may unconsciously encourage or attend to emotional responses and coping strategies for boys and girls at varying degrees due to societal expectations of gender conformity (Brody, 2000; Fivush et al., 2000; Garside & Klimes-Dougan, 2002; Root & Denham, 2010; Chaplin et al., 2013). There has been an abundance of early childhood studies on parents' and caregivers' emotion socialization-related behaviors, such as their discussion of emotion, their supportive versus unsupportive responses to children's emotions, and their perceptions of or beliefs about emotional expression by their perceived gender of the child (Brody, 2000; Fivush et al., 2000; Chaplin et al., 2005; Cassano et al., 2007; van Der Pol et al., 2015; Perry et al., 2015). Studies have shown that positive parental strategies, such as modeling, redirection, emotional validation, and problem-solving, can aid children in learning to effectively manage frustration (Stansbury, 2000; Deichmann & Ahnert, 2021; Edelman & Del Vecchio, 2024). However, the extent to which these practices vary based on the child's perceived gender remains largely unexamined. The current study aims to explore the strategies parents use with their children during a frustrating wait task and whether differential strategies by perceived child gender can be identified as early as toddlerhood. This chapter will introduce the study by outlining the background and context, then addressing the research problem, aims, objectives, questions, and significance.

Early Development of Socioemotional Skills

Toddlerhood is a period of rapid emotional and cognitive growth, characterized by significant developments in language, socioemotional and cognitive skills, where children begin to assert their independence, experience heightened emotion, and gain the capacity to assert control over those emotions, establishing it as a critical period for emotion socialization and parental modeling of emotional regulation (Colson & Dworkin, 1997; Lippard & La Paro, 2018; Noroña-Zhou & Tung, 2020; Slot et al., 2020; Brazzelli et al., 2022). Emotion socialization refers to a range of practices that shape children's emotional development, which can either promote social-emotional competence and regulation of emotional expression or, conversely, encourage the dismissal, masking, or internalizing of emotions (Eisenberg, 1998). The specific strategies employed by parents can predict whether children develop adaptive emotional skills or struggle with emotion-related challenges and psychopathology (Zinsser et al., 2021; Peisch et al, 2020; Godleski et al., 2020).

The adaptive nature of these emotion-related skills may vary depending on cultural context. For instance, Black boys may be more likely to mask or restrict their emotional expression to avoid adherence to stereotypes like the “angry” or “dangerous” Black man (Najdowski et al., 2015; Lazoda et al., 2021). Stereotypes like these have consequences that range from teacher bias (Thomas et al., 2009) to potentially life-threatening encounters with law enforcement (Najdowski et al., 2015). In which case, these emotional behaviors are protective. Similarly, the role of parents of Black adolescents’ may include being more unsupportive of negative emotional expression, or instructing them to mask their emotions, as a protective strategy in response to the sociocultural context of being Black in the United States (Ogbu, 1981; Murry, 2018; Nelson et al., 2012; Harris & Amutah-Onukagha, 2019).

Notwithstanding, research indicates that during toddlerhood, parents, and especially mothers, who employ supportive strategies can significantly improve their children's ability to cope with stress and feelings of frustration (Valiente et al., 2004; Stansbury & Sigman, 2000). Of the aforementioned adaptive skills, emotional competence or emotional understanding is comprised of a range of capabilities, including one’s ability to recognize emotion in oneself and others, understand both how emotions are evoked and expressed, as well as what is being communicated in that expression (Pons, 2010, as cited in Laugen et al., 2024). In parallel, emotion-related self-regulation refers to managing emotions by controlling how one feels and

reacts, including adjusting the intensity, duration, and expression of feelings and behaviors to effectively adapt to their environment (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004). Both of these abilities are predictive of positive academic and psychosocial outcomes – such as early literacy skills and academic performance, school engagement, heightened status among peers, superior friendship quality, improved mental health outcomes, and a lower risk for later-in-life substance abuse and unemployment (Curby et al., 2015, Wang et al., 2018, Robson et al., 2020). Parents and caregivers play an essential role in the development of these competencies through their own emotion-related beliefs, behaviors, and skills (Castro et al., 2014), as well as through the quality of their relationship and the manner of their responses to children's emotional expression (Laugen et al., 2023, Perry et al., 2020, Guo et al., 2024).

Familial and Child Characteristics as Related to Children's Emotion Socialization

The regulatory behaviors that parents employ when a child experiences a difficult emotion can include emotion coaching, in which they assist children in naming their emotions, empathize with or validate those emotions, and facilitate problem-solving. Emotion coaching offers numerous benefits, including increased emotional expressiveness, decreased occurrences of punitive parenting, improved child emotion regulation, and reduced behavioral problems (Qiu & Shum, 2021; Chan, Qiu, et al., 2021; Havighurst et al., 2012; Ornaghi et al., 2019; Smit et al., 2021). Additionally, parents may model emotional regulation by demonstrating calmness, using distraction techniques, offering choices to enhance the child's sense of control, or providing physical touch to comfort and reinforce emotional security (Morris et al., 2007; Havighurst et al., 2010; Leijten et al., 2019; Cekaite & Kvist Holm, 2017; Dittman et al., 2011; Meuwissen & Carlson, 2019).

Supportive parental behaviors have been shown to have significant long-term effects on children's emotional development. In a sample of 404 children, mothers' supportive responses to their 5-year-old children's negative emotions positively impacted their emotion regulation skills at age 10 and their social competence at age 15 in both measures of laboratory tests and mothers' and teachers' reports. Moreover, children who received supportive responses demonstrated better adjustment in adolescence, while non-supportive responses were linked to poorer emotional and physiological regulation later in life (2020). Non-supportive parental responses to children's emotional expressiveness have also been associated with increased risk for internalizing problems such as depression and anxiety and externalizing problems such as reactive aggression,

characterized as impulsive, reckless, and emotional violence (Davies et al., 2021; Guo et al., 2024, Byrd et al., 2021, Walters, 2020).

Relatedly, recent findings indicate that parents' physiological stress responses, such as sympathetic arousal when observing their child's frustration, can impact the degree of support they provide; parents with higher stress levels tend to respond less supportively to their child's negative emotions (Zhang et al., 2021). Morris's "Tripartite Model of the Impact of the Family on Children's Emotion Regulation and Adjustment" highlights all of the above influences, proposing that the socialization of emotion regulation occurs via observation/modeling, parenting practices, and the emotional climate of the family (including parenting style, which has been differentiated from parenting practices), the model also proposes that this socialization is dependent on the characteristics of the child, such as the child's temperament and sex or perceived gender (Morris et al., 2007).

Flexibility in strategy use may also be an important part of supporting children's emotion regulation development (Spinrad et al., 2004). This flexibility includes not only varying the types of strategies employed but also adjusting the frequency of regulation attempts concerning the child's developmental stage and individual needs. Research suggests that while the proportion of parental regulatory attempts may decrease as children develop greater self-regulation skills, the frequency and quality of those attempts during critical periods, such as early toddlerhood, remain influential (Spinrad et al., 2004). By tailoring both the type and frequency of strategies to align with the child's emotional baseline and context, parents provide essential scaffolding that fosters flexible regulation skills, which are associated with lower levels of psychopathology (Aldao & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012).

Children with higher negative emotionality, a facet of child temperament that describes the tendency to experience and react to negative emotions, elicit more frequent supportive responses from parents in higher socioeconomic families, and less frequent supportive responses in lower socioeconomic families (Paulussen-Hoogeboom et al., 2007). It is important to note that the patterns found in this meta-analysis may also be influenced by factors of race and ethnicity, which intersect with socioeconomic status in their influence on parenting practices and child developmental outcomes (Coll et al., 1996). Some existing evidence supports a bidirectional relationship between child characteristics, like negative emotionality, and parenting through emotion socialization practices (Lengua & Kovacs, 2005; Nyquist et al., 2019; Klein et al., 2016;

Wittig & Rodriguez, 2019; Morris et al., 2007). When toddler boys demonstrate independent regulation skills, mothers offer less support in future interactions. Conversely, when they rely on caregiver-focused regulation, they receive more support. However, this relationship was not found for girls. The authors hypothesize that mothers may perceive boys aged 2 to 3 as less ready for independent coping, leading them to prefer caregiver-focused regulation and respond more unsupportively when that regulation decreases. This contrasts with girls, whom mothers may perceive as more emotionally adept (Premo & Kiel, 2014), a result of the gendered belief that girls are naturally prone to emotionality, as opposed to through the influence of larger contextual and societal factors (Chaplin et al., 2018). Consequently, girls may be granted greater freedom for emotional expression and to incorporate a broader range of regulation strategies without significant changes in parental response. Patterns such as these highlight how parents' or other caregivers', and especially mothers' (Thomassin & Seddon, 2019; Sibley, 2015), beliefs about gender, and their adherence – or lack thereof – to traditional gender roles shape their emotional socialization practices (Mascaro et al., 2017).

Perceived Gender, Gender Socialization, and Gendered Emotion Socialization

Gender has been a recurring discussion in child development and socialization (see gender socialization), but only recently have researchers (e.g., Fivush, 2000; Chaplin, 2005; 2013; Aznar, 2013; Brody, 2000) begun to isolate how gendered beliefs and practices are associated with emotion skill outcomes. First, it is crucial to understand the context of gender in the United States when discussing how these outcomes may differ for girls and boys. Specifically, there must be a clear understanding of the ideology of traditional masculinity, which refers to the general structure of how a man "should be." Though there are many different ideologies of masculinity (Levant, 2011), traditional masculinity is especially relevant here. The first component of this ideology is that men are to be distinctly different from women, i.e., they should not possess any effeminate traits. Second, that society is hierarchical, and men should reside at the top of that hierarchy. This expectation is tied to specific characteristics: men are to be unemotional, self-reliant, willing to take risks, focused on work, driven by success, and assert dominance over others, even if through violence (Sattel et al., 1978, as cited in Levant, 2011, Krivoshchekov et al., 2023).

Consequently, it is well-established in the literature that boys and girls, to some extent, and notably, by context, vary in degree of emotional expression (Chaplin et al., 2005, 2013,

2018; Brody & Hall, 2009; Chiang, 2018; Veijalainen et al., 2019). Sex differences in expressiveness begin to manifest in toddlerhood (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013), and as gendered beliefs become more salient, differences in emotional expressiveness, too, become more apparent. During the toddler and preschool periods, boys tend to express more externalizing emotions, such as anger, especially in negative situations and when alone or with peers. Girls, however, are more likely to express internalizing emotions like sadness, particularly when interacting with unfamiliar adults. The context-specificity of these gender differences suggests that differences in expression are socialized rather than innate (2013).

Some research disputes the presence of gendered differences (Else-Quest et al., 2006; Prosen & Smrtnik Vitulić, 2017), but variation in results are believed to be a consequence of diverse cultural contexts of gender and gendered expectations, as well as varying contexts of emotion expression, such as the setting in which expression takes place (Brody, 1996, Liben & Bigler, 2002, Löffler & Greitemeyer, 2021). Boys and girls are socialized following their respective gender's display rules, or prescriptive norms regarding how, when, and where emotions should be expressed (Underwood et al., 1992; Brody, 2000), a competency related to emotion regulation (Matsumoto et al., 2005). Parents play a significant role in shaping their children's understanding of display rules. They model, reinforce, and sometimes punish emotional expressions based on what they perceive as appropriate for each gender (Brody, 2000). For example, some research has found that fathers identify and attend to more submissive expressions in preschool girls, and more disharmonious expressions such as anger in school-aged boys (Chaplin, 2005). Parents have also identified angry book characters as boys, in contrast to girls, who were identified as happy or sad characters while discussing a picture book with their two to four-year-old children (van der Pol et al., 2015), giving credence to the parental reinforcement of display rules. It is important to note that these gendered parental behaviors may not be conscious. Implicit gendered messages are more common in parents than are explicit (Mesman & Groeneveld, 2017). Still, mothers of sons who ascribe to strong beliefs about gender are more likely to believe emotional expressiveness is dangerous, less valuable, and to be punitive or minimizing in response to their son's emotional expressiveness (Sibley, 2015).

Since display rules in the United States typically demand a level of emotional suppression from boys, it is reasonable to make the above assertion that gender differences in emotional expression may be both present and culturally reinforced. Without external and

especially parental validation and support for their emotional experiences, children are more prone to emotional dysregulation, which may manifest as impulsivity, emotional restrictiveness, and externalizing behaviors (Eisenberg et al., 1996, 1998; Tager et al., 2010).

Despite this extensive knowledge of gendered emotion socialization, little research has explored how parents equip their sons or daughters to cope with specific emotional states like frustration. Frustration is particularly salient and often arises in goal-blocking or social rejection contexts. With a lack of supportive parental guidance, children, especially boys, may fail to develop healthy coping and emotional regulation skills and instead externalize frustration through reactive aggression (Rubin et al., 2008; Card & Little, 2006; White et al., 2012), an emotional pathway that has been linked to intimate partner violence and violence against women (Tager & et al., 2010, Ontiveros et al., 2023, Krivoshchekov et al., 2023). Therefore, the parental role in teaching children how to cope with frustration, especially in emotionally charged contexts like goal-blocking and social rejection, is critical.

Current Study

This descriptive study attempts to extend existing developmental theories by building on the knowledge of parental strategies for promoting the regulation of frustration, by exploring if mothers' and fathers' specific approaches to managing their children's potential frustration vary concerning their children's characteristics. The research examines the frequency of both mothers' and fathers' responses to children's distress during a frustrating wait task through emotional validation, physical touch, and problem-solving strategies. It explicitly aims to investigate if mothers and fathers adjust their frequency of use of specific strategies with toddler boys versus toddler girls, or if they are more flexible in their strategy use with boys or girls. The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What strategies do mothers use to help their toddlers manage their emotions during a frustrating wait task?
    a. What is the proportion of each strategy used by mothers when helping their toddlers manage their emotions during the task?
        i. Are some strategies used more often than others, and if so, which ones are used most often?
    b. On average, how many attempts to help toddlers manage their emotions do mothers make for the duration of the task?

    c. On average, how many unique strategies do mothers use for the duration of the task?
2. What strategies do fathers use to help their toddlers manage their emotions during a frustrating wait task?
    a. What is the proportion of each strategy used by fathers when helping their toddlers manage their emotions during the task?
        i. Are some strategies used more often than others, and if so, which ones are used most often?
    b. On average, how many attempts to help their toddlers manage their emotions do fathers make for the duration of the task?
3. Do mothers' strategies for helping their toddlers manage their emotions differ in frequency between boys and girls?
    a. Are there gender differences in the proportions of each strategy used by mothers when helping their toddlers manage their emotions during a frustrating wait task?
        i. Are some strategies used more often than others, and if so, which ones are used most often?
    b. Are there gender differences in the number of attempts to help their toddlers manage their emotions that mothers make for the duration of the task?
    c. Are there gender differences in the number of unique strategies mothers use for the duration of the task?
4. Do fathers' strategies for helping their toddlers manage their emotions during a frustrating wait task differ in frequency between boys and girls?
    a. Are there gender differences in the proportions of each strategy used by fathers when helping their toddlers manage their emotions during a frustrating wait task?
        i. Are some strategies used more often than others, and if so, which ones are used most often?
    b. Are there gender differences in the number of attempts to help their toddlers manage their emotions that fathers make for the duration of the task?
    c. Are there gender differences in the number of unique strategies fathers use during the duration of the task?

