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Quality Child-Caregiver Relationships as an Agent of Change?

Longitudinal Findings on the Social Skills of Yi Children in Rural China

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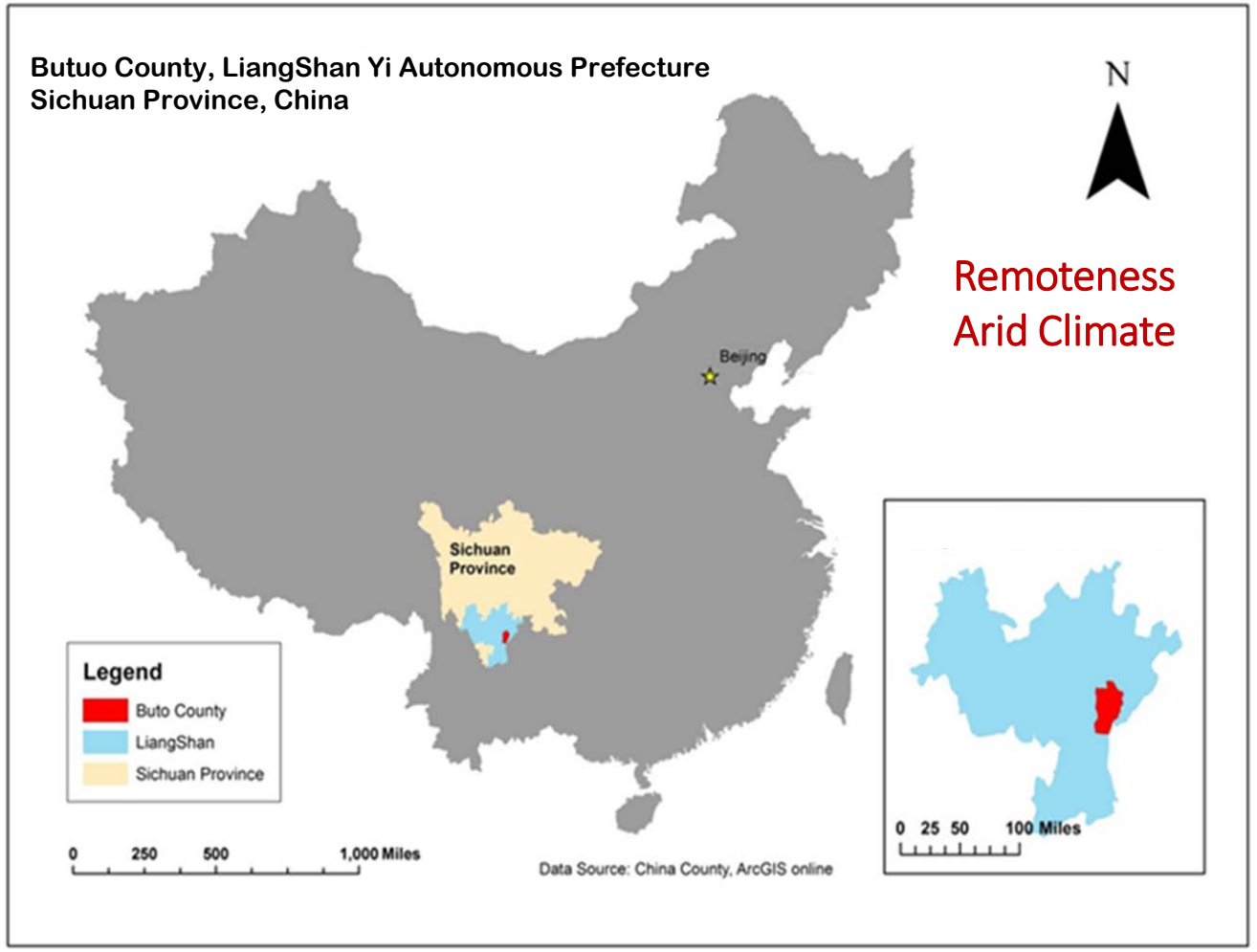
Background

Yi children are at-risk of negative development



Remoteness
Arid Climate

Extreme Poverty

- 100 USD per year
- 20% extreme poverty

Parental Loss

- 10% lost 1 parent; 43% lost both
- Adopted or stranded

(Jiao, 2007; Li et al., 1999; Yang et al., 2007)

