

Lina Gervinskaite-Paulaitiene*, Izabele Grausliene, Rasa Barkauskiene

Department of Clinical and Organizational Psychology, Vilnius University, Lithuania

*lina.gervinskaite@fsf.vu.lt

Background

Early attachment insecurity is found to be related to later behavior problems in preschool years (Fearon et al., 2010), middle childhood (O'Connor et al., 2014). Less is understood about the role of later attachment security in development and presentation of externalizing difficulties in middle childhood.

During middle childhood transformations in attachment system may take place (Dwyer, 2005), felt availability of the parent becomes increasingly important (Kerns & Brumariu, 2015). Moreover, internal working models become a structure for self-regulation within the person (Moss, Bureau, Béliveau, Zdebik, & Lépine, 2009) which can be very important for successful functioning in social contexts in middle childhood. Accordingly, insecure attachment might be related to conduct problems in same developmental period, but there is still few studies analyzing this link empirically.

Aim

The aim of this study is to examine externalizing problems in securely and insecurely to mother and father attached children over one-year time period in middle childhood.

Method

Participants

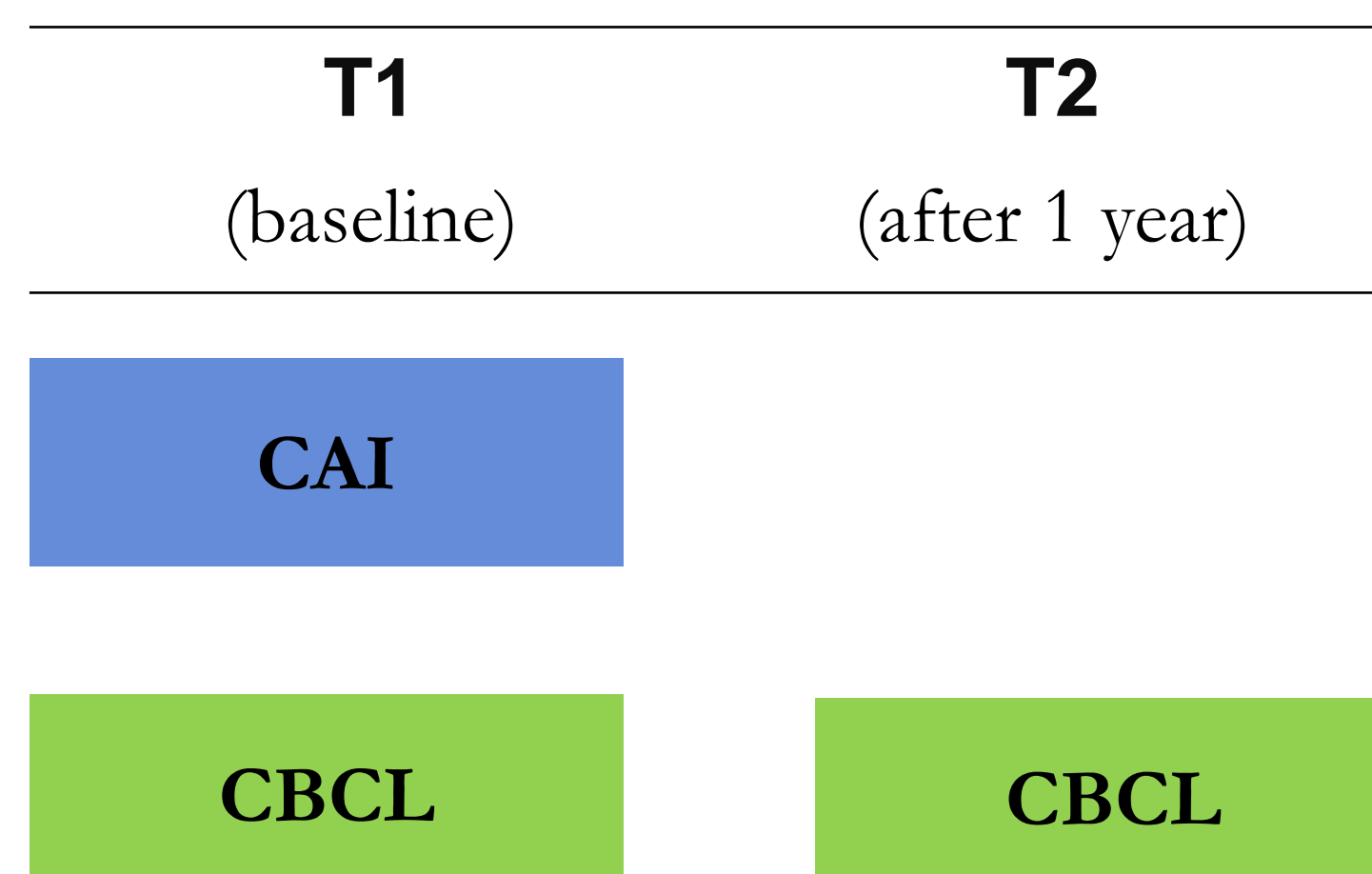
This community sample included 66 children (60,6% boys), aged 7-10 ($M = 8,53$, $SD = 0,980$) and their mothers ($N = 66$) in Lithuania.