Although sex may be associated with parental responses and behaviors, the researcher recognizes that other child characteristics, such as temperament, age, and distress level, may also play a role. Therefore, an exploration analysis will examine the following question:

1. Are there associations between other child, parent, or family characteristics and the types and frequency of strategies parents use?

LITERATURE REVIEW

While existing knowledge on emotion socialization in early childhood is abundant, little research has examined whether parents' regulatory practices differ by perceived toddler gender. Thus, the current study focuses on the strategies parents use to help their toddlers cope with frustration, with a particular emphasis on identifying potential gender differences in these strategies. This chapter will review the existing literature on theories of emotion socialization, frustration management, and gender differences in parental emotional regulation.

In particular, this review will cover the foundational theories of emotion socialization, namely Eisenberg's Parental Socialization of Emotion, and Morris's Tripartite Model of Emotional Regulation, alongside empirical research that explores parental strategies for managing children's frustration. Special attention will be given to studies examining gendered emotion socialization practices. However, this review will not discuss the broader aspects of emotional development outside of frustration management or explore research beyond early childhood, as the primary focus remains on toddlerhood and parental frustration management strategies. Next, the review will explore the developmental significance of frustration, examining how parents typically respond to this emotion in young children, and highlighting where child gender differences may exist. Finally, the review will identify gaps in the literature on gendered emotion socialization.

Parental Reactions and Responses

Parents' reactions to children's negative emotions, whether supportive or unsupportive, are closely linked to children's ability to self-regulate (Morris et al., 2007; Hurell et al., 2019). Research has consistently shown that how parents manage children's difficult moments can nurture a child's emotional skills or, otherwise, contribute to future difficulties with coping. Supportive responses such as emotion coaching can contribute to children's ability to self-regulate, while dismissive or punitive reactions may lead to emotional dysregulation, internalizing problems, or behavioral issues. For instance, perceptions of unsupportive parental responses have been shown to predict depressive symptoms in children aged 8-11, with heightened emotional dysregulation and reduced coping strategies associated with unsupportive maternal reactions to sadness and paternal reactions to anger.

Notably, mothers' unsupportive responses to sadness were more strongly related to depressive symptoms, whereas fathers' unsupportive responses to anger were more closely linked

to children's emotional dysregulation and depressive outcomes (Sanders et al., 2013). Fathers have likewise been found to give more attention (whether encouraging or discouraging) to submissive expressions in preschool girls while ignoring submissive expressions in boys (Chaplin, 2005). These findings suggest potential differences in the emotional socialization roles of mothers and fathers, particularly in how they respond to specific emotions (2013). Concerning child gender, when fathers assigned intentionality to boys' misbehavior, and they were most likely to do so, they displayed more unsupportive reactions than they did with girls (Endendijk et al., 2023). Parents have also reported that they are more likely to encourage their daughters' expressions of sadness than their sons (Cassano et al., 2007).

In kindergarten, supportive parental responses have been found to enhance both physiological and emotional regulation, thereby reducing the likelihood of aggressive or antisocial behavior (Zhang et al., 2020). Perry et al., describe that supportive reactions to negative emotions in early childhood can foster better emotional and physiological regulation later on, which predicts improved social competence and overall adjustment (2015). Conversely, unsupportive maternal reactions have been linked to poorer physiological and behavioral regulation in middle childhood, resulting in diminished adolescent adjustment across multiple domains (2015). Moreover, findings indicate that maltreated children demonstrate fewer adaptive emotion regulation skills and greater emotional dysregulation than their non-maltreated peers, a pattern related to lower levels of emotion coaching and validation from maltreating mothers, and by contrast, heightened levels of invalidation, in response to their children's emotions (Shipman et al., 2007). The presence of unsupportive responses is more impactful than the presence of supportive responses. Seddon et al., (2020) found that parental dysfunction was passed down to the child only through the presence of unsupportive parental emotion socialization, but not through the absence of supportive emotion socialization. Similarly, maternal dismissiveness of emotion has been associated with more internalizing and externalizing problems, while maternal emotion encouragement predicted externalizing behaviors, but only in children with low self-control (2015).

Poorer toddler emotional functioning has been similarly associated with a greater risk of future internalizing and externalizing problems (Engle & McElwain, 2011; Mathieson et al., 2008). Though Engle & McElwain specify that the connection between punitive parental responses and emotional dysregulation was only found for boys with heightened negative

emotionality (2011). Nevertheless, unsupportive maternal responses to children's negative affect are associated with subsequent aggression, while soothing and distraction strategies have not shown the same relationship (Edelman & Del Vecchio, 2024). Additionally, the relationship between maternal acceptance of negative emotions and toddler aggression has been evidenced to be mediated by emotional regulation, suggesting that maternal responses significantly influence the development of emotional regulation, which in turn affects aggressive behavior or lack thereof (Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002). Emotion dismissing, as a dimension of unsupportive responses, is negatively associated with toddlers' emotional competencies (Ornaghi et al., 2019), which are in turn associated with emotion regulation and adjustment.

Supportive responses have been consistently linked to improved self-regulation and adjustment, while unsupportive responses, particularly those that are dismissing, minimizing, or otherwise punitive, are associated with emotional dysregulation, internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and even aggression. The detriment of unsupportive reactions outweighs the benefits of supportive ones, emphasizing children's sensitivity to negative emotional socialization patterns.

Emotion Discussion

Parents' discussions and representations of emotions are a critical piece of children's socioemotional development and emotion regulation skills. Specifically, discussion of emotion helps children recognize emotions in themselves and others, name emotions, and make inferences about emotions (Eisenberg et al., 1998). Multiple studies have established a significant link between parents' discussions about emotions and children's propensity to engage in emotional talk, in addition to children's increased emotional understanding (Dunn et al., 1987, 1991; Racine et al., 2007; Aznar & Tenebaum, 2013; Farrant et al., 2013, Yuuil & Little, 2017; Curtis et al., 2020). Research indicates that toddlers at high risk for behavioral problems particularly benefit from these discussions (Brophy-Herb et al., 2015). There has been evidence for a negative association between parents' emotion talk and children's externalizing problems (Chan et al., 2022), and a balanced approach to emotion talk (i.e., emphasizing both positive and negative emotions) has been associated with lower internalizing problems (Hernandez et al., 2018). Interestingly, parents' emotional talk sometimes varies with the gender of the child. Findings suggest fathers tend to assign feelings of happiness and sadness to girls but associate anger more frequently with boys (van der Pol et al., 2015). Additionally, a longitudinal study of

parents' use of emotion language discovered that, although parental emotion language did not differ based on parent gender, it was more frequent and varied when speaking with daughters. By 70 months, daughters also used a greater number of unique emotion terms compared to sons (Adams et al., 1995).

Both the quantity and quality of parental emotion talk are instrumental in the later development of effortful control for 6-9-year-old children. Increased effortful control is subsequently associated with a higher propensity for prosocial behavior (Curtis et al., 2020). Prosocial behavior is relevant here given that those behaviors include empathic and social concern, both of which are extensions of emotional understanding (Knafo-Noam et al., 2015). The quality of discussion about emotions is even more influential than the presence of it alone – 18-30-month-old toddlers who engaged in more prosocial behaviors, such as sharing and helping, were more likely to have parents who prompted them to label and explain emotions in picture books, whereas toddlers who performed less prosocial behavior had parents who only labeled the emotions without engagement from the child (Brownell et al., 2012). Interestingly, mothers were more likely to use labels in emotion discussions with their daughters and more explanations in their discussions with their sons (Cervantes & Callanan, 1998).

Internal state talk (IST) defined as parental discussion of internal feelings, perceptions, beliefs, thoughts, and desires, constitutes a form of emotion socialization that has been linked to children's emotional understanding (LaBounty et al., 2008; Taumoepeau & Ruffman, 2006, 2008) and cognitive development (Jenks et al., 2003; Merz et al., 2015). Notably, parents are more likely to use IST with feminine or gender-neutral children than with masculine children (Farrell et al., 2023). A key dimension of internal state talk frequently emphasized in the literature is reflective functioning (RF), or the parent's capacity to interpret the mental states underlying their child's behavior. Research indicates that lower parental RF is associated with increased anxiety and externalizing behaviors, and decreased emotion regulation skills in children (Camoirano, 2017). In contrast, studies reveal that toddlers whose mothers exhibit high levels of RF are less likely to respond aggressively under distress (Borelli et al., 2020). Children aged 4–6 similarly demonstrate improved emotion regulation abilities when their mothers engage in higher levels of RF (Shao et al., 2023).

Research repeatedly evidences that children benefit from their parents' balanced and responsive emotional talk, through improved emotional understanding, prosocial behavior, and

effortful control. These effects are especially pronounced in high-risk children, who display fewer behavioral issues when parents actively engage in emotion-focused conversations.

Familial characteristics and emotional climate

Morris et al., (2020) highlight the strengths of Eisenberg's *Parental Socialization of Emotion* model (1998) but note a recent shift from focusing solely on specific components, such as emotion-socialization-related behaviors (ESRBs), toward more integrative frameworks. The Morris *Tripartite Model of Familial Influence* (2007) builds on Eisenberg's model by incorporating the broader emotional context of the family as directly impactful, rather than simply influencing the use of ESRBs. While parental discussion of emotion, modeling of emotion, and reactions to emotion remain central to emotion socialization models, newer approaches such as Morris's emphasize contextual factors like the quality of the marital relationship, the quality of attachment relationships within the family, parenting style, and the unique characteristics of both the parent and the child. Morris describes parental characteristics, i.e., parental beliefs, regulation, and mental health, to shape the emotional climate of the family (2007). Among the characteristics identified in the Tripartite Model, parental beliefs and mental health represent key dimensions of the family's emotional environment, as they illustrate how parents' inner lives and attitudes might influence, consciously or unconsciously, the ways that they engage in emotion socialization with their children.

Parental Beliefs

Parent meta-emotion philosophy, or PMEP, refers to the theory that parents hold beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about their own emotions and those of their children (Gottman et al., 1996; Katz et al., 2012). Those beliefs, thoughts, and feelings then form the emotional climate of the family, through their influence on parenting practices, parental expressiveness, and reactivity (2007). Throughout the literature, two parental beliefs emerge as meaningful contributors to parents' emotion socialization practices and children's emotional development. First, the belief in the importance of accepting and acknowledging a child's emotions, and second, the belief in the value of negative emotions and the importance of emotion regulation (Meyer et al., 2014; Halberstadt et al., 2013; Rogers et al., 2016). Parents who reported valuing their children's anger were both more negatively expressive themselves and more supportive of their children's negative expression (Halberstadt et al., 2013), they were also more likely to encourage their children's expression of negative feelings when they valued negative emotions more broadly

(Lozada et al., 2015; Wong et al., 2009). Alternatively, parents who reported believing emotions to be dangerous rather than valuable were more likely to mask their emotional expression (Dunsmore et al., 2009) and avoid labeling negative emotions (Lozada et al., 2015). School-aged children whose parents value emotion have been shown to better self-regulate and recover more promptly from the experience of negative emotions (Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002; Rogers et al., 2016).

Beliefs about emotion, however, are not isolated; they are shaped by outside factors, e.g., cultural context, which often includes display rules and beliefs about gender. A lack of acceptance or devaluing of negative emotions may be a culturally adaptive, protective strategy in Black American families (Nelson et al., 2012). Similarly, negative emotional expression may be viewed as more or less acceptable depending on both which negative emotion is being expressed and the gender of the person expressing said emotion (Sibley, 2015). The relationship between mothers' beliefs that emotional expression is dangerous and their tendency to minimize or punish negative emotions was significant for mothers of boys, but not for mothers of girls. Specifically, mothers of boys with higher danger beliefs were more likely to minimize or punish negative emotions, while mothers of girls showed similar responses regardless of their beliefs. This pattern was influenced by the mother's gender beliefs: there was an observed positive association between gender beliefs and danger beliefs. Mothers with traditional gender beliefs were more likely to minimize or punish boys' emotions when their danger beliefs were higher, whereas mothers with egalitarian beliefs showed no significant relationship between danger beliefs and their responses (Sibley, 2015). As Morris et al., (2007) describe, these beliefs influence individual socialization behaviors as well as the broader emotional climate of the family by affecting the quality of familial relationships, parenting style, and family expressiveness. However, it is important to note once again that these beliefs do not have to be conscious nor explicit to have an effect. Implicit gender messaging is much more common in gendered parenting than is explicit (Mesman & Groeneveld, 2017), meaning that parents are more likely to socialize by gender through subtle patterns of behavior, communication styles, and expectations (Mesman & Groeneveld, 2017).

Parental Characteristics

Parental mental health, including the presence of depressive or anxious symptoms, is comparably consequential to the emotional climate of the family through spillover effects.

Spillover effects refer to the transfer of emotional processes from one area of an individual's life to another, which suggests that parents' psychopathology symptoms may be reflected in their responses to their children's negative emotions (Breaux et al., 2015). These spillover effects seem to be most pronounced in mothers, which is consistent with the tendency for mothers to be the load-bearing caregiver (McDonnell et al., 2019; Nelson-Coffey et al., 2019). For example, mothers who reported greater psychopathology symptoms were overall less likely to respond to their children supportively, though the same was not true for fathers (Breaux et al., 2015). Mothers with childhood-onset depression exhibit similar patterns and are more likely to respond to negative affect with magnification (or answering the child's emotion with an equivalent or more intense emotional response), punishment, or neglect (Silk et al., 2011). Parental depression and antisocial behavior are, in turn, associated with their children's negative emotionality in adolescence, a result of a lack of warmth and sensitivity in crucial, early developmental periods (Godleski et al., 2020; Sellers et al., 2013).

Parental beliefs and attitudes about emotions, mental health, and broader contextual factors contribute uniquely to the family's emotional climate and children's emotional development by guiding how parents interact with and respond to their children's emotions and setting the tone for familial interactions.

Childhood Frustration, Regulation, and Gaps in the Literature

Children's expressions and regulation of frustration change with age and context. By 24 months, children have already developed the ability to express emotions in socially adaptive ways. Toddlers display sadness more often and at a higher intensity when looking at their mothers than other adults, suggesting they intend to elicit maternal support (Buss & Kiel, 2004). In a longitudinal study of expression during frustration-eliciting tasks, children also expressed sadness more frequently when performing a task with their mothers than with other adults or when alone. However, sadness expressions decreased with age in all contexts, with the sharpest declines occurring with mothers between ages 3-4 and 4-5, likely due to children's development of independent emotion management. Expressions of anger grew significantly from ages 3 to 5 when with an adult or alone, though no significant changes were observed with mothers. Overall, children displayed higher frequencies of anger with age and when alone.