Fu Hui Education Foundation
2006 - Present
1,300 Yi children

Current Research: 31 month study, Yi children (6-8) entered in 2009

Research Aims

Overall

To understand risk and promoting factors associated with the social skills development of Yi children

- ✓ Psychological, behavioral health & academic success in adulthood (Aviles et la., 2006; Lynch et al., 2010)
- ✓ High levels of productivity of the region (OECD, 2010; Xu et al., 2016)

Specific Aims

1. Negative effect of maladaptive behaviors on social skills
2. Promoting effect of children-caregivers relationships (child-adopter, child-father and child-mother) on social skills
3. Risk and Resilience: Social skills development of Yi children over time

Theories & Conceptual Framework

Child-caregivers relationships

Child-Adopter

Child-Father

Child-Mother

Hypothesis 2

+

Hypothesis 3

Buffer

+

Maladaptive behaviors

−

Hypothesis 1

Social Skills

Hypothesis 4

Attachment Theory

Developmental Psychopathology Approach

Risk and Resilience

Methods

Research Design

Longitudinal Quantitative Data (4 Waves; 31 months; 2009-2012)

All students (6-8 years old) entering program in year 09; n=328 participants

Multilevel Modeling (Slope varying model)

Main Effects

Level 1 (Social skills): *Social skillsij = β0j+β1j(time)+β2j(Maladaptive Behaviors)+ rij*

Level 2 (Individual):

β0j = γ00+γ01(child-mother)+ γ02(child-father)+γ03(child-adopter)+γ04(Gender)+γ04(Age)+ u0j

β1j = γ10

β2j = γ20

Interaction Term

(Child-caregiver relationships x maladaptive behaviors)

Level 1 (Social skills): *Social skillsij= β0j +β1j(time) +β2j(Maladaptive Behaviors)+ rij*

Level 2(Individual):

β0j = γ00+γ01(child-mother)+ γ02(child-father)+γ03(child-adopter)+γ04(Gender)+γ04(Age)+ u0j

β1j = γ10

β2j = γ20+γ21 (child-mother)+ γ22(child-father)+γ23(child-adopter) + u1j

Measurements

Time-varying outcome variable (Social Skills)

Self-designed teacher-reported social skills scale (5 items; CFI/TFI=0.98; α>.80); all 4 data waves

Time Index

Time-varying predictor (Maladaptive behaviors)

Self-designed teacher-reported maladaptive behaviors (5 items; CFI/TFI>0.98; α>.80);

3 categories (High; Medium; Low); all 4 data waves

Time-invariant predictors (Child-caregivers realtionships)

Child-adopter self-reported relationships (Single Item); baseline

Child-mother self-reported relationships (Single Item); baseline

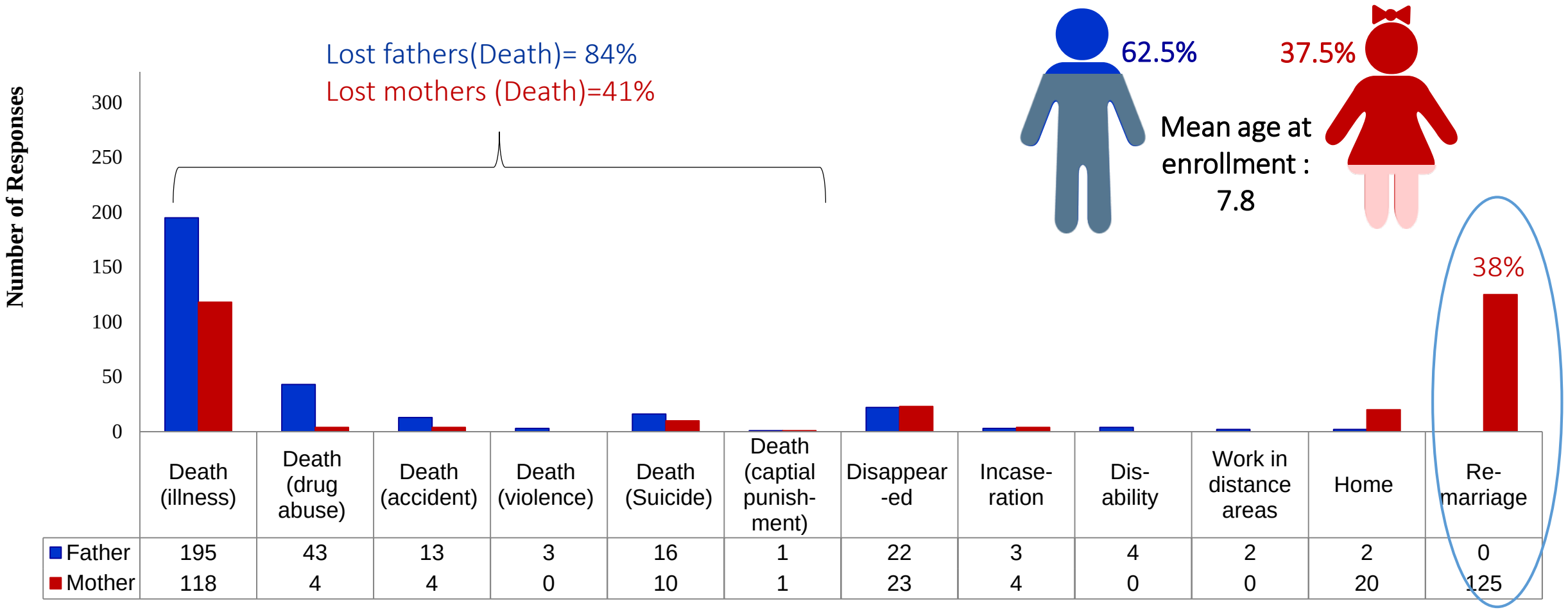
Child-father self-reported relationships (Single Item); baseline