Measures

Child Attachment Interview (CAI) (Shmueli-Goetz, Target, Fonagy, & Datta, 2008) is a semi-structured interview, in which children are invited to describe their relationships with their primary caregivers. It was used to code child attachment towards mother and father.

Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL 6/18), Achenbach and Rescorla, 2001) was used to measure externalizing problems in children. It was completed by mothers 2 times over one year period.

Procedure



Note. As data was not normally distributed, Nonparametrical statistics were used.

References

Dwyer, K. M. (2005). The meaning and measurement of attachment in middle and late childhood. *Human Development*, 48, 155-182.
 Fearon, R.P., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M.J., van Ijzendoorn, M.H., Lapsley, A., Roisman, G.I. (2010). The significance of insecure attachment and disorganization in the development of children's externalizing behavior: a meta-analytic study. *Child Development*, 81(2), 435-456.
 Kerns, K.A., & Brumariu, L.E. (2015). Attachment in middle childhood. In J. Cassidy & P. Shaver (Eds), *Handbook of Attachment* (3rd edition). N.Y.: Guilford.
 Moss, E., Bureau, J., Béliveau, M., Zdebik, M., & Lépine, S. (2009). Links between children's attachment behavior at early school-age, their attachment-related representations, and behavior problems in middle childhood. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 33(2), 155-166.
 O'Connor, E., Scott, M., McCormick, M., & Weinberg, S. (2014). Early mother-child attachment and behavior problems in middle childhood: The role of the subsequent caregiving environment. *Attachment & Human Development*, 16(6), 590-612.