There may also be a gendered effect on emotional expression in challenging contexts, albeit minimal. At age 5, girls expressed less sadness than boys during interactions with adults,

though no gender differences were found with mothers or when alone. At age 4, girls displayed more happiness than boys in adult contexts. Still, these findings indicate the context specificity of children's expression (Chaplin et al., 2017). Feldman et al., similarly assert that toddler anger is context-specific, elicited most frequently when there are perceptions of unfairness (2011). Given children's increasing ability to express a range of emotions, they must also, during this time, develop scaffolded skills to cope with them.

18-month-olds' tendency to become distressed or aggressive during frustrating tasks is negatively associated with their tendency to use adaptive, regulatory behaviors (Calkins & Johnson, 1998). The development of these regulatory behaviors is essential for later social interaction and child well-being. Among toddlers aged 15-39 months, common self-regulation behaviors include self-comforting (e.g., finger sucking, twirling hair, embracing objects), self-distracting, avoidant, and help-seeking (e.g., looking to parent, moving towards parent), as well as pretend play. During frustration-eliciting tasks, self-distraction behaviors were 50% effective in younger children, while pretend play was 70% effective in older children. Self-comforting behaviors only reduced frustration responses by 20% (Deichmann & Ahnert, 2021).

Furthermore, as children's expression of emotion is age and context-specific, so is their emotion regulation. Children as young as 3 years old begin to employ complex emotion regulation strategies, such as distraction and cognitive reappraisals, when faced with frustration. While 3-year-olds rely marginally more on instrumental strategies, like making direct requests, their use decreases by age 4, which the authors suggest results from increasing effectiveness in their strategy employment (Stansbury & Sigman, 2000). 3-year-olds also employ different regulatory strategies depending on the context of their distress. They were more likely to use cognitive and instrumental strategies during a delay-of-gratification task, in contrast to using self-comforting strategies in context with a stranger, and self-distraction strategies when faced with a busy caregiver (Zimmerman & Stansbury, 2003). Children who demonstrate situational flexibility (i.e., the ability to match regulation strategies to context) demonstrate greater general regulation skills (Tan, 2014). Zimmerman & Stansbury noted that girls displayed more self-comforting behaviors than boys, a finding that was similarly present in Deichmann & Ahnert's 2021 study, while Calkins & Johnson discovered a gender-differentiated effect in the use of constructive coping.

Children must learn to employ these strategies from their parents, who scaffold regulation skills. There is a range of strategies parents may employ to manage their children's emotions, both positive and negative. Regulatory strategies may include acceptance, attempts at soothing, encouraging, using cognitive techniques such as distraction and reframing, and instrumental techniques like explanation or demonstration (Spinrad, 2004; Mirabile et al., 2009; Morris et al., 2017; Deichmann & Arnett, 2021), or punitive, neglectful, minimizing, or intensifying responses (Mirabile et al., 2009; Edelmann & Del Vecchio, 2024).

Mothers' proportion of regulatory attempts to opportunities for regulatory attempts decreases between the ages of 18-30 months as children develop their ability to self-regulate, supporting the role of parental scaffolding. However, the frequency of mothers' regulatory strategies when their children were 30 months old was nevertheless predictive of how children responded to disappointment at age five, with greater maternal strategy use associated with more positive and less negative affective responses (Spinrad et al., 2004). This implies that parents' greater flexibility in strategy use is associated with children's better ER.

The use of parents' regulation attempts, like toddlers', is adjusted by context: the emotion being expressed, or the child's characteristics, e.g., their propensity towards negative emotionality (Mirabile et al., 2009; Spinrad, 2004). For example, when toddlers display positive affect, mothers are more likely to use strategies like soothing and acceptance, but distraction, wish-granting, and questioning are much more frequently used in response to negative affect (Spinrad, 2004). Research shows that parental regulation strategies are most effective when they align with a child's baseline emotionality; less reactive children respond well to simple soothing efforts, but more highly reactive children may benefit from alternative techniques, as their reactivity may interfere with their ability to respond effectively to soothing (Mirabile, 2009). For children in preschool to 2nd grade, dyadic mother-child refocusing and reframing were the most effective strategies for reducing negative emotions, aligning with Spinrad's findings that mothers' use of distraction techniques at 30 months were moderately associated with their children's increased positive affect at age 5 (Morris et al., 2011; Spinrad, 2004). Parental strategy flexibility, both in frequency of attempt and goodness of fit, appears to function as a determining factor of children's regulation skills.

Despite this knowledge, there is significantly less research on how specific contexts, namely concerning toddler sex, might affect toddler parents' frequency of strategy use or their choice of strategy. This gap is what the current research is designed to address.

Through behaviors such as modeling, discussion, and reaction to emotions, parents influence how children manage feelings of frustration and other challenging emotions. These processes are similarly influenced by the parent and child's characteristics and the family's broader emotional climate. Importantly, emotion socialization is not uniform for all children; child sex can play a role in parental emotion beliefs and attitudes, then influencing their behaviors and responses. Parents may unconsciously encourage different emotional expressions and coping strategies for boys and girls, reflecting broader cultural expectations. Together, these factors shape children's emotional development and their ability to navigate frustration effectively.

The Current Study

The literature underscores the important role of parental emotion socialization in early childhood, particularly in helping toddlers learn to regulate negative emotions. Research consistently shows that parents' supportive responses to negative emotions have a positive impact on children's self-regulation skills, while unsupportive reactions can lead to emotional dysregulation and later behavioral issues. Evidence suggests potential, but marginal, gender differences in children's expression of frustration, and these gendered differences may likewise impact parental responses. The review emphasizes that parental beliefs, mental health, and family emotional climate similarly shape socialization practices. There is, however, a noted gap in understanding how regulatory strategies may vary in frequency and type, especially concerning certain toddler characteristics, including toddler sex.

The current study examines the mean frequencies of strategies used by mothers and fathers to support their toddlers during a frustrating wait task. The study also examines the range of strategies used and which of the strategies are most commonly used. Additionally, it explores whether the frequency of mothers' and fathers' strategies differs concerning the child's sex. Recognizing that other child characteristics, like temperament and age, may also influence parental responses, an exploratory analysis will then investigate potential associations between these characteristics and the types and frequency of strategies used by parents.

Traditionally, both parenting and developmental research have stressed the role of the mother with relatively limited consideration for fathers' contributions. Though attention to the

issue has improved somewhat, the gap is still noticeable. To address this, the study's secondary analysis is conducted using two deidentified datasets collected by the CHILD (*Cultivating Hearts & Minds for Infants/Toddlers' Learning & Development*) Lab at Michigan State University. Both datasets –*Families and Children's Emotions Study (FACES)* and the *Toddler 5 Study (T5)*—employ the same wait task, wait task protocol, and include a parent self-report questionnaire. The waiting task was conducted exclusively with fathers in the FACES dataset and exclusively with mothers in the T5 dataset, allowing for separate analyses of mothers' and fathers' responses.

METHODS

Participants

FACES (Families and Children's Emotion Study)

The FACES study consisted of 166 Midwestern parents, specifically 83 mother-father pairs, each with a child aged between 24 and 36 months. The children in the sample averaged 30.06 months old (*SD* = 11.3), and 48.2% (n = 40) were boys. Most parents were married (90.4%, or 75 pairs) and nearly all were biological parents—96.4% of fathers (n = 80) and 98.8% of mothers (n = 82). Almost all couples lived together (96.4%, or 80 pairs). Parents' ages ranged from 23 to 52, with fathers having an average age of 34.45 years (*SD* = 5.34). About 62.2% of families (n = 51) reported an annual household income exceeding $55,000. Fathers in the sample were primarily White (67.5%, n = 56), with the remainder identifying as Black (12%), Asian (8.4%), Latino (6%), multiracial (1.2%), or other (4.8%). 76% of fathers earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

T5 (Toddler 5)

The T5 sample consisted of 112 mother-toddler pairs recruited from a Midwestern town via flyers distributed at Early Head Start centers, local early childhood programs, and a parent listserv. Originally, 123 mother-toddler pairs participated, but nine pairs were excluded from the data due to toddlers' extraordinary distress or lack of engagement in the task. Toddlers in this sample were between 16 to 36 months old (*M* = 26.1 months, *SD* = 6.90), and 58% (n = 72) were boys. Mothers' ages ranged from 20 to 46 years (*M* = 33.04, *SD* = 5.25). The sample was primarily White (73.1%), with smaller representations of Black (11.5%), Hispanic (6.7%), Asian or Pacific Islander (2.9%), American Indian/Alaska Native (1%), and multiracial or other (3.8%). Most mothers had a college degree (34.6%) or higher (40.4%).

Procedure

FACES (Families and Children's Emotions)

Participants were recruited from a public Midwestern university parent listserv. Upon families' arrival for their one-time university laboratory visit, they were greeted by interviewers, provided with a parking pass, and escorted to the lab. Parents received information on the purpose and procedure of the study, both orally and in writing, and written consent was obtained through a consent form. The family engaged in a free play session, after which, the mother and interviewer moved to a separate room to begin a series of questions regarding both them and their child; the father and toddler stayed behind. The father and toddler participated in a lockbox

task. To begin, the father was to fill out a brief questionnaire concerning his feelings and beliefs about parenthood. Then, during the final duration of the task, the father was to join his toddler in participation. The father and toddler then engaged in a book-sharing activity and an additional wait task. Next, toddlers joined their mothers, and fathers completed the same interview given to mothers earlier. Following all tasks, families were escorted out and given gift cards with signed receipts. Each visit required approximately 2 to 2 ½ hours of participants' time.

During the lockbox task, the father and toddler were videotaped from start to finish while completing a structured activity to observe their strategies for supporting toddlers' emotion regulation. In this task, the father begins by selecting one toy for the toddler to play with for two minutes. The data collector then hands the father a key and instructs him to place the toy into a locked box. The father then locks the toy in the box and provides only the following explanation to the toddler: "It's time to put the toy away now," before returning the key to the data collector and leaving the room. The father remains "busy" on the sofa, completing the first portion of his interview, and is instructed to refrain from interacting or communicating with the toddler in any way. After two minutes, the data collector returns and informs the father that he may now interact with the toddler as he normally would, though the toy will remain locked up for another two minutes. The data collector leaves again. After the second two-minute period, the data collector returns, unlocks the box and hands the toy back to the father and toddler to play with for another two minutes.

Interview responses and videotapes were coded by trained researchers and research assistants, using codebooks developed by the lead researcher. Both the father and toddler's behavior and regulatory attempts were coded.

T5 (Toddler 5)

Mothers and toddlers were recruited to participate in a single laboratory session via distributed flyers at Early Head Start centers, local early childhood programs, and through parent listservs. Mothers were also recruited by word of mouth from previous participants. During the laboratory visit, mothers and toddlers were invited to engage in free play for five minutes. Toddlers then took part in a range of frustrating tasks, including a lock box task, while mothers completed a series of questionnaires. Mothers were informed of the general purpose and procedure of the study, both during and before the visit. Consent was received electronically

prior to the visit via Survey Monkey or obtained onsite if not given already. The lockbox task followed the same procedure as in FACES.

Measures

Parental Support or Non-Support of Toddler's Negative Emotions

Both mothers and fathers independently completed the Coping with Toddlers' Negative Emotion Scale (CTNES; Spinrad et al., 2007), an adaptation of the Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale (CCNES; Fabes et al., 1990), to report how they would respond to their toddlers' negative emotions in 12 hypothetical situations. For each scenario (e.g., "If my toddler is angry because he wanted to play outside and couldn't because he was sick, I would**:**"), parents rated their likelihood of engaging in seven types of responses on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("I would not do this") to 7 ("I would do this"). The unsupportive response subscales include minimizing and punitive responses, i.e., "Tell my child that he/she is making a big deal out of nothing" or "Tell my child we will not get to do something fun (i.e., watch TV, play games) unless he stops acting like that". Cronbach's alpha indicated internal consistency for both the FACES and T5 studies. Specifically, in the current sample, reliability was $\alpha = 0.898$ for mothers' FACES responses, $\alpha = 0.839$ for fathers', and $\alpha = 0.891$ for mothers' T5 responses.

The supportive responses subscales include expressive encouragement, emotion-focused, and problem-focused responses, i.e. "Tell my child it's okay to be angry", "Comfort my child and/or do something with him to make him feel better", "Help my child find something he wants to do inside" ($\alpha = .882$ for mothers' FACES responses, $\alpha = .884$ for fathers' FACES responses, $\alpha = .899$ for T5 responses). Subscales were averaged to create a composite "supportive" and "unsupportive" scale.

Parental Emotion Socialization

Z scores from two scales were combined to create a comprehensive measure of parental emotion socialization. Firstly, the emotion-dismissing Z score from the Emotional Styles Questionnaire (Lagacé-Séguin & Coplan, 2005). The ESQ is a 14-item measure designed to assess parental beliefs about children's emotional expressions and their goals when addressing their child's negative emotions. Each item was rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The emotion-dismissing subscale ($\alpha = .660$ for mothers' FACES responses, $\alpha = .724$ for fathers'), consisting of four items, captured the extent to which parents held beliefs that devalued or dismissed negative emotions. Example items include, "Sadness is

something that one has to get over with, to ride out, and not to dwell on," "I try to change my child's angry mood into a cheerful one," and "Childhood is a happy-go-lucky time, not a time to feel sad or angry." Subscale scores were averaged, with higher scores reflecting stronger emotion-dismissing beliefs. The second scale was the unsupportive responses subscale (α = .898 for mothers' FACES responses, α = .839 for fathers'), Z-score from the Coping with Toddlers' Negative Emotion. The two scales were summed to form a composite score reflecting unsupportive parental emotion socialization (α=.902 for mothers' FACES responses, α=.855 for fathers').

Acceptance or Rejection of Negative Emotions

The Emotion-Related Parenting Styles Scale (ERPS; Paterson et al., 2012) is a 20-item measure consisting of five subscales. For this study, the acceptance and rejection of negative emotions subscales were used. The acceptance and rejection of negative emotions subscales assess how parents respond to their children's negative emotions. Each subscale includes five items rated on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("not at all true") to 4 ("very true"). Example acceptance items (α = .289) are "When my child is sad, we sit down and talk over the sadness" and "A child's anger is important", while rejection items (α = .73) include "Children acting sad are usually just trying to get adults to feel sorry for them" or " When my child gets sad, I warn him or her about not developing a bad character". Mean scores for each subscale were calculated for analysis.