Covariates

Gender & Age

Results

Descriptive



	Death (illness)	Death (drug abuse)	Death (accident)	Death (violence)	Death (Suicide)	Death (captial punish-ment)	Disappear-ed	Incase-ration	Dis-ability	Work in distance areas	Home	Re-marriage
Father	195	43	13	3	16	1	22	3	4	2	2	0
Mother	118	4	4	0	10	1	23	4	0	0	20	125

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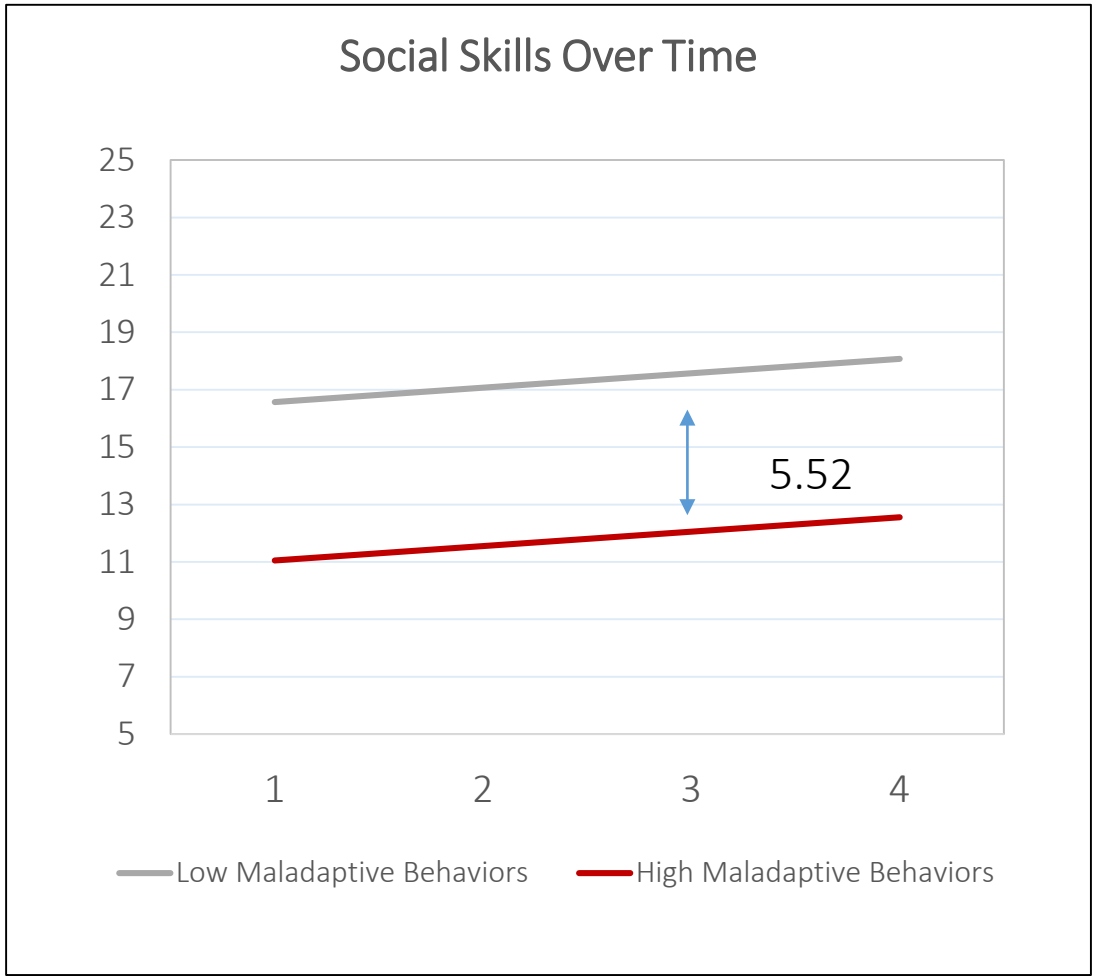
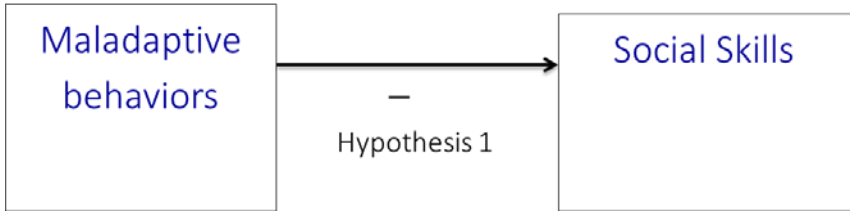
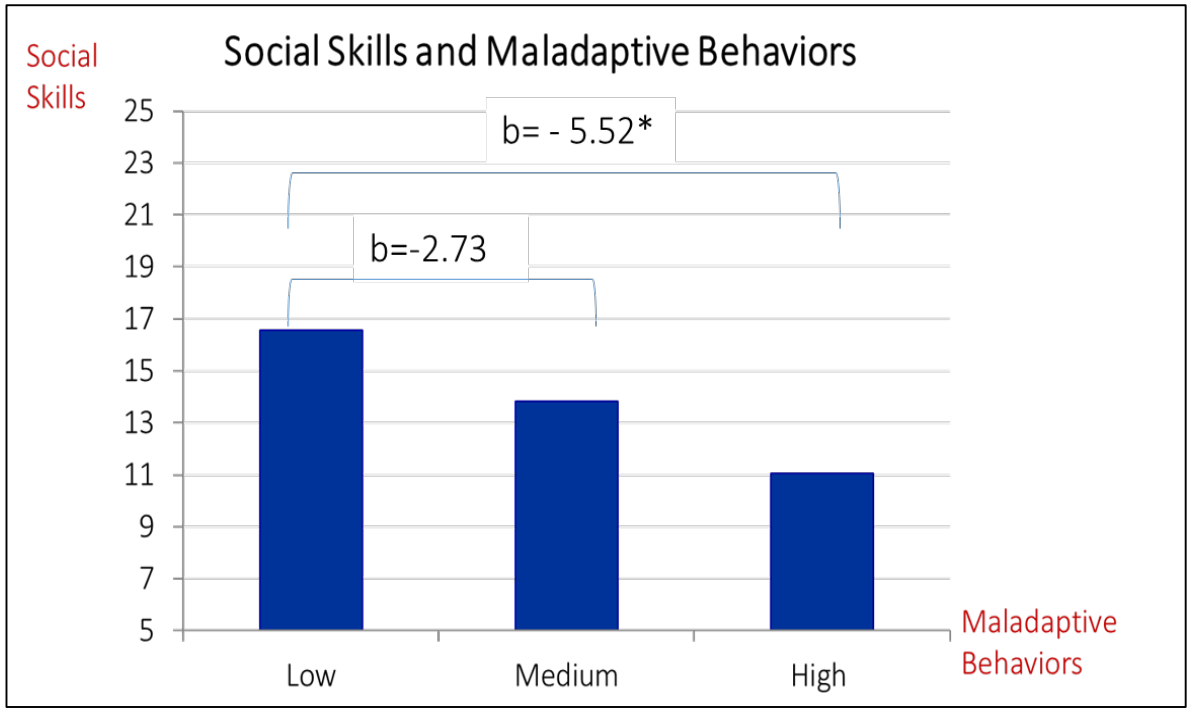
Multilevel Model:
Negative effect of maladaptive behaviors







