

**How do parents believe that disruptive behavior must be treated in children?  
The effect of the parent's and the child's sex.**

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The purpose of the present study was twofold: first, to investigate parental perceptions about the way a child's disruptive behaviour must be treated and, second, to explore sex differences between the above perceptions of mothers and fathers regarding boys and girls. 317 mothers and 317 fathers of children aged 4-6 completed a modified version of "The Parental Account of the Causes of Childhood Problems Questionnaire" (PACCP; Sonuga-Barke & Balding, 1993), in order to explore parental perceptions about reactions to disruptive behavior, instead of causes. A between-subjects design was used, with two versions of the PACCP: one presenting a male and one presenting a female vignette. Four major parental reactions to disruptive behaviour were proposed: to approach the child, to change the child's environment, to be stricter towards the child and to be less strict towards the child. The change of the environment and the adoption of a stricter strategy towards the child were more often proposed for boys ( $t=2.86$ ,  $p<.01$ ;  $t=3.30$ ,  $p=.001$ , respectively). The choice to approach the child was more often made by mothers ( $t=-2.51$ ,  $p=.01$ ). Moreover, when asked whether professional advice is needed for the child's behavior, a positive answer was more often obtained by mothers than fathers ( $t=-2.34$ ,  $p=.01$ ), mainly regarding girls ( $t=-2.55$ ,  $p=.01$ ). The implications of the above parental perceptions in the outcome of disruptive behavior in boys and girls are discussed.