Parental Strategies

Parental strategies were defined as any observable parental behavior aimed at helping the child manage an emotional response (see Table 1). Research assistants coded parental behaviors from videotapes of the waiting task to identify 12 different strategies used to regulate children's actions and emotions. Behaviors of interest were distraction, expressive encouragement, rule statements with positive or negative commands, reasoning, redirecting the child's attention, minimizing, punishment, physical touch or physical restraint, ignoring, or passive responses. Distraction was coded when parents redirected the child's attention away from the task through unrelated activities like playing, singing, or general conversation ("Do you want to sing?"). Expressive encouragement included parental responses that validated or acknowledged the child's emotions, such as labeling feelings ("You're frustrated") or offering comfort during distress ("What happened? What do you want?"). Subtle acknowledgments of emotions, even when semi-task-related, were also coded. Rule statements were divided into positive and negative commands. Positive commands encouraged compliance through supportive language, such as "Wait just a bit longer" or "You can

have it later," while negative commands explicitly discouraged actions (e.g., "Don't touch that" or "Stop touching the box"). Reasoning–norms included statements tied to social expectations or developmental milestones, such as, "You have to be a big girl and be patient," while reasoning–logical provided practical, task-specific explanations like, "We don't have the key, so we can't unlock the box." Returning attention to the toy was coded when parents refocused the child's attention on the task through observations, questions, or comments about the toy or box (e.g., "What color is it?")

Additional behaviors were coded as follows: Minimizing referred to dismissive or sarcastic responses to the child's emotions (e.g., "Quit making a big deal out of this" or eye-rolling). Punitive responses included scolding, threats, or warnings of consequences for noncompliance (e.g., "Do you want a timeout?"). Physical comfort was coded when parents used soothing actions like hugging or holding the child, whereas physical refraining described actions to physically prevent the child's access to the toy, such as holding their arms. Ignoring was coded when parents did not respond to the child's bids for attention within three seconds, particularly during instances of distress or danger. These behaviors were coded using strict operational definitions to ensure consistency and reliability across observations. Parental strategies were coded for both the T5 and FACES datasets by a coding team blind to the study questions. Interrater reliability for video coding across both datasets was 90% for parental verbal strategies (reasoning, minimizing, rule statements, reflection, expressive encouragement, returning attention to the toy, punitive statements), 70% for touch strategies (physical comfort, physical restraint) and 83% for other strategies (including distraction and ignoring).

Table 1.

Parental Strategies Coded from the Lockbox Task

Strategy	Definition	Example(s)
Distraction	A parent distracts a child by holding a conversation about a non-task-related topic.	*Playing games, singing, dancing, general unrelated conversation, etc.,*
Returning the child's attention to the toy	The parent talks about the toy, key, or box and points to it.	*"Look at the toy." "This looks like a very nice toy." "The toy has your favorite colors." "It's locked in the box." Etc.,*
Expressive Encouragement	Acknowledging or validating the child's emotions through verbal or comforting responses and labeling the child's emotions.	*"You're frustrated." "I know you're upset." "What happened?"*
Reflection	General reflective statements are made back to the child.	*Child says, "Toy, box," and the Parent says, "Yes, the toy is in the box." "It's locked in the box."*
Rule Statement – Positive	Any reference to the rules or encouragement of compliance that is phrased positively.	*"Wait just a bit longer." "You can have it later." "We have to follow the rules."*
Rule Statement – Negative	Any reference to the rules or discouragement of behavior that is phrased negatively.	*"Don't touch that."; "Stop touching the box."; "Stop it right now."*
Reasoning – Norms	Referencing social norms, developmental expectations, or consequences.	*"You have to be a big girl and be patient, okay? "You're three now; you know how to wait."*
Reasoning – Logical	Providing task-specific or practical explanations.	*"We don't have the key, so we can't unlock the box."*
Minimizing	Parent makes fun of or teases the child's emotional expression, is otherwise minimizing.	*"Quit making a big deal out of this."; eye-rolling; "Oh come on, give me a break."*
Punishment	Scolding, threatening, or warning the child of consequences.	*"Do you want me to tell X you were acting like this?" "If you keep this up, we aren't going (special activity, treat, etc.)."*
Physical Comfort	Touch is intended to comfort the child.	*Parent hugging, kissing, or picking up the child to give comfort, stroking child's hair, putting child on their lap*
Physical Restraint	Using physical action to restrict the child's interaction with the toy.	*Holding the child's arms back; holding child firmly in their lap.*
Ignoring	Parent does not respond to child's bid (physical, nonverbal, and/or verbal bids) verbally or	*No verbal or nonverbal response.*

Table 1 (cont'd).

Note. Strategies were coded from videotaped observations and were predefined.

Child Temperament

Mothers and fathers independently reported their child's tendency towards negative emotionality using items taken from the Early Childhood Behavior Questionnaire (ECBQ; Putnam et al., 2006). The ECBQ assesses toddler temperament across 18 dimensions on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 meaning "Never" and 7 meaning "Always", with a Negative Affectivity subscale. The mean scores of the Negative Affectivity subscale, i.e., the child's propensity towards discomfort ("become distressed when his/her hands were dirty and/or sticky?"), fear, ("seem frightened for no apparent reason?"), shyness (cling to a parent?"), and frustration ("get easily irritated?), as well as their motor activity ("tap or drum with fingers on tables or other objects?") perceptual sensitivity ("notice changes in your appearance (such as wet hair, a hat, or jewelry)?", and soothability ("calm down quickly?"), were calculated to represent the child's general negative affect ($\alpha = .724$).

Family Expressivity

Family expressivity was measured with the Self-Expressiveness within the Family Context developed by Halberstadt et al., (SEFQ, 1995). The SEFQ is a 40-item self-report measure that assesses the frequency and nature of emotional expressiveness within families. It includes two subscales—Positive Expressiveness ($\alpha = .868$). , which evaluates expressions of affection ("Expressing deep affection or love for someone"), praise ("Praising someone for good work"), and happiness ("Telling family members how happy you are"), and Negative Expressiveness ($\alpha = .839$), which captures expressions of anger ("Expressing anger at someone else's carelessness"), frustration ("Expressing anger for a moment over something small that was irritating"), and criticism ("Blaming one another for family troubles"). Items are rated on a 9-point Likert scale, reflecting how characteristic these behaviors are of the family, and the measure has demonstrated strong reliability and validity. Mean scores of positive and negative family expressivity were calculated.

Parental Depressive Symptoms

The Center of Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) was used to assess parental depressive symptoms. The CES-D is a 20-item, self-report measure. Parents rated how often they experienced symptoms such as sadness, hopelessness, or lack of appetite over the past week on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 ("rarely or none of the time") to 3 ("most or all of the time"). The CES-D provides a total score, with higher scores indicating greater levels of depressive symptoms ($\alpha = .610$).

Derived Variables

Child Distress

A binary variable was created to represent the presence (or absence) of child distress during the task. This variable was coded based on visit log notes. If significant distress was noted in the log, it was coded as 1. In the absence of any mention of distress or when only mild or no distress was observed, the variable was coded as 0.

Broken Protocol

A binary variable was created to represent whether the task protocol was broken. The variable was coded based on task observations. If the protocol was violated (the parent or child ended the task early, the parent interacted with the child during the child-only phase of the task, etc.), it was coded as 1. If the protocol was followed correctly throughout the task, it was coded as 0.

Data Analysis Plan

Two distinct datasets are analyzed in this study. The FACES dataset includes both mothers' and fathers' interview responses, with only fathers participating in a frustrating wait task with their children. The T5 dataset includes only mothers in both the interview and the task. The same analysis plan has been applied to both datasets to allow for a more comprehensive understanding of gendered patterns in parental emotion regulation strategies. This approach also addresses the historical underrepresentation of fathers in developmental research. All analyses will be conducted using SPSS, version 30. The alpha level for all tests will be set at .05.

RQ 1: What strategies do mothers and fathers use to help their toddlers manage their emotions during a frustrating wait task?

a. What is the proportion of each strategy used by mothers when helping their toddlers manage their emotions during the task?

Proportion scores were calculated separately for mothers and fathers. Each parent's proportion score reflected the number of times a given strategy was used, divided by the total number of attempts to help their toddlers manage their emotions made for the duration of the task.

a.i. Are some strategies used more often than others, and if so, which ones are used most often?

The individual proportions were then averaged across the sample to identify common patterns of strategy use across the sample. Proportions were used to enable more meaningful comparisons across participants and groups. To identify which specific strategies are used more frequently, the rank order of strategies based on their mean proportion of use was determined. After ranking, a Friedman test was conducted, due to unequal distribution of proportions, to test for significant differences in the proportions of the top-ranked strategies.

b. On average, how many attempts to help toddlers manage their emotions do mothers make for the duration of the task?

c. On average, how many unique strategies do mothers use for the duration of the task?

The number of attempts made to help their toddlers manage their emotions for the task's duration was summed, noting that the number of attempts made is distinct from the number of strategies used, as parents may make multiple attempts using the same strategy. Additionally, the number of unique strategies used – that is, the number of times parents attempted with a new strategy – was calculated, with separate reports for mothers and fathers. Descriptive statistics will be presented with graphs to visualize mothers' and fathers' strategies.

RQ 2: Do mothers' or fathers' strategies for helping their toddlers manage their emotions during a frustrating wait task differ in frequency between boys and girls?

a .Are there gender differences in the proportions of each strategy used by mothers when helping their toddlers manage their emotions during a frustrating wait task?

To explore whether strategy use differs based on the child's sex, independent samples t-tests were conducted separately for mothers and fathers to compare the mean proportion of each of the most used strategies with boys versus girls. For example, this study compares the average proportion of "Distraction" used with boys against that used with girls. Assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were tested before conducting the t-tests.

i. Are some strategies used more often than others, and if so, which ones are used most often?

To identify which specific strategies were used more frequently, the rank order of strategies used by fathers and mothers of girls or boys based on their mean proportion of use was determined. After ranking, a Friedman test was conducted, due to unequal distribution, of proportions to test for significant differences in the proportions of the top-ranked strategies.

b. Are there gender differences in the number of attempts to help their toddlers manage their emotions that mothers make for the duration of the task?

c. Are there gender differences in the number of unique strategies mothers use for the duration of the task

The average number of attempts to help toddlers manage their emotions made by the parent for the duration of the task by the child's sex was calculated, and the number of unique attempts made by the parent by child sex was summed and is presented in a frequency graph.

It is hypothesized that parents will demonstrate more flexibility, that is, a higher number of attempts or a higher number of unique strategies, in their attempts to help their toddlers manage their emotions for girls compared to boys. To test this hypothesis, a two-tailed independent samples t-test was conducted using the total number of attempts made and, again, using the total number of unique strategies by parents of boys and parents of girls to determine whether there are significant differences in parental flexibility. Effect sizes (Cohen's d) are reported to evaluate the magnitude of any observed differences.

Are there associations between other child, parent, or family characteristics and the types and frequency of strategies parents use?

Finally, limited exploratory analyses were conducted using Pearson's correlations to observe any potential associations between child, parent, and family characteristics and the types and frequencies of strategies parents used. These analyses will help identify any additional factors that may be associated with parents' strategy use, which could inform future research. A binary logistic regression was then used to explore any observed relationships. Assumptions for linearity and multicollinearity were checked before running the regression.

RESULTS

Summary of Results

Mothers and fathers most frequently used Distraction to support their toddlers during the frustrating wait task (Mothers: $M = 0.38$, $SD = 0.29$; Fathers: $M = 0.37$, $SD = 0.27$), followed by Physical Comfort (Mothers: $M = 0.21$, $SD = 0.25$; Fathers: $M = 0.18$, $SD = 0.23$) and Returning Attention to the Toy (Mothers: $M = 0.20$, $SD = 0.23$; Fathers: $M = 0.24$, $SD = 0.24$), with some variation in rank. Mothers made 5.54 ($SD = 2.73$) attempts to help their toddlers manage their emotions and used 3.53 ($SD = 1.31$) unique strategies, while fathers made 5.72 ($SD = 3.01$) attempts and used 3.51 ($SD = 1.44$) unique strategies. Strategies were generally used in similar proportions regardless of whether the child was a boy or a girl, and no statistically significant gender differences were found in the number or type of strategies used by either mothers or fathers. Instances of observed child distress and protocol violations were recorded; however, their frequencies were too low to warrant inclusion in either dataset's analyses.

1. What strategies do mothers use to help their toddlers manage their emotions during a frustrating wait task?

1a. What is the proportion of each strategy used by mothers when helping their toddlers manage their emotions during the task?

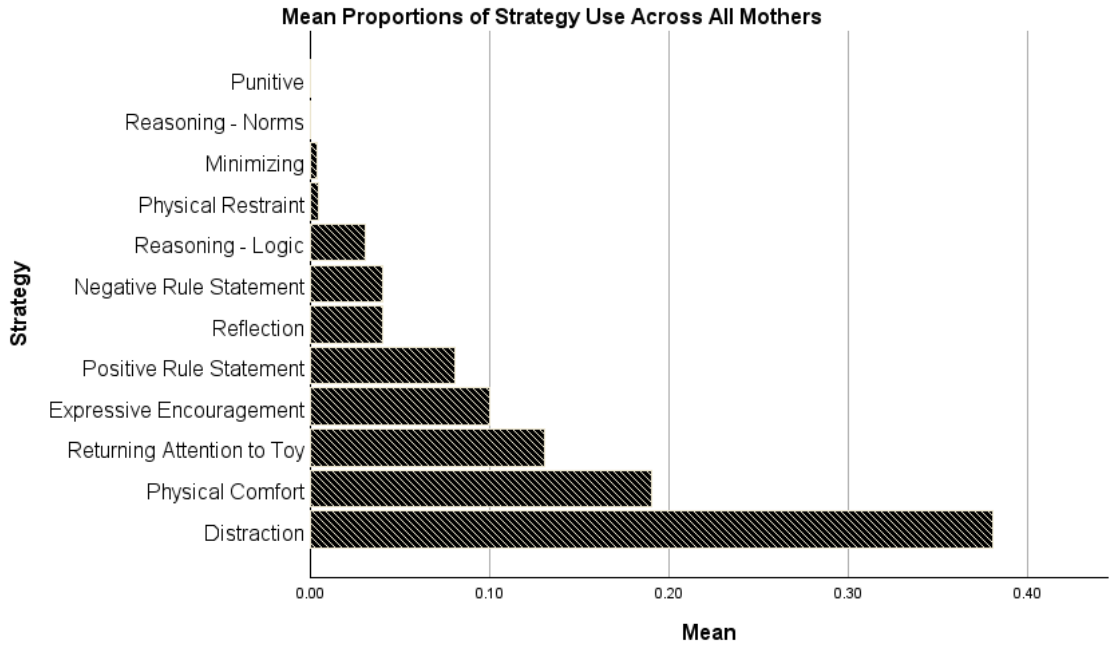
1a.i. Are some strategies used more often than others, and if so, which ones are used most often?