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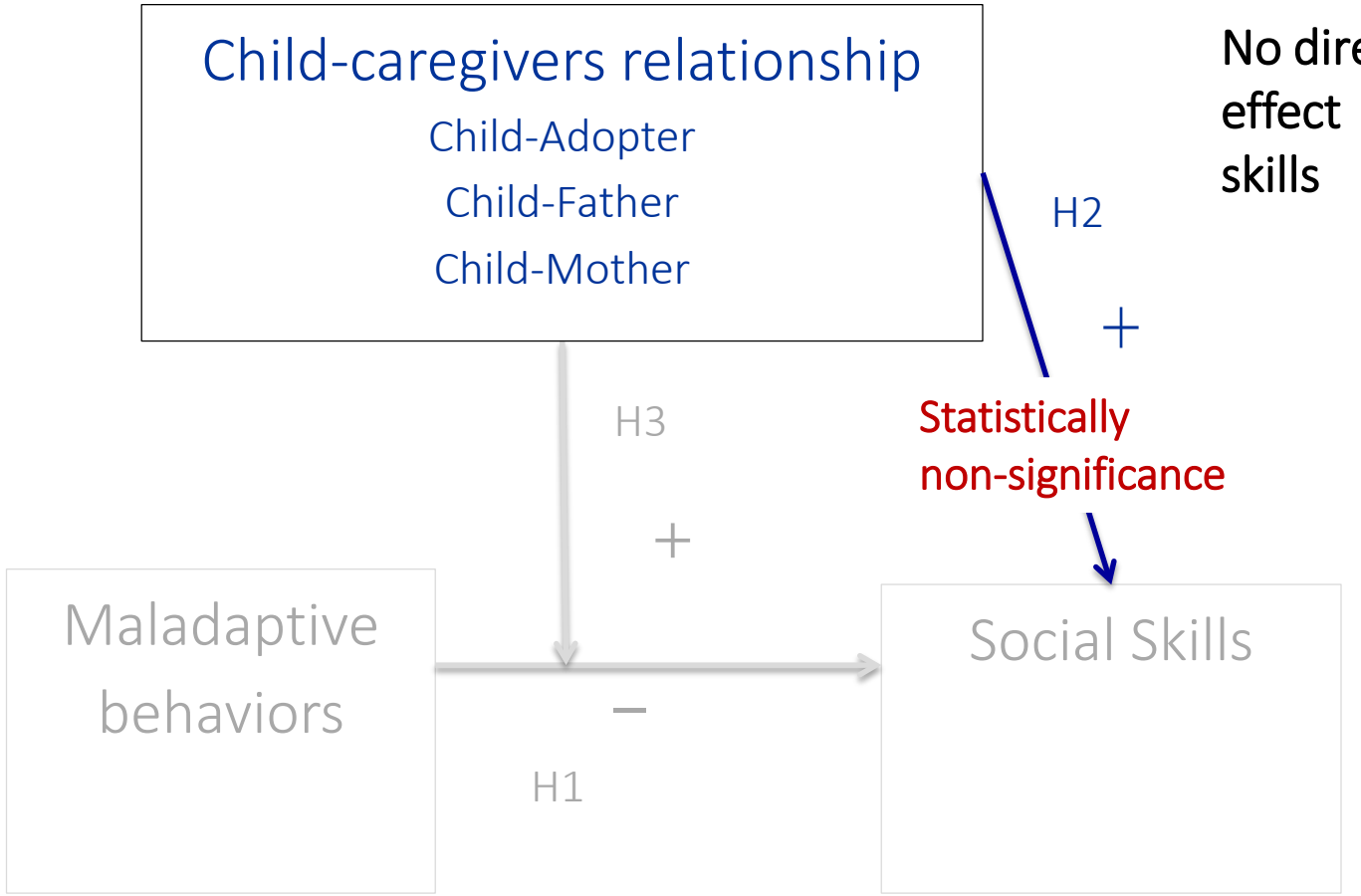
