

Abstract

In view of the lack of research examining children's subjective understanding of marital conflicts, the present study was designed to study children's causal and blame attribution of marital conflicts and the effects of such conflicts and attributions on their adjustment. Thirty mother-dyads were interviewed. They were asked to attribute the cause and blame for specific conflicts and administered a battery of standardized questionnaires. The results showed that children and mothers were more likely to attribute the cause and blame to fathers. Children's causal and blame attribution were related to content of the conflicts and their negative beliefs towards self and parents regarding conflicts. In addition, blame attribution was related to parent-child relationship. Children tended to report a lower level of marital conflicts than their mothers. Their subjective report of conflict frequency did not associate with levels of behavior problems. On the other hand, maternal adjustment consistently predict children's both externalizing and internalizing behavior. Fathers' verbal aggression towards mothers was associated with father-child relationship while the association with mother-child relationship was not significant. Based on the results, the implication in intervention for children exposed to marital conflicts was discussed.