Results

Distribution of attachment classifications

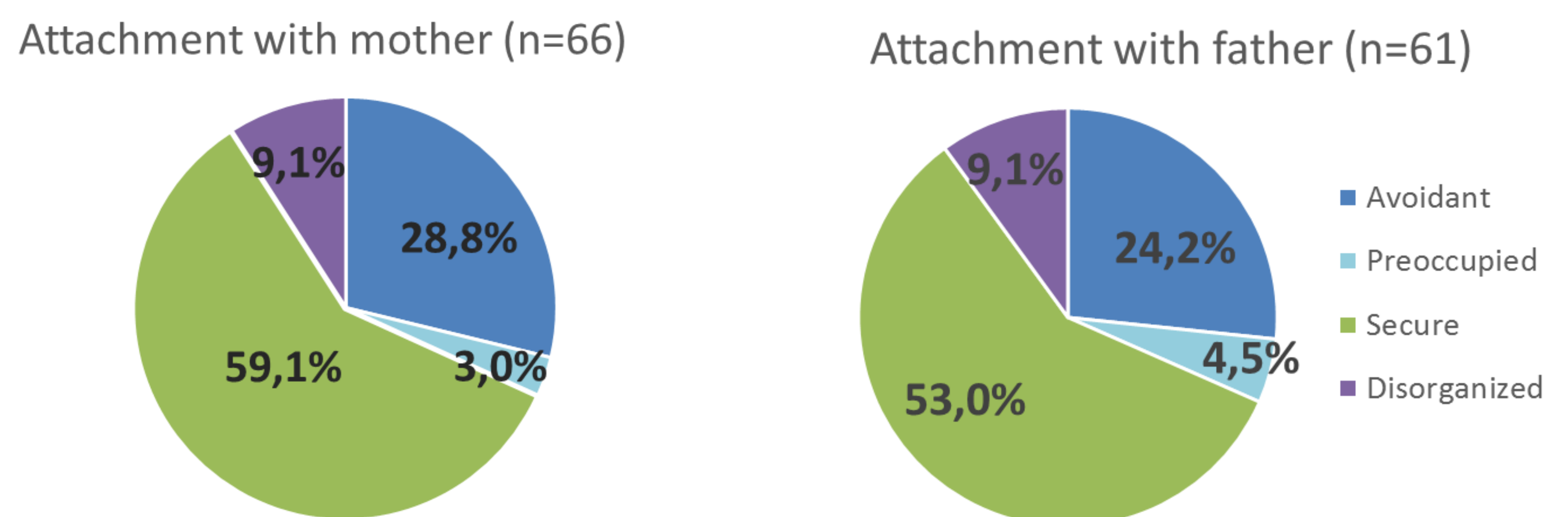


Fig. 1. Distribution of attachment classifications with both parents.

Relationships between externalizing problems and attachment security

Table 1. Externalizing problems in children with secure and insecure attachment to mother over 1 year

	Secure with mother (n=39)	Insecure with mother (n=27)	Mann-Whitney U	Effect size r
	Mean Rank	Mean Rank		
T1 Rule breaking behavior	28.85	40.22	345.0*	-0.30
T1 Aggressive behavior	29.03	39.96	352.0*	-0.28
T1 Externalizing problems	28.91	40.13	347.5*	-0.29
T2 Rule breaking behavior	28.63	40.54	336.5*	-0.31
T2 Aggressive behavior	30.24	38.20	399.5	-0.21
T2 Externalizing problems	29.65	39.06	376.5	-0.24

Note: * $p < .05$

Table 2. Externalizing problems in children with secure and insecure attachment to father over 1 year

	Secure with father (n=35)	Insecure with father (n=25)	Mann-Whitney U	Effect size r
	Mean Rank	Mean Rank		
T1 Rule breaking behavior	26.17	36.56	286.0*	-0.30
T1 Aggressive behavior	26.61	35.94	301.5*	-0.26
T1 Externalizing problems	26.46	36.16	296.0*	-0.28
T2 Rule breaking behavior	26.87	35.58	310.5	-0.25
T2 Aggressive behavior	28.34	33.52	362.0	-0.15
T2 Externalizing problems	27.86	34.20	345.0	-0.18

Note: * $p < .05$

At baseline 29.6% of children who were insecurely attached to mother and 28% of children insecurely attached to father had externalizing problems in borderline or clinical range compared to 10.3% of children with secure attachment to mother ($\chi^2(1, N = 66) = 4.025$, $p = .045$) and 8.6% to father ($\chi^2(1, N = 60) = 3.963$, $p = .046$). At 1-year follow up these differences were not significant.

Conclusions

- At baseline children with insecure attachment to mother and to father exhibited more rule breaking, aggressive behavior and overall externalizing problems than securely attached children.
- At 1 year follow-up children with insecure attachment to mother exhibited more rule breaking behavior compared to children with secure attachment.
- At baseline more children with insecure attachment to mother and to father had borderline or clinical range externalizing problems than children with secure attachment. At 1-year follow up these differences were not significant.

Acknowledgements:
 The study was funded by a grant (No. MIP-016/2012) from the Research Council of Lithuania.



24th Biennial Meeting of the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development
 July 10-14, 2016 | Vilnius, Lithuania