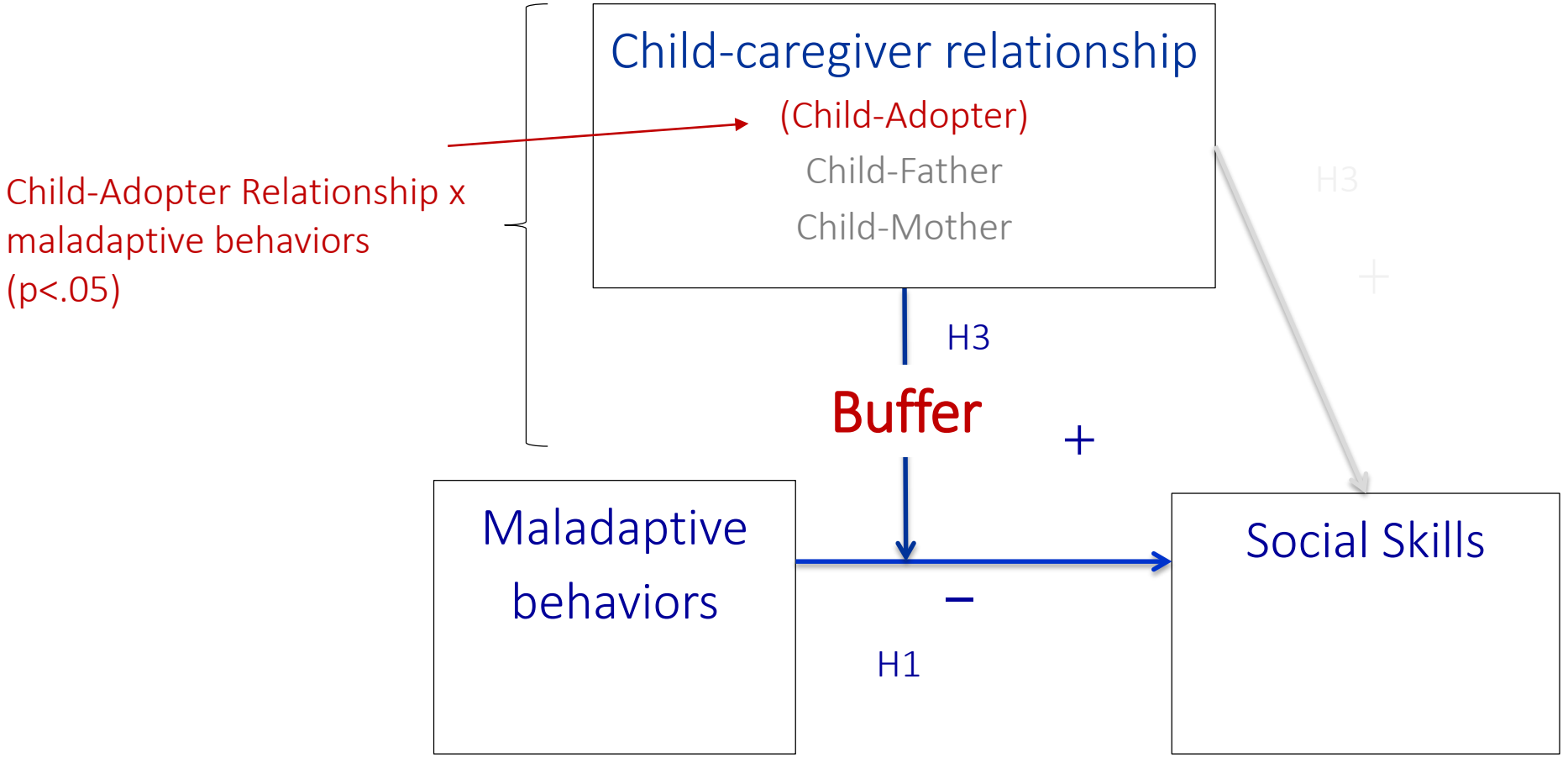
Multilevel Model:
Effect of Child-Caregivers Relationship