To examine mothers' use of each strategy, mean proportions were calculated by dividing the number of times each strategy was used by the total number of regulatory attempts. Distraction was used most frequently, accounting for 38% of regulatory attempts ($SD = 0.28$), followed by Physical Comfort at 19% ($SD = 0.20$) and Returning Attention to the Toy at 13% ($SD = 0.15$). A Friedman test showed a significant difference in overall strategy use. However, post-hoc comparisons revealed no statistically significant differences between the top three strategies, with all adjusted p-values exceeding .05. Other strategies were used less often, including Expressive Encouragement (10%, $SD = 0.16$), Reflection (4%, $SD = 0.08$), and Reasoning – Logic (3%, $SD = 0.07$). The use of Positive and Negative Rule Statements was relatively infrequent, though mothers relied more on Positive Rule Statements (8%, $SD = 0.13$) than Negative Rule Statements (4%, $SD = 0.09$). Some strategies were rarely observed, including

Minimizing (<1%, *SD* = 0.02) and Physical Restraint (<1%, *SD* = 0.02). Punitive strategies and Reasoning – Norms were not used at all across the sample. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Mean Proportions of Strategy Use by All Mothers Across the Sample

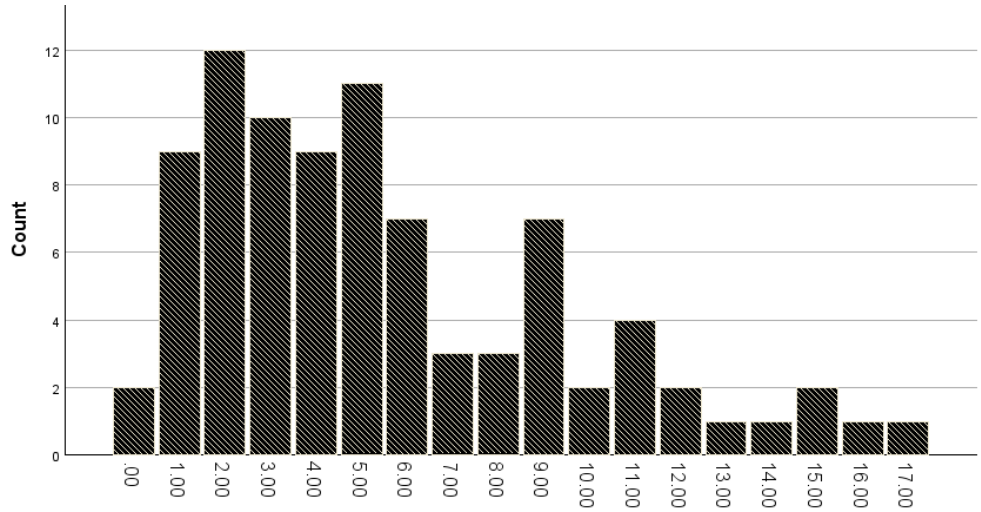


1b. On average, how many attempts to help toddlers manage their emotions do mothers make for the duration of the task?

Mothers made an average of 5.54 (*SD* = 4.01) total attempts to help their toddlers manage their emotions across the full sample (Figure 2).

Figure 2.

Distribution of Total Attempts Made by Mothers

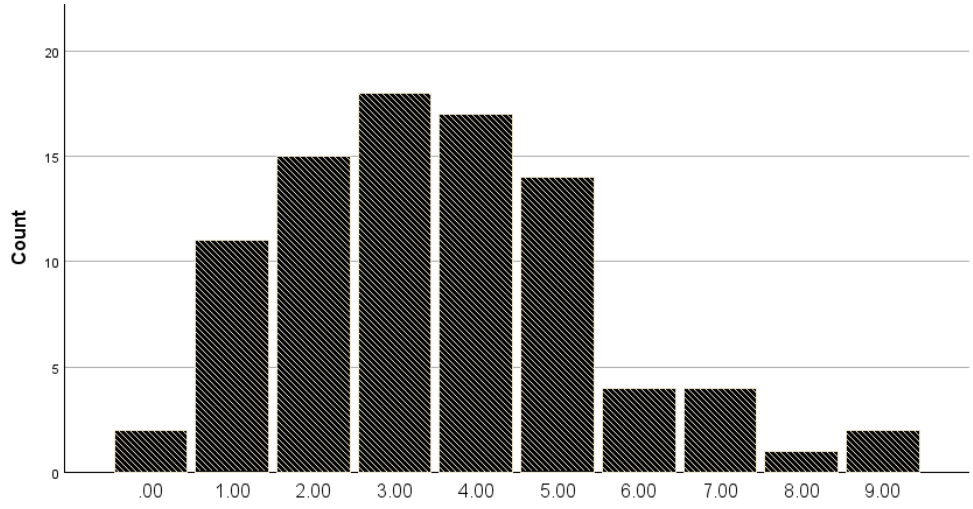


1c. On average, how many unique strategies do mothers use for the duration of the task?

Mothers used 3.53 (*SD* = 1.92) unique strategies.

Figure 3.

Distribution of Unique Strategies Used by Mothers



2. What strategies do fathers use to help their toddlers manage their emotions during a frustrating wait task?

2a. What is the proportion of each strategy used by fathers when helping their toddlers manage their emotions during the task?

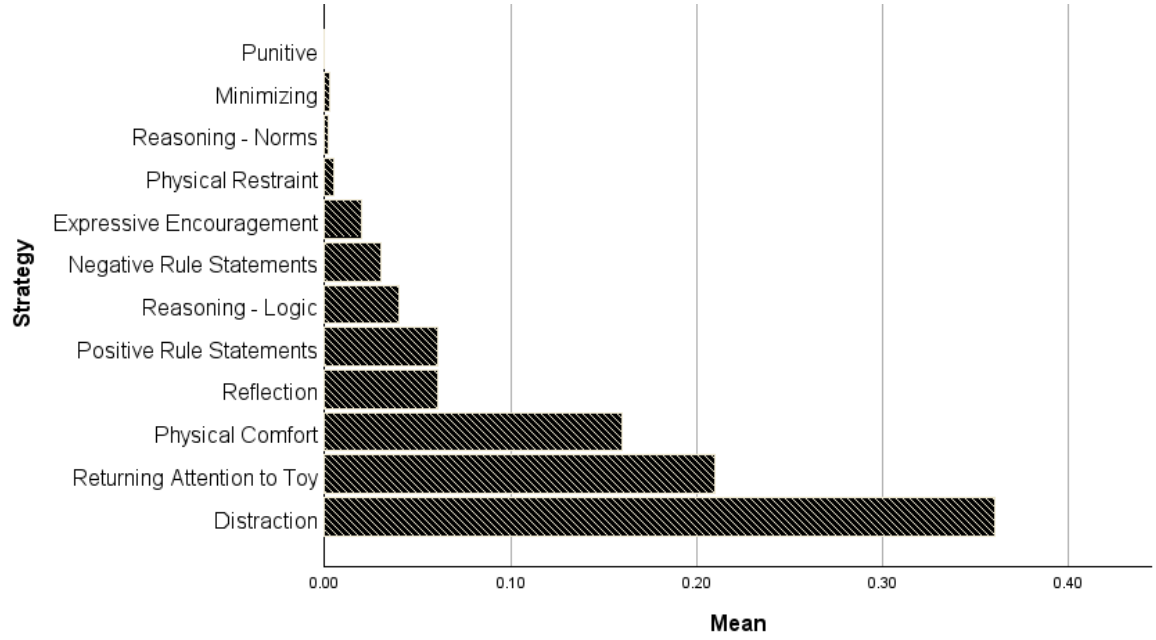
2a.i. Are some strategies used more often than others, and if so, which ones are used most often?

Mean proportions of strategy use were calculated for the entire sample of fathers, using the number of times the father used a particular strategy divided by the total number of regulatory attempts the father made. Among the strategies, Distraction had the highest proportion, accounting for 37% of regulatory attempts (*SD* = 0.16). Returning Attention to the Toy was the second most used strategy at 22% (*SD* = 0.17), followed by Physical Comfort at 16% (*SD* = 0.20). A Friedman test indicated a significant overall difference in the use of regulatory strategies. However, there was no statistical difference between the use of any of the top three strategies, with all adjusted p-values exceeding .05. Other strategies were less common, including Expressive Encouragement at 23% (*SD* = 0.06), Reflection at 6% (*SD* = 0.10), and Reasoning – Logic at 4% (*SD* = 0.08). Positive and Negative Rule Statements were used

sparingly, though fathers used Positive Rule Statements more frequently (6%, SD = 0.10) than Negative Rule Statements (3%, *SD* = 0.08). Physical Restraint (0.5%, *SD* = 0.03), Minimizing (0.2%, *SD* = 0.17), and Reasoning – Norms (0.3%, *SD* = 0.01) were the least commonly used strategies. Punitive strategies were not used at all by fathers. (See Figure 4).

Figure 4.

Mean Proportions of Strategy Use by All Fathers Across the Sample

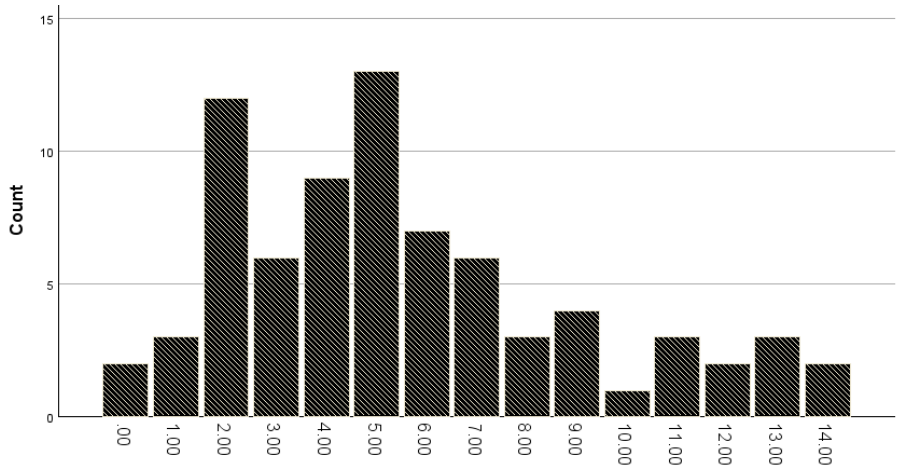


2b. On average, how many attempts to help their toddlers manage their emotions do fathers make for the duration of the task?

Fathers made 5.72 (*SD* = 3.42) attempts to help their toddlers manage their emotions across the sample.

Figure 5.

Distribution of Total Attempts Made by Fathers

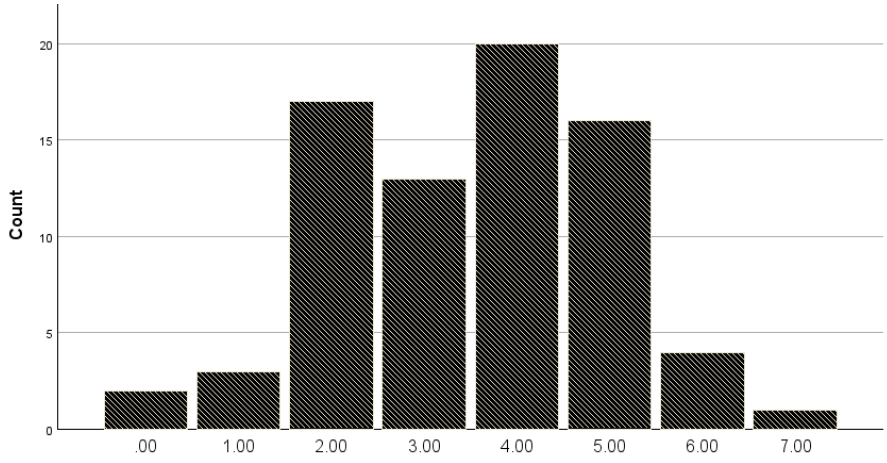


2c. On average, how many unique strategies do fathers use during the duration of the task?

Across the sample, fathers used 3.51 (*SD* = 1.48) unique strategies.

Figure 6.

Distribution of Unique Strategies Used by Fathers



3. Do mothers' strategies for helping their toddlers manage their emotions differ in frequency between boys and girls?

3a. Are there gender differences in the proportions of each strategy used by mothers when helping their toddlers manage their emotions during a frustrating wait task?

3a.i. Are some strategies used more often than others, and if so, which ones are used most often?

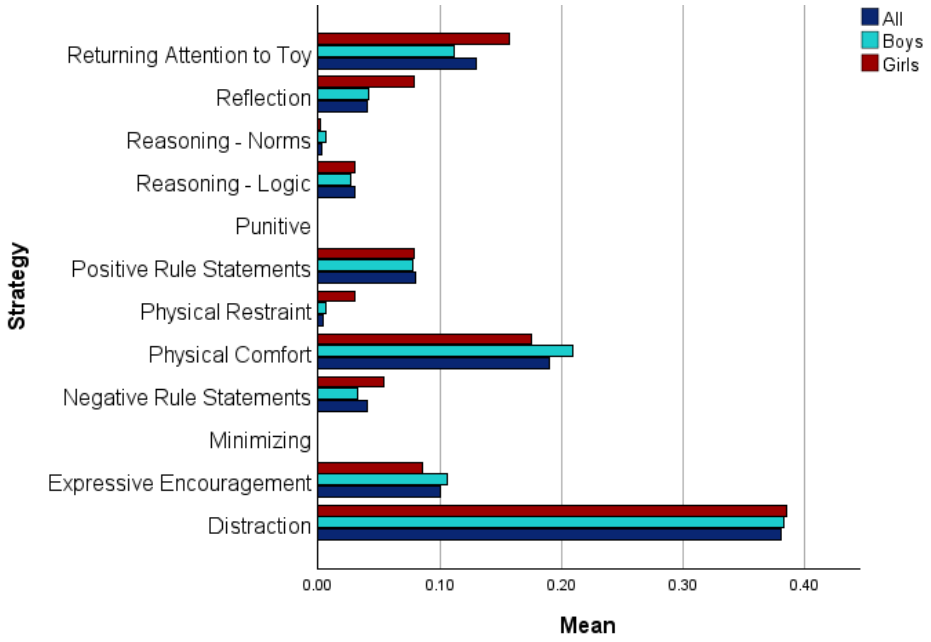
Patterns of strategy use were generally consistent across child gender. Among mothers of boys, Distraction had the highest proportion of use at 38% (*SD* = 0.28), followed by Physical Comfort at 21% (*SD* = 0.23), and Returning Attention to the Toy at 11% (*SD* = 0.13). A similar pattern was observed among mothers of girls, with Distraction again the most frequently used strategy at 38% (*SD* = 0.28), followed by Returning Attention to the Toy at 16% (*SD* = 0.17), and Physical Comfort at 18% (*SD* = 0.18). A Friedman test revealed no significant differences in the top three strategies used by mothers of boys and mothers of girls.

Differences between mothers of boys and girls were minor. Mothers of boys demonstrated slightly greater use of Expressive Encouragement (11%, *SD* = 0.16) compared to the full sample (10%, *SD* = 0.16) and mothers of girls (9%, *SD* = 0.16). Conversely, Reflection was used slightly more frequently among mothers of girls (5%, *SD* = 0.09) than in the overall

sample (4%, *SD* = 0.08) or among mothers of boys (3%, *SD* = 0.07). Results are illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7.

