

CHILD MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

Associations with Pre-Pandemic Variables and Parent Mental Health in the CHILD COVID-19 Add-on Study

Kailey E. Penner¹, Emily E. Cameron¹, Leslie E. Roos¹⁻³, Padmaja Subbarao⁴⁻⁶, Theo Moraes^{4-5,7}, Stuart Turvey⁸⁻⁹, Piush Mandhane¹⁰, Elinor Simons²⁻³, Terrie E. Moffitt¹¹⁻¹³, Geoffrey L. Winsor¹⁴, Fiona S.L. Brinkman¹⁴, David M. Patrick¹⁵, Deborah McNeil¹⁶⁻¹⁷, & Meghan Azad²⁻³

¹Department of Psychology, University of Manitoba; ²Department of Pediatrics and Child Health, University of Manitoba; ³Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba; ⁴Department of Paediatrics, University of Toronto; ⁵The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto; ⁶Department of Medicine, McMaster University; ⁷SickKids Research Institute, Toronto, Ontario; ⁸British Columbia(BC)'s Children's Hospital; ⁹Department of Pediatrics, UBC; ¹⁰Department of Pediatrics, University of Alberta; ¹¹Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, Duke University, Durham, NC, USA; ¹²Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, King's College London, London, UK; ¹³Center for the Study of Population Health and Aging, Duke University Population Research Institute, Durham, NC, USA; ¹⁴Department of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, Simon Fraser University; ¹⁵School of Population and Public Health, UBC; ¹⁶Faculty of Nursing and Department of Community Health Sciences, Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary; ¹⁷Alberta Health Services

INTRODUCTION

- Children's mental health is expected to have been significantly impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to unique challenges families have faced.¹
- Yet, little is known about the specific impact on children, and limited pre-pandemic information is available to assess change due to the pandemic.
- This study aimed to describe child mental health symptoms during the pandemic and associated risk and protective factors before and during COVID-19 using both child and parent reports.

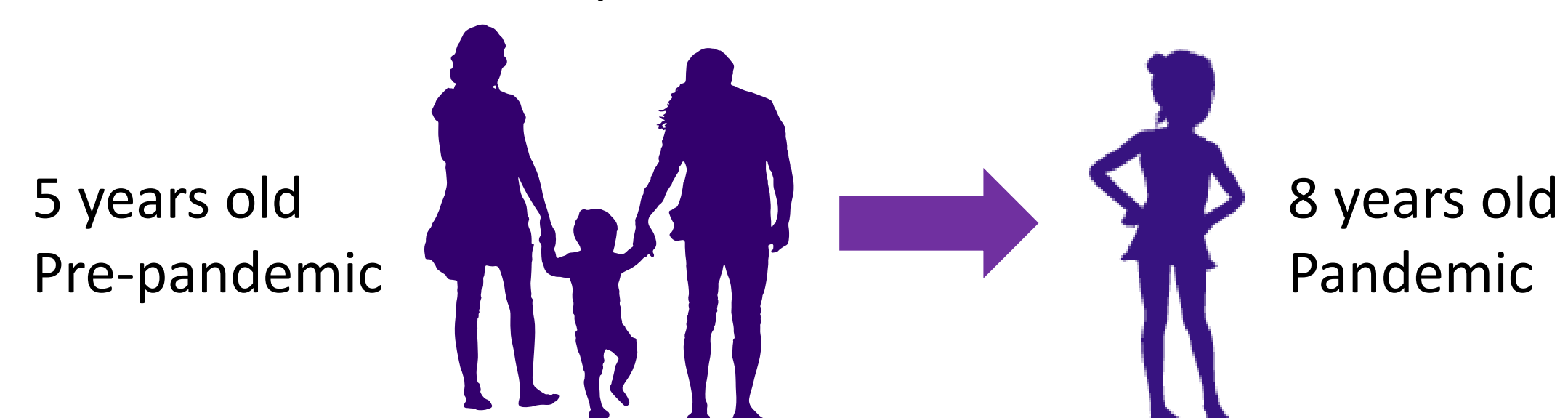
METHODS

Participants

- Mothers ($N = 1431$), fathers ($N = 1015$), and children ($N = 1671$) from the Canadian Healthy Infant Longitudinal Development (CHILD) birth cohort recruited from 2008-2012 were invited to participate in this COVID-19 study in November 2020.
- Age: Mothers, $M = 43.1$ years ($SD = 4.1$); Fathers, $M = 45.2$ years ($SD = 5.0$); Children, $M = 10.3$ years ($SD = 2.2$)