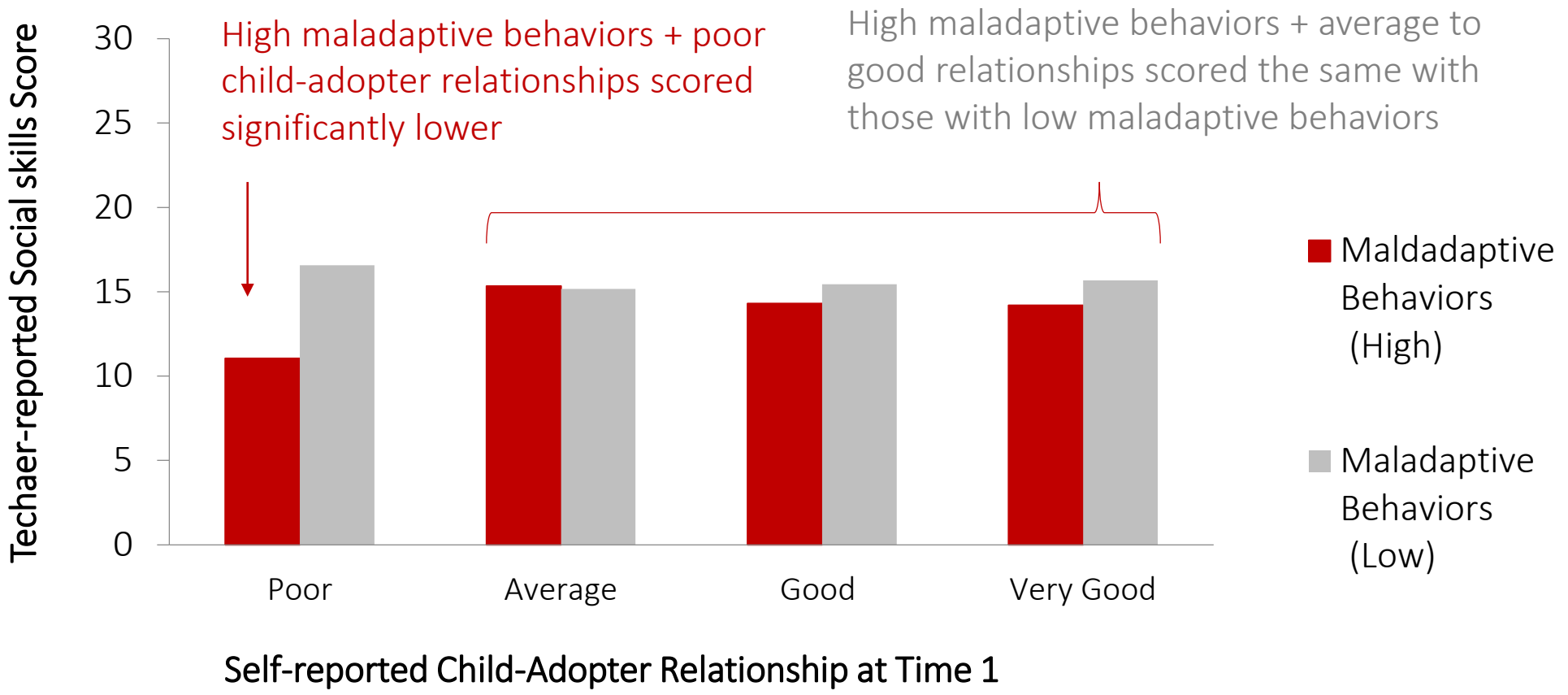


No direct positive effect on social skills

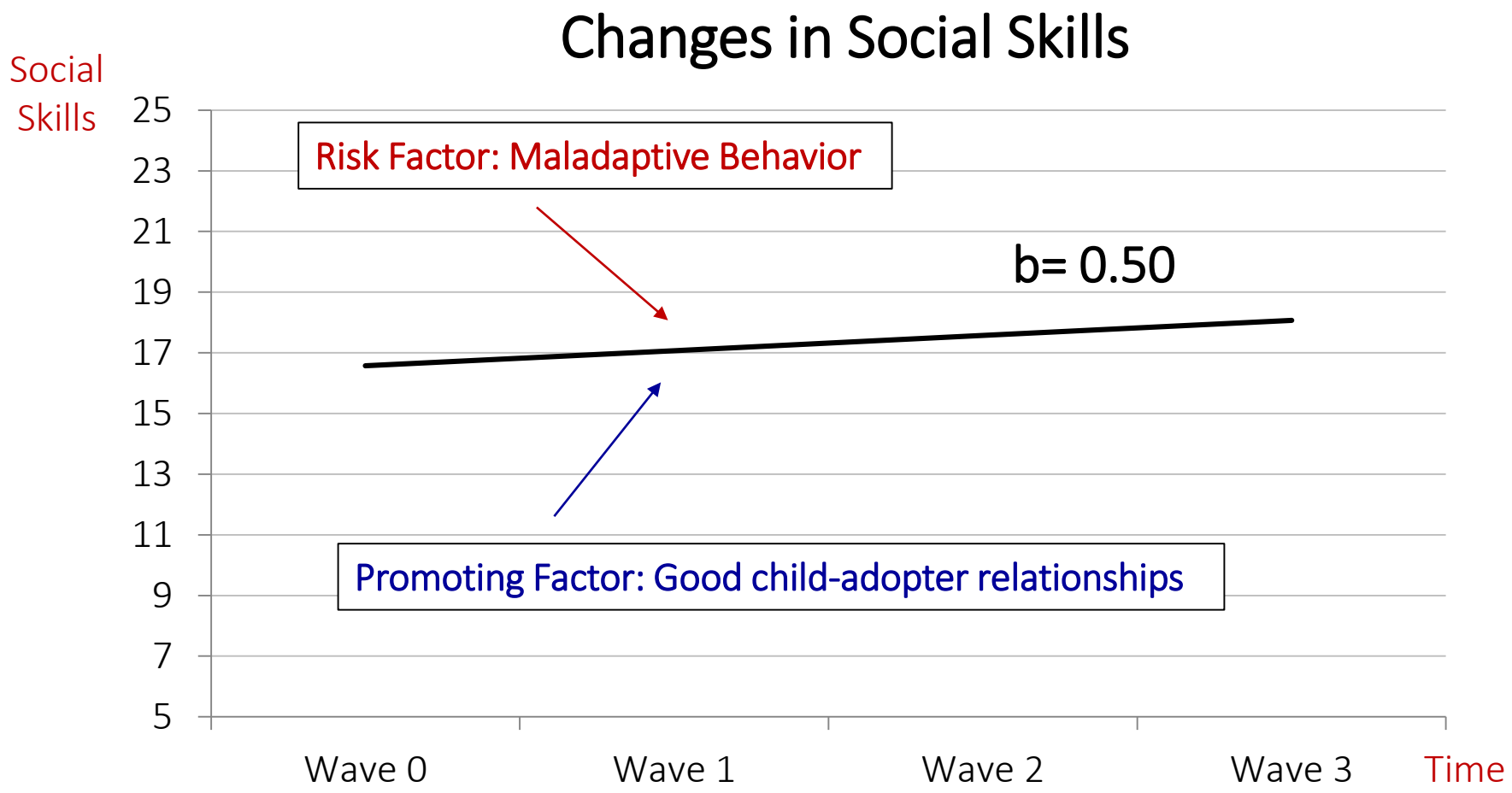
Multilevel Model:
Buffering effect of good child-adopter relationships for high risk Yi children



Multilevel Model:
Buffering effect of good child-adopter relationships for high risk Yi children



Multilevel Model:
Social skills improve over time



Discussion

Key Findings

1. Maladaptive behaviors has a negative effect on social skills of Yi children

2. Having average to good child-adopter relationships buffer the negative effect of maladaptive behaviors on social skills.

3. Social skills of Yi children improve over time.

Innovation & Significance

Use of Strength based approach vs deficit approach

- ✓ “Redefine” on Yi children : Are they at risk? Problematic? Nothing good in them?
- ✓ Identify strengths : Yi children can thrive

Preventive approach vs. problem solving approach

- ✓ Mobilize existing familial resources associated with future positive development
- ✓ Developmental trajectory of Yi Children can be altered (POSSIBILITY)

Strengths & Limitations

Strengths

1. Longitudinal data
   - Predictive effect of child-adopter relationship (baseline) on social skills development
   - Multilevel model : Allow the modeling of change patterns even for data collected at uneven time points
2. Solid theoretical Foundation
   - Risk and Resilience
   - Developmental Psychopathology
   - Attachment Theory

Limitations

1. Fail to capture the effect of parental loss and extreme poverty on maladaptive behaviors
2. Single item measurement (child-caregiver relationships)
3. Common method bias
4. Effect of age on social skills

So What?

Practice implications

- Programs do not necessarily need to target at changing individuals behaviors, rather focus on altering external environment to facilitate change.

Research implications

- Conduct randomized control trails to examine the positive effect of child-caregiver program on Yi children.
- Large scale research to test the generalizability of the proposed framework on youths of other ethnic minority groups in rural China.

Policy implications

- Government to invest in promoting positive familial relationships of Yi children for positive change

Acknowledgement

Fu Hui Education Foundation

&

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