Mean Proportions of Strategy Use by Mothers by Child Sex



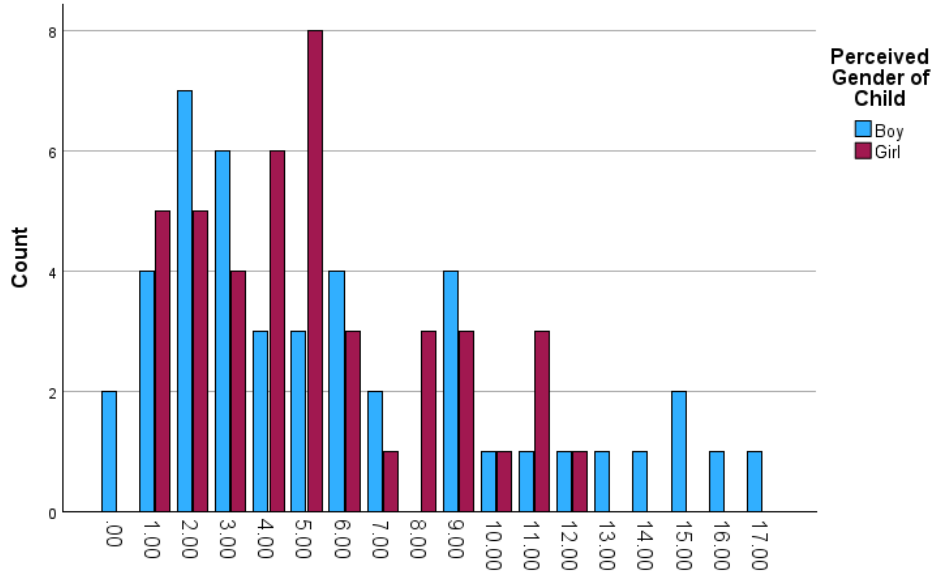
For mothers' proportions of distraction, the assumption of equal variances was met (p = .892), so a standard independent samples t-test was used. No significant difference was found between groups, $t(83) = –0.04$, $p = .484$. The mean difference was negligible ($M = –0.00$, SE = 0.06), 95% CI [–0.123, 0.119]. Cohen's d = 0.28 also suggested a small and nonsignificant effect. Proportions of returning attention to the toy did not meet the assumptions for a t-test due to significant deviations from normality ($p < .010$ for both groups) and unequal variances (p = .029). Accordingly, a Mann–Whitney U test was used. No significant group differences emerged, $U = 1032$, $p = .231$. Lastly, physical comfort was compared using an independent samples t-test, as assumptions were met (Levene's test $p = .250$). The results again showed no significant difference between groups, $t(83) = 0.76$, $p = .224$. The mean difference was small (0.034, SE = 0.044), 95% CI [–0.054, 0.121]. Cohen's $d = 0.20$ reflected a small effect size.

3b. Are there gender differences in the number of attempts mothers make to help their toddlers manage their emotions for the duration of the task?

Mothers of boys made an average of 5.91 attempts (*SD* = 4.73), while mothers of girls made an average of 5.16 attempts (*SD* = 3.12).

Figure 8.

Distribution of Total Attempts Made by Mothers by Child Sex



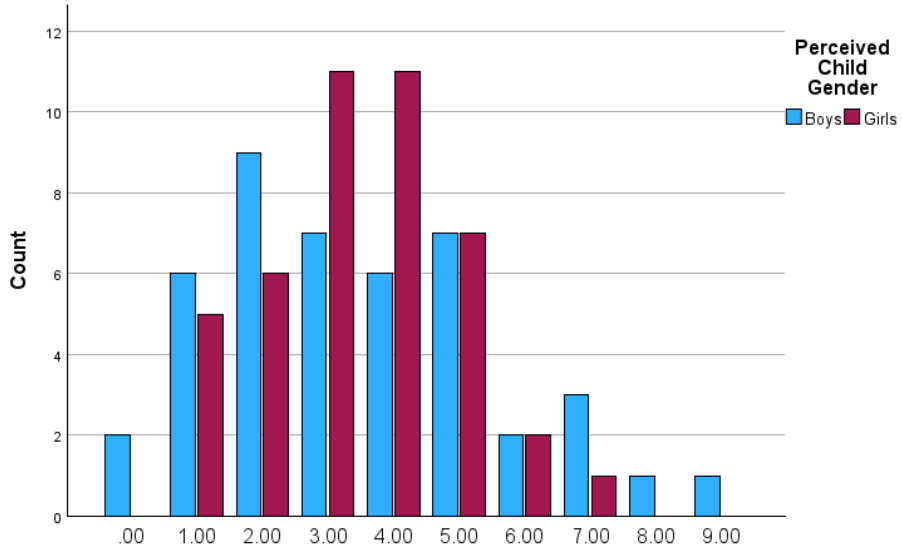
For mothers' total attempts to help their toddlers manage their emotions, skewness and kurtosis values suggested approximate normality, but significant results on the Shapiro-Wilk tests ($p < .001$) and Levene's test for equality of variances ($p = .007$) indicated violations of assumptions. As a result, a Mann–Whitney U test was used. No significant differences were found between mothers of boys and mothers of girls in total regulatory attempts, $U = 928$, $p = .878$.

3c. Are there gender differences in the number of unique strategies mothers use for the duration of the task?

Mothers of boys used an average of 3.50 unique strategies (*SD* = 2.16), and mothers of girls used 3.44 (*SD* = 1.47) unique strategies.

Figure 9.

Distribution of Unique Strategies Used by Mothers by Child Sex



When comparing the number of unique strategies mothers used, Levene's test revealed unequal variances, $F(1, 85) = 6.691$, $p = .011$, prompting the use of Welch's t-test. Again, no significant difference was observed, $t(75.88) = 0.15$, $p = .884$. The mean difference was minimal ($M = 0.06$, $SE = 0.40$) and Cohen's $d = 0.03$. The 95% CI [–0.389, 0.452] included zero, suggesting negligible group differences.

4. Do fathers' strategies for helping their toddlers manage their emotions differ in frequency between boys and girls?

4a. Are there gender differences in the proportions of each strategy used by fathers when helping their toddlers manage their emotions during a frustrating wait task?

4a.i. Are some strategies used more often than others, and if so, which ones are used most often?

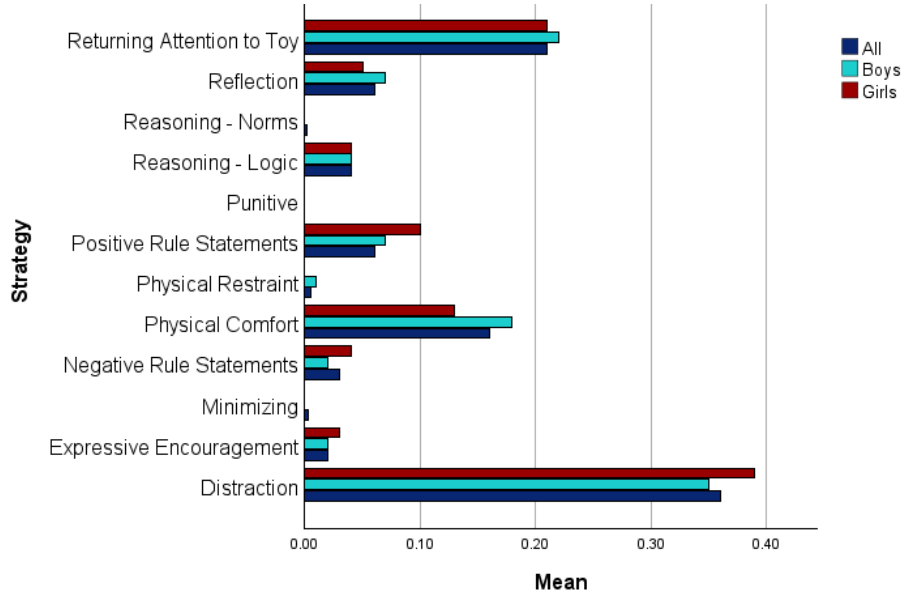
Fathers of boys followed a similar pattern of strategy use as observed across the entire sample of fathers. Distraction was again the most frequently used strategy, comprising 35% of coded responses ($SD = 0.11$), followed by Returning Attention to the Toy at 23% ($SD = 0.17$), and Physical Comfort at 18% ($SD = 0.18$). The same pattern is held for fathers of girls, with Distraction used in 39% of responses ($SD = 0.19$), Returning Attention to the Toy in 21% ($SD =$

0.16), and Physical Comfort in 13% (*SD* = 0.17). A Friedman test indicated no significant differences in the top three strategies used by fathers of boys versus fathers of girls.

When accounting for perceived gender, only minimal differences emerged in the proportion of strategies used. The overall rank order remained largely consistent, although fathers of girls used slightly more Positive Rule Statements (10%, *SD* = 0.13) compared to the overall sample (6%, *SD* = 0.10) and fathers of boys (6%, *SD* = 0.10). In contrast, Reflection was used slightly less by fathers of girls (5%, *SD* = 0.08) than in the overall sample (6%, *SD* = 0.10) or by fathers of boys (7%, *SD* = 0.11). See Figure 10.

Figure 10.

Mean Proportions of Fathers' Strategy Use by Child Sex



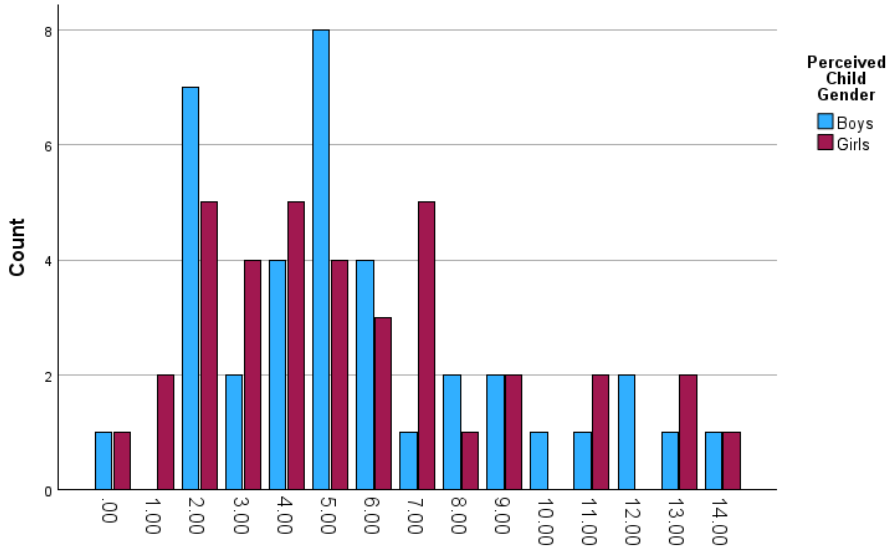
An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to examine group differences in the proportion of distraction use, physical comfort, and returning attention to the toy. Prior to analysis, tests of normality were conducted for each variable and indicated that assumptions of normality were met. There was no significant difference between groups in the use of distraction strategies, $t(70) = -0.97$, $p = .338$, with a small effect size, $d = 0.16$. Similarly, no significant difference was found in the use of physical comfort, $t(70) = 1.11$, $p = .269$, with a small effect size, $d = 0.18$. Finally, the groups did not differ significantly in the proportion of time spent returning attention to the toy, $t(70) = 0.35$, $p = .730$, and the effect size was again small, $d = 0.17$. Results suggest that the strategy use was comparable between fathers of boys and girls.

4b. Are there gender differences in the number of attempts fathers make to help their toddlers manage their emotions for the duration of the task?

Fathers of boys made 5.76 (*SD* = 3.50) regulatory attempts on average, while fathers of girls made 5.54 (*SD* = 3.57) regulatory attempts.

Figure 11.

Distribution of Total Attempts Made by Fathers by Child Sex



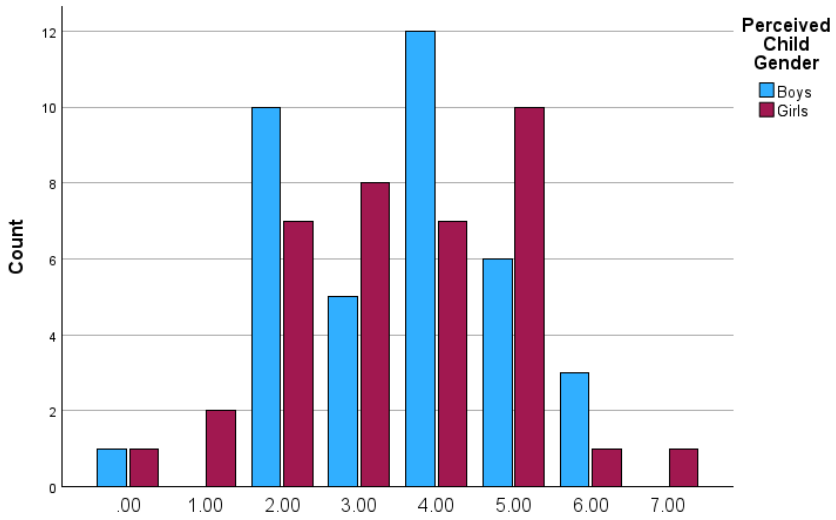
An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the number of total attempts between fathers of boys and fathers of girls. Levene's test for equality of variances was not significant, $F(1, 70) = 0.035$, $p = 0.852$, indicating that the assumption of equal variances was met. The t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the groups in total attempts made, $t(70) = 0.273$, $p = 0.393$, 95% CI [-1.399, 1.843]. There was a large effect size, Cohen's $d = 3.45$, 95% CI [-0.398, 0.526], although the result was not statistically significant.

4c. Are there gender differences in the number of unique strategies fathers use for the duration of the task?

Both fathers of boys (*SD* = 1.40) and fathers of girls (*SD* = 1.53) used 3.54 unique strategies on average (see Figure 12).

Figure 12.

Distribution of Unique Strategies Used by Fathers by Child Sex



An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the number of unique strategies used between fathers of boys and fathers of girls. Levene's test for equality of variances was not significant, $F(1, 72) = 0.376$, $p = 0.542$, indicating that the assumption of equal variances was met. The t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the groups in the number of unique strategies used, $t(72) = 0.000$, $p = 1.000$, 95% CI [-0.683, 0.683], Cohen's $d = 1.47$, with a 95% CI [-0.456 to 0.456].

Post-Hoc Correlations

1. Are there associations between other child, parent, or family characteristics and the types and frequency of strategies parents use?

Tables 2-5, and Appendix A & B present descriptive statistics for and Pearson correlations among the primary study variables. These correlations were examined to assess bivariate associations and inform subsequent regression analyses. No bivariate relationships were strong enough to suggest redundancy. While some associations emerged between familial characteristics and specific strategies, these were not the focus of the primary research questions and have been considered in exploratory analyses. Strategies that were not used were left out of the correlation analysis.

