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## 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

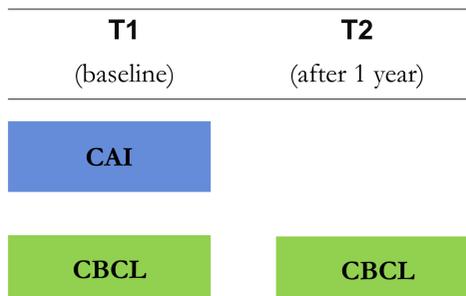
This community sample included 66 children (60,6% boys), aged 7-10 ( $M = 8,53$ ,  $SD = 0,980$ ) and their mothers ( $N = 66$ ) in Lithuania.

### 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.

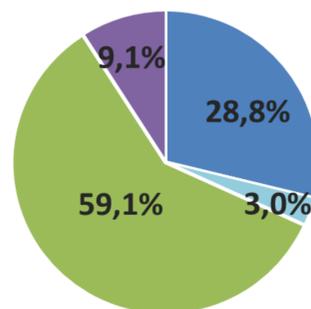
## References

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## Results

### Distribution of attachment classifications

Attachment with mother (n=66)



Attachment with father (n=61)

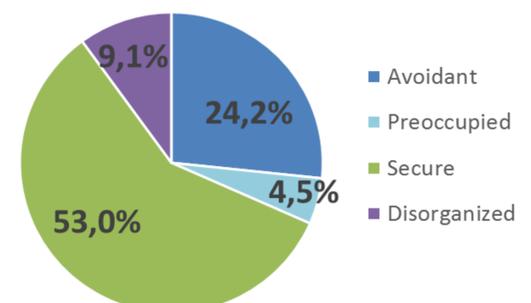


Fig. 1. Distribution of attachment classifications with both parents.

### 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.

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