Given observed associations between the use of Expressive Encouragement (see Appendix A & B) and various familial characteristics, a binary logistic regression was conducted to examine the extent to which familial variables were associated with fathers' use of Expressive

Encouragement. Predictor variables included paternal depression (CES-D), the Emotionally Unsupportive and Supportive Response scales from the CTNES, and the Emotion Coaching scale from the ESQ. The model was significant, $\chi^2(5) = 25.46$, $p < .001$, indicating that the inclusion of these variables improved model fit relative to the intercept-only model. Higher paternal depression scores (CES-D) were associated with a greater likelihood of reporting frequent use of Expressive Encouragement ($B = 3.93$, $p < .001$). Emotionally Unsupportive Responses on the CTNES (e.g., punitive or minimizing reactions) were associated with lower likelihoods of Expressive Encouragement ($B = -0.94$, $p = .038$). The Emotion Coaching scale (ESQ) was also negatively related to Expressive Encouragement ($B = -1.51$, $p = .013$). Emotionally Supportive Responses from the CTNES and the Emotion Dismissing scale (ESQ) were not significantly associated with the outcome. The model's goodness of fit was acceptable, with a Pearson chi-square of 41.44 (df = 68, $p > .05$) and a deviance of 29.34 (df = 68).

Another binary logistic regression was run to examine predictors of mothers' use of Expressive Encouragement. The model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(20) = 54.15$, $p < .001$, and the overall association between child age and Expressive Encouragement was also significant, $\chi^2(1) = 36.34$, $p = .004$. Specifically, 18-month-olds were significantly more likely to receive Expressive Encouragement ($B = 2.59$, $p = .016$) than any other age. No significant associations were found for other ages. The goodness-of-fit statistics indicated an acceptable model fit, with a deviance of 54.82 and a Pearson chi-square of 46.40 ($p = .725$).

Table 2.

FACES Descriptives

Variables	*n*	M	SD
Child Sex	81	—	—
Child Age	82	30.06	11.30
Total Attempts	74	5.72	3.42
Unique Strategies	76	3.51	1.50
Child Neg. Affect	83	2.85	0.70
Pos. Family Expressivity	83	7.18	1.20
Neg. Family Expressivity	83	3.05	1.18
Emo. "Supportive" Responses	83	5.71	0.67
Emo. "Unsupportive" Responses	83	3.23	0.80
Emotion Coaching	83	3.70	0.55
Emotion Dismissing	83	3.70	0.58
Depression Score	83	0.40	0.22
Distraction	74	0.37	0.16
Returning Attention to the Toy	74	0.21	0.17
Physical Comfort	74	0.16	0.20

Table 3.

T5 Descriptives

Variable	*n*	M	SD
1. Child Sex	108	—	—
2. Child Age	108	26.14	6.9
3. Total Attempts	87	5.54	4.01
4. Unique Strategies	88	3.53	1.92
5. Child Neg Affect	108	3.31	0.56
6. Emo "Supportive" Response	104	6.1	0.55
7. Emo "Unsupportive" Response	104	2.55	0.9
8. Emotion Coaching	102	4.31	0.45
9. Rejection of Neg Emo	102	2.39	0.47
10. Acceptance of Neg Emo	102	3.64	0.69
11. Depression Score	101	0.41	0.29
12. Distraction	85	0.38	0.28
13. Returning Attention to the Toy	85	0.13	0.15
14. Physical Comfort	85	0.19	0.20

Table 4.

FACES Correlation Matrix – Child and Family Characteristics with Most Used Strategies

Variable	*n*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Child Sex	81	—														
2. Child Age	82	0.05	—													
3. Total Attempts	74	-0.03	-0.01	—												
4. Unique Strategies	76	0.00	0.08	0.82**	—											
5. Child Neg. Affect	83	0.10	-0.02	0.04	-0.01	—										
6. Pos. Family Expressivity	83	0.13	-0.12	0.15	0.11	0.1	—									
7. Neg Family Expressivity	83	-0.01	0.06	0.11	0.06	0.11	0.03	—								
8. Emo "Supportive" Response	83	-0.10	-0.25*	0.32**	0.27*	-0.13	0.21	-0.26*	—							
9. Emo "Unsupportive" Response	83	0.05	0.11	-0.18	-0.32**	0.16	-0.05	0.18	-0.29**	—						
10. Emotion Coaching	83	-0.03	0.02	0.02	-0.05	-0.01	0.21	0.03	0.13	0.30**	—					
11. Emotion Dismissing	83	-0.02	0.15	-0.18	-0.15	0.25*	0.14	0.02	-0.28*	0.46**	0.29**	—				
12. Depression Score	83	-0.12	-0.03	-0.04	-0.06	-0.03	-0.26*	0.29**	0.1	0.03	0.03	-0.07	—			
13. Distraction	74	0.12	-0.08	-0.51**	-0.63**	0.07	0.06	0.04	-0.31**	0.12	-0.17	0.06	0.11	—		
14. Returning Attention	74	-0.04	0.04	0.13	0.14	-0.07	0.02	0.29*	0.00	0.12	0.03	-0.03	-0.14	-0.25*	—	
15. Physical Comfort	74	-0.13	0.10	-0.41**	-0.36**	-0.1	-0.30**	-0.17	-0.09	-0.00	-0.13	0.09	0.18	-0.09	-0.42**	—

Table 5.

T5 Correlation Matrix – Child and Family Characteristics with Most Used Strategies

Variable	*n*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Child Sex	108	—													
2. Child Age	108	0.02	—												
3. Total Attempts	87	-0.09	-0.14	—											
4. Unique Strategies	88	-0.02	-0.19	0.88**	—										
5. Child Neg. Affect	108	0.07	0.25**	-0.05	-0.05	—									
6. Emo "Supportive" Response	104	-0.23*	-0.05	0.19	0.16	-0.040	—								
7. Emo "Unsupportive" Response	104	0.00	0.25**	0.04	0.02	0.27**	-0.25*	—							
8. Emotion Coaching	102	-0.05	-0.01	-0.14	-0.12	0.030	0.39**	-0.22*	—						
9. Rejection of Neg Emo	102	0.14	0.01	0.19	0.15	0.160	-0.45**	0.48**	-0.35**	—					
10. Acceptance of Neg Emo	102	-0.08	-0.02	0.01	0.05	-0.020	0.32**	-0.16	0.18	-0.23*	—				
11. Depression Score	101	0.07	0.08	0.03	0.03	0.31**	-0.190	0.20*	-0.12	0.31**	-0.05	—			
12. Distraction	85	0.00	0.15	-0.67**	-0.69**	0.020	-0.150	0.06	0.09	-0.10	-0.01	-0.03	—		
13. Returning Attention to the Toy	85	0.17	-0.11	0.34**	0.30**	0.040	0.050	0.13	-0.01	0.15	0.11	-0.01	-0.44**	—	
14. Physical Comfort	85	-0.08	0.02	-0.14	-0.12	-0.040	0.030	-0.14	-0.03	0.01	-0.20	-0.04	-0.34**	-0.13	—

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine potential relationships between child characteristics, such as perceived gender, and parents' attempts to help their toddlers manage their emotions. This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on emotion socialization by refining the current understanding of parental strategies for helping children regulate their emotions, primarily frustration, an emotion central to many developmental challenges. By providing descriptive information on how parents respond to their children's emotional states, this research can provide deeper insight into the strategies parents choose to use with their children, the things that influence their choices, and whether and when perceived child gender plays a role in their decision-making.

Considering that problems of emotional dysregulation often underpin future mental health and behavioral challenges, achieving a more complete view of the manner and variety of parental approaches to managing frustration could enrich the field's understanding of parent-child interactions and models of emotional regulation, particularly in early childhood. This research can help identify where support is most needed for young boys and how it can be effectively targeted.

The study asked whether perceived child gender in toddlerhood was at all associated with (1) the number of regulatory attempts parents made, (2) the diversity of strategies parents used, and (3) the proportion of strategy types. The results suggest that none of these aspects of parental strategy use varied significantly by perceived child gender.

While null results can be difficult to interpret, they are nonetheless valuable because, in this case, they challenge assumptions about gender-differentiated parenting in early emotion socialization. Multiple factors may account for the lack of observed associations. One possible contributing factor may be the educational background of the participating parents. In both samples, parents were highly educated: 76% of FACES fathers and 76.2% of T5 mothers held a bachelor's degree or higher. Similarly, both samples were comprised primarily of higher-income households, with 24.1% of FACES fathers and 32% of T5 mothers reporting annual household incomes exceeding $95,000. Both higher levels of education and greater household income – through higher education – are associated with more progressive beliefs, including greater gender egalitarianism and reduced reliance on traditional gender norms (Leaper & Valin, 1996; Leaper, 2002; Cunningham et al., 2005; Garaigordobil & Aliri, 2012; Du et al., 2020; Filler &

Jennings, 2015). A quasi-experimental study across 14 European countries found a direct, causal relationship between years of schooling and endorsement of traditional gender-role attitudes, particularly among individuals from less-educated families (Rivera-Garrido, 2022). These associations may stem from greater access to diverse social networks, more exposure to egalitarian ideologies, and increased economic security.

Additionally, it has been observed that mothers and fathers rarely differ in their explicit gender socialization practices. Indeed, research shows that most parents use similar broad parenting practices—like warmth, responsiveness, and control—toward sons and daughters, particularly in early childhood (Mesman & Groeneveld, 2017), and that differentiation is often implicit (i.e., indirect gendered messages, such as evaluating others' behavior in gendered terms or modeling gender roles in the child's presence) (2017). This may be because the skills associated with parental warmth and sensitivity are seen as essential developmental goals for all children, regardless of gender. It is also possible that frustration, as a developmentally normative and highly visible emotion in toddlerhood, evokes similar parental responses. Unlike sadness or fear, which have shown stronger gendered patterns in past research (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013), frustration may prompt parents to prioritize behavioral management or soothing regardless of perceived child gender. Others have argued that overt gendered socialization, particularly the socialization of masculine traits, may emerge only once children (boys, specifically) demonstrate increased physical strength and independence, at which point parents may begin to reinforce masculine traits more directly (Zosuls et al., 2009).

Similarly, it may be premature to expect parents to diverge in their treatment of children based on gender at this early age. Part of the aim of this study was to consider whether differences in parental strategy use might be observable as early as toddlerhood. Although children can recognize gender distinctions by age 2 and develop a gender identity by age 3 (Leaper & Friedman, 2007) and even display gendered patterns in emotional expression during toddlerhood (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013), parents may not begin actively enforcing emotion-based gender norms until later in development. While, indeed, parents begin engaging in gender socialization from birth (Leaper & Friedman, 2007), enforcement of emotional display rules may not become prominent until children are more socially active, such as when they begin school, where peer interactions heighten gender salience (Zosuls et al., 2009) and children's emotional understanding, self-regulation, and awareness of social norms become more advanced (Eisenberg

et al., 2010). For example, Chaplin (2005) found that fathers were more responsive to gender "appropriate" emotional expressions, but the children in that study were preschool and school-aged. The current study found that mothers' use of Expressive Encouragement was significantly associated with child age, with 18-month-olds being significantly more likely to receive Expressive Encouragement compared to both younger and older children. However, it's important to note that the sample included only 13 children younger than 18 months, compared to 93 children older than 18 months (n = 112). These results align with previous research suggesting that in toddlerhood, children become more communicative and emotionally expressive, which may prompt parents to engage more frequently in emotion socialization practices like expressive encouragement (Fields-Olivieri et al., 2020). As children develop further, however, the frequency of this behavior may change, especially as gendered expectations become more salient. Parents have previously been found to become more discouraging and punitive of emotional expression as children get older, regardless of child gender (Klimes-Dougan et al., 2007; O'Neal & Magai, 2005).

It is also worth considering the possibility that the roots of boys' emotional dysregulation may not be a consequence of early parental emotion socialization but rather the broader cultural messages children encounter as they grow, especially through media, the internet, and peers (Giaccardi et al., 2016; Scharrer & Warren, 2021; Amin et al., 2018; Koester & Marcus, 2024; Fox et al., 2015). The absence of significant gender-based differences in parental strategy use suggests that parents, at least in early childhood, may not be the primary source of gendered emotional norms. In some ways, this can be encouraging; it could indicate a shift in parenting practices that reflects greater gender egalitarianism. However, these findings illustrate the need for a wider lens. The roles of culture, media, peer relationships, and institutional messaging, all of which may exert a stronger influence on boys' emotional development than parental behavior alone, must be addressed. If parenting were the primary driver of boys' persistent challenges of emotional dysregulation, aggression, and violence against women, targeted interventions and educational efforts could offer a relatively direct path to change. However, when such patterns are embedded within broader societal structures, the issue becomes much more elusive, as micro-level solutions are ineffective.

Lastly, the results of the binary logistic regression model suggest that fathers' use of Expressive Encouragement is significantly associated with parental depression and beliefs about

emotions. This finding aligns with the Tripartite Model of Familial Influence (Morris et al., 2007), which suggests parental beliefs about emotions and characteristics of the family shape emotion socialization practices and outcomes. This finding aligns with the Tripartite Model of Familial Influence (Morris et al., 2007), which suggests parental beliefs about emotions and characteristics of the family shape emotion socialization practices and outcomes. Specifically, higher depression scores were associated with more frequent use of Expressive Encouragement. This is intriguing, but consistent with previous research. Mothers with greater overall psychopathology symptoms have been found to have more unsupportive responses to their children, but the same was not true for fathers (Breaux et al., 2015). Though this difference may be due to spillover effects being more pronounced for mothers, who often serve as the primary caregivers (McDonnell et al., 2019; Nelson-Coffey et al., 2019). Interestingly, parts of this model could be attributed to social desirability bias. Expressive Encouragement and the Emotion Coaching Scale were negatively correlated, even though expressive encouragement is very similar in form to emotion coaching, suggesting that fathers reported specific, socially desirable beliefs about how to respond to their children, but did not necessarily demonstrate those beliefs through their behavior.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the study relied on pre-existing data, which constrained the ability to explore variables in greater depth. For example, limited information regarding the level of children's distress may have resulted in conflating parents' number of attempts with children's actual distress. Furthermore, results could be context-specific, as parents were primarily white, Midwestern, and highly educated. Notably, children's emotion-skill-related outcomes were not measured, so this study could not assess the effectiveness or relevance of parental strategy use or flexibility. Parental responses were not recorded in relation to toddlers' specific behaviors, so there may have been bidirectional relationships that are unaccounted for. On a similar note, this study could have benefited from within-family analysis to observe how the same parent behaved with children of a different perceived gender. It could also be possible that parents who volunteer for this kind of study may be more attuned to their children's emotional responses and matters of emotional socialization. Finally, the sample size of 83 families may be considered small in the context of parenting research.

Future Directions

Despite the growing acceptance of gender equality, as has been potentially demonstrated in the results of this study, there has been a resurgence of traditional, often rigid notions of masculinity that are amplified by online spaces and influential figures who promote ideals centered on dominance, emotional stoicism, and economic provision (Farrell et al., 2019, Riberio et al., 2021; Roberts et al., 2025). The rise of the "manosphere" and figures like Andrew Tate reflect the belief that emotional vulnerability is incompatible with masculinity, and particularly with male social dominance, and that men who express emotions risk being perceived as weak or unsupported, primarily by women (Farrell et al., 2019, Riberio et al., 2021; Roberts et al., 2025). These narratives not only contribute to boys' emotional suppression and dysregulation in and of themselves (Wilson et al., 2024) but also erode cultural momentum towards healthier emotional expression. This is further complicated by the fact that many boys engage with such content privately, limiting opportunities for adults to recognize or address its influence.

For future research, developmentalists should consider replicating studies such as this with older children, like preschoolers. If gender differences in parental strategy use are not observable in toddlerhood, they may begin to emerge when children enter school. This would facilitate a more complete understanding of the parental role in the current emotional difficulties boys and men are facing. Given that adolescence is another crucial period for emotion regulation development (Silvers, 2021; Heller & Casey, 2015) and that adolescents are particularly sensitive to peer norms (Pinho et al., 2021), especially norms that emphasize masculine ideals (McCoy et al., 2017), it may also be valuable to examine how parents support their sons with frustration at this stage of development. In doing so, researchers can begin to trace how, when, and why parental strategies evolve across development and how they interact with the other powerful socializing forces mentioned here. Future research may benefit from incorporating these broader socializing forces into study designs, alongside measures of boys' demonstrated regulation skills, to better understand how these influences interact.

In discussing the role of parents, it is important to emphasize that even if parents are not directly socializing gendered emotional norms through explicit messaging as early as toddlerhood, implicit messaging is still a relevant concern. One important form of implicit socialization lies in the parents' emotional skills. For instance, fathers' emotional dysregulation has been shown to predict children's emotional expressions, including sadness and anxiety

(Bowie et al., 2013; Chaplin et al., 2005). Given that fathers are subject to the same masculine norms as their sons, there must be efforts to address how masculine norms prevent fathers from improving their own emotional regulation skills (Cherry & Gerstein, 2021), as fathers' emotional dysregulation is in itself an implicit, gendered message. Fathers are important socializing agents, but are often overlooked by parenting research and intervention. Positive paternal behavior, such as emotion coaching, warmth, and expressiveness, has been associated with better regulation skills, greater social competence, and more positive emotion expression in children (Islamiah et al., 2023). In one study, paternal emotion coaching predicted children's increased positive expression a year later, to a greater extent than maternal emotion coaching did (Gerhardt et al., 2020).

Future research should also explore why paternal psychopathology does not appear to be negatively associated with parenting behaviors, particularly in comparison to mothers, to further understand the unique roles of mothers and fathers in emotion socialization. It is clear that fathers uniquely contribute to the emotional socialization of their children, and therefore, fathers must be similarly supported in defying masculine norms, improving emotional skills, and parenting practices (Cherry & Gerstein, 2021). Fathers report perceiving parenting interventions to be geared towards mothers, as well as barriers to access through gender roles or aversion to help-seeking (Cherry & Gerstein, 2021; Sicouri et al., 2018). Parenting interventions, then, especially those rooted in socioemotional content, should be designed for fathers, or at the least, with fathers in mind, to increase father recruitment and retention (Cherry & Gerstein, 2021). With this, fathers may not only improve their explicit emotional responses and behaviors, but also the implicit messaging modeled to their sons through their own emotional skills.

Another area of future work addresses the role of media in boys' emotional socialization. Parents may make efforts to monitor online activity and have frequent discussions with their sons about what they may be consuming. Social media algorithms target young men with controversial content (Wilson et al., 2024) that creates echo chambers of "radicalization, extremism, and polarization" (Shaw, 2023). In a sample of 307 13–18-year-olds, more frequent users of YouTube, television, and video games scored higher on endorsement of traditional masculine norms. In particular, young men who spent more time watching YouTube more highly endorsed emotional detachment and social dominance (Scharrer & Warren, 2021). Nevertheless, most parents do not report discussing extremist values or ideals with their children (Sikkens et

al., 2018) and disengage when their child begins to radicalize (Kerr et al., 2009), likely as a result of feeling powerless and unsure of how to respond (Sikkens et al., 2018). As the problem of radicalization increases, especially due to algorithmic content, it might be necessary to tailor parenting interventions for information on signs of radicalization, as well as tools to cope with radicalization. Research indicates that parents should have access to professional support for discussing and dissuading extremist ideas within their children (Gielen, 2015; Sikkens et al., 2018).

Conclusion

This study explored whether perceived child gender was associated with the regulation strategies parents used in response to their toddlers' frustration. Contrary to some gender emotion socialization literature, no significant associations were found between perceived child gender and parents' strategy use. Parents did not differ in how frequently they attempted regulation, the types of strategies they employed, or the diversity of their approaches based on perceived child gender. These findings suggest that, at least within this sample of highly educated and predominantly white, higher-income parents, regulatory strategies are not explicitly gendered in early childhood.

While this may reflect genuine egalitarian parenting practices, it may also be influenced by context, such as parents' educational backgrounds (Leaper & Valin, 1996; Leaper, 2002; Cunningham et al., 2005; Garaigordobil & Aliri, 2012; Du et al., 2020; Filler & Jennings, 2015) or the age of the children in the sample. It may be that toddlerhood is too early to detect gendered patterns in parental emotion socialization, as parents may begin enforcing emotional norms more actively during later developmental stages, particularly when children begin to engage in gender-salient peer environments like school (Zosuls et al., 2009; Klimes-Dougan et al., 2007; O'Neal & Magai, 2005). Moreover, it could be that parents do not differ much by child gender in such explicit practices as responding to children's emotional states and that gender bias is much more implicit in parenting practices (Mesman & Groeneveld, 2017).

Importantly, this study emphasizes the need to move beyond parental influence alone when considering boys' later emotional dysregulation, aggression, and violence. It may be that wide-ranging cultural and societal forces like media, peer norms, and the proliferation of harmful masculine ideals online (Farrell et al., 2019, Riberio et al., 2021; Roberts et al., 2025) exert a stronger influence than early parental behaviors. This illustrates the need to further shift the

conversation around boys' emotional challenges from individual family practices to systemic and cultural drivers.

Still, parents remain a relevant component of the emotional development of young children, especially through their implicit messaging. Fathers, in particular, represent a unique but often underutilized tool in shaping emotional competencies and regulation skills (Gerhardt et al., 2020). Supporting fathers through accessible, inclusive, and gender-informed interventions can enhance not only their parenting behaviors but also the emotional skills and behaviors they model for young boys (Cherry & Gerstein, 2021).

Ultimately, addressing the crisis of boys' emotional suppression and dysregulation will require coordinated efforts at multiple levels. While this study did not find evidence that parents are actively reinforcing gendered emotional norms in toddlerhood, it invites future work to analyze when and how those norms emerge in managing children's difficult emotions like frustration. Only by broadening the lens of inquiry can the relationship between parenting, culture, and gendered emotional development begin to be addressed.

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APPENDIX A: FACES REMAINING STRATEGIES

Table A1.

FACES Descriptives – Remaining Strategies

Variables	*n*	M	SD
Child Sex	81	—	—
Child Age	82	30.06	11.30
Total Attempts	74	5.72	3.42
Unique Strategies	76	3.51	1.50
Child Neg. Affect	83	2.85	0.70
Pos. Family Expressivity	83	7.18	1.20
Neg. Family Expressivity	83	3.05	1.18
Emo. "Supportive" Responses	83	5.71	0.67
Emo. "Unsupportive" Responses	83	3.23	0.80
Emotion Coaching	83	3.70	0.55
Emotion Dismissing	83	3.70	0.58
Depression Score	83	0.40	0.22
Expressive Encouragement	74	0.02	0.06
Reflection	74	0.06	0.10
Positive Rule Statements	74	0.06	0.10
Negative Rule Statements	74	0.03	0.09
Reasoning - Norms	74	0.00	0.02
Reasoning - Logic	74	0.04	0.09
Minimizing	74	0.00	0.02
Physical Restraint	75	0.01	0.04

Table A2.

FACES Correlation Table – Remaining Strategies

Variable	*n*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1. Child Sex	81	—																			
2. Child Age	82	0.05	—																		
3. Total Attempts	74	-0.03	-0.01	—																	
4. Unique Strategies	76	0	0.08	0.82**	—																
5. Child Neg. Affect	83	0.1	-0.02	0.04	-0.01	—															
6. Pos. Family Expressivity	83	0.13	-0.12	0.15	0.11	0.1	—														
7. Neg Family Expressivity	83	-0.01	0.06	0.11	0.06	0.11	0.03	—													
8. Emo "Supportive" Response	83	-0.1	-0.25*	0.32**	0.27*	-0.13	0.21	-0.26*	—												
9. Emo "Unsupportive" Response	83	0.05	0.11	-0.18	-0.32**	0.16	-0.05	0.18	-0.29**	—											
10. Emotion Coaching	83	-0.03	0.02	0.02	-0.05	-0.01	0.21	0.03	0.13	0.30**	—										
11. Emotion Dismissing	83	-0.02	0.15	-0.18	-0.15	0.25*	0.14	0.02	-0.28*	0.46**	0.29**	—									
12. Depression Score	83	-0.12	-0.03	-0.04	-0.06	-0.03	-0.26*	0.29**	0.1	0.03	0.03	-0.07	—								
13. Expressive Encouragement	74	0.04	-0.05	0.37**	0.38**	0.11	0.09	0.08	0.27*	-0.26*	-0.18	0.28*	-0.27*	—							
14. Reflection	74	-0.11	-0.13	0.13	0.25*	-0.10	0.19	-0.17	0.12	-0.09	0.21	-0.22	-0.14	-0.1	—						
15. Positive Rule Statements	74	-0.11	-0.13	0.13	0.25*	-0.10	0.19	-0.17	0.12	-0.09	0.21	-0.22	-0.14	-0.1	1.00**	—					
16.Negative Rule Statements	74	0.10	0.12	0.00	0.01	0.25*	0.12	0.08	-0.06	0.02	0.18	-0.06	0.07	-0.13	-0.08	-0.08	—				
17. Reasoning - Norms	74	-0.05	0.01	0.34**	0.32**	-0.00	0.05	0.02	-0.02	0.01	0.10	-0.03	0.16	0.13	-0.1	-0.1	-0.06	—			
18. Reasoning - Logic	74	0.02	-0.08	0.31**	0.36**	0.01	0.17	-0.16	0.15	0.01	0.04	-0.21	-0.01	-0.11	0.19	0.19	-0.01	-0.03	—		
19. Minimizing	74	-0.12	0.01	0.25*	0.21	0.01	0.03	0.01	-0.04	0.01	0.13	-0.07	0.16	-0.04	-0.07	-0.07	-0.04	0.89**	-0.06	—	
20. Physical Restraint	74	-0.03	-0.04	-0.05	0.10	-0.04	0.05	0.09	-0.01	-0.07	0.10	0.10	0.19	-0.06	-0.1	-0.10	0.07	-0.03	-0.08	-0.02	—

Note: Child sex was coded as a binary variable where “0” = male and “1” = female.

APPENDIX B: T5 REMAINING STRATEGIES

Table B1.

T5 Descriptives – Remaining Strategies

Variable	*n*	M	SD
1. Child Sex	108	—	—
2. Child Age	108	26.14	6.9
3. Total Attempts	87	5.54	4.01
4. Unique Strategies	88	3.53	1.92
5. Child Neg Affect	108	3.31	0.56
6. Emo "Supportive" Response	104	6.1	0.55
7. Emo "Unsupportive" Response	104	2.55	0.9
8. Emotion Coaching	102	4.31	0.45
9. Rejection of Neg Emo	102	2.39	0.47
10. Acceptance of Neg Emo	102	3.64	0.69
11. Depression Score	101	0.41	0.29
12. Expressive Encouragement	85	0.10	0.16
13. Reflection	85	0.04	0.08
14. Positive Rule Statements	85	0.07	0.13
15. Negative Rule Statements	85	0.04	0.09
16. Reasoning – Logic	85	0.03	0.07
17. Minimizing	85	0.00	0.02
18. Physical Restraint	85	0.00	0.02

Table B2.

T5 Correlation Matrix – Child and Family Characteristics with Remaining Strategies

Variable	*n*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Child Sex	108	—																	
2. Child Age	108	0.02	—																
3. Total Attempts	87	-0.09	-0.14	—															
4. Unique Strategies	88	-0.02	-0.19	0.88**	—														
5. Child Neg. Affect	108	0.07	0.25**	-0.05	-0.05	—													
6. Emo "Supportive"							—												
Response	104	-0.23*	-0.05	0.19	0.16	-0.040													
7. Emo "Unsupportive"								—											
Response	104	0.00	0.25**	0.04	0.02	0.27**	-0.25*												
8. Emotion Coaching	102	-0.05	-0.01	-0.14	-0.12	0.030	0.39**	-0.22*	—										
9. Rejection of Neg Emo	102	0.14	0.01	0.19	0.15	0.160	-0.45**	0.48**	-0.35**	—									
10. Acceptance of Neg Emo	102	-0.08	-0.02	0.01	0.05	-0.020	0.32**	-0.16	0.18	-0.23*	—								
11. Depression Score	101	0.07	0.08	0.03	0.03	0.31**	-0.190	0.20*	-0.12	0.31**	-0.05	—							
12. Expressive																			
Encouragement	85	-0.08	-0.27*	0.28**	0.30**	-0.05	0.04	-0.08	-0.04	-0.07	0.01	-0.1	—						
13. Reflection	85	0.17	0.15	0.35**	0.25*	-0.06	-0.13	0.00	-0.16	0.06	-0.00	0.08	-.21	—					
14. Positive Rule Statements	85	0.01	-0.06	0.26*	0.30**	0.09	0.09	0.02	-0.01	0.04	0.02	0.15	-0.08	0.01	—				
15. Negative Rule Statements	85	-0.06	0.06	0.18	0.24*	-0.01	0.020	0.07	0.02	0.11	0.010	0.06	0.04	-0.09	0.11	—			
16. Reasoning - Logic	85	-0.01	0.04	0.40**	0.43**	-0.13	0.18	-0.07	-0.040	-0.15	0.24*	0.00	-0.12	0.28**	0.13	0.03	—		
17. Minimizing	85	-0.14	0.09	0.30**	0.28**	0.29**	0.15	0.16	-0.03	0.22*	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.12	0.01	0.03	-0.01	—	
18. Physical Restraint	85	-0.11	-0.14	0.30**	0.38**	-0.02	0.21	-0.07	0.10	0.01	0.14	0.12	0.090	-0.07	-0.07	0.15	0.25*	0.07	—

Note: Child sex was coded as a binary variable where “0” = male and “1” = female.