Procedure

- Parents and children completed questionnaires
- CHILD database was used to assess pre-pandemic functioning for both parents and children at 5 years



Data analysis

- Descriptive statistics to define the sample
- Bivariate correlations and hierarchical linear regression analyses

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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RESULTS

Figure 1. Prevalence of child mental health symptoms.

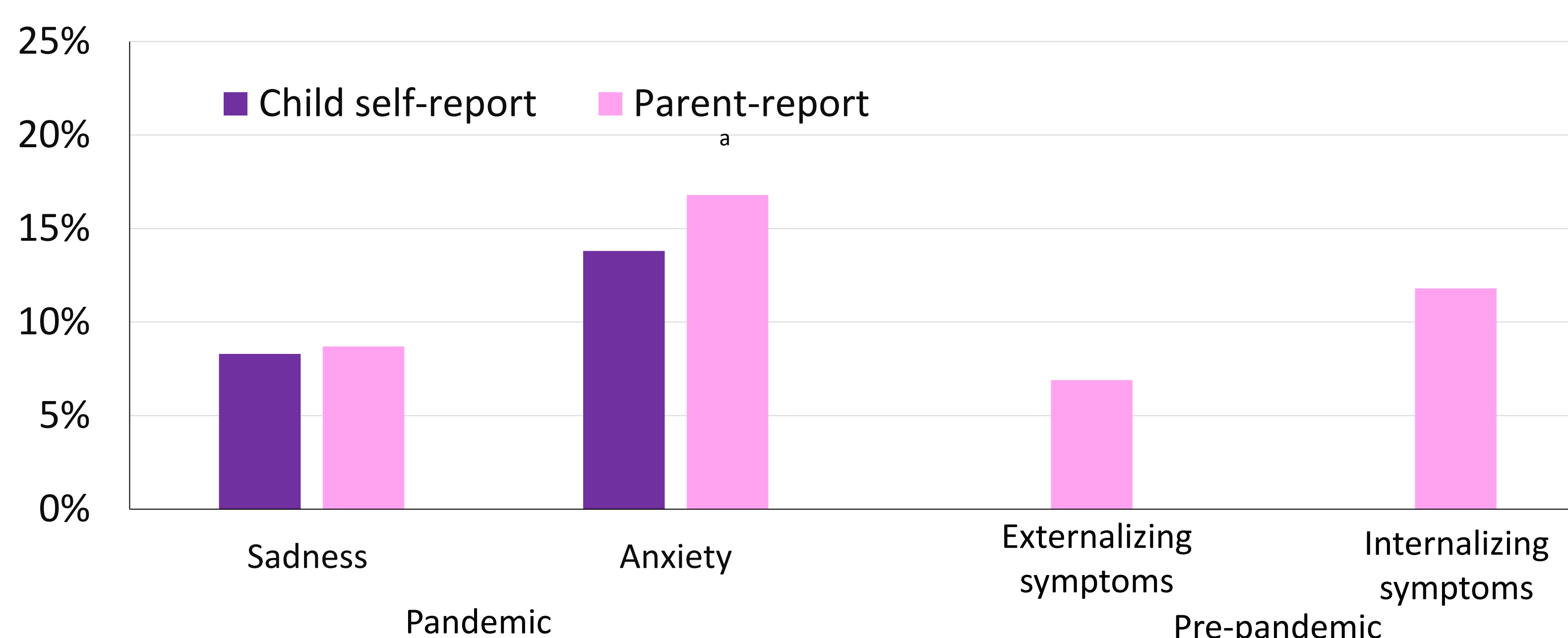


Figure 2. Prevalence of parent mental health symptoms and COVID-19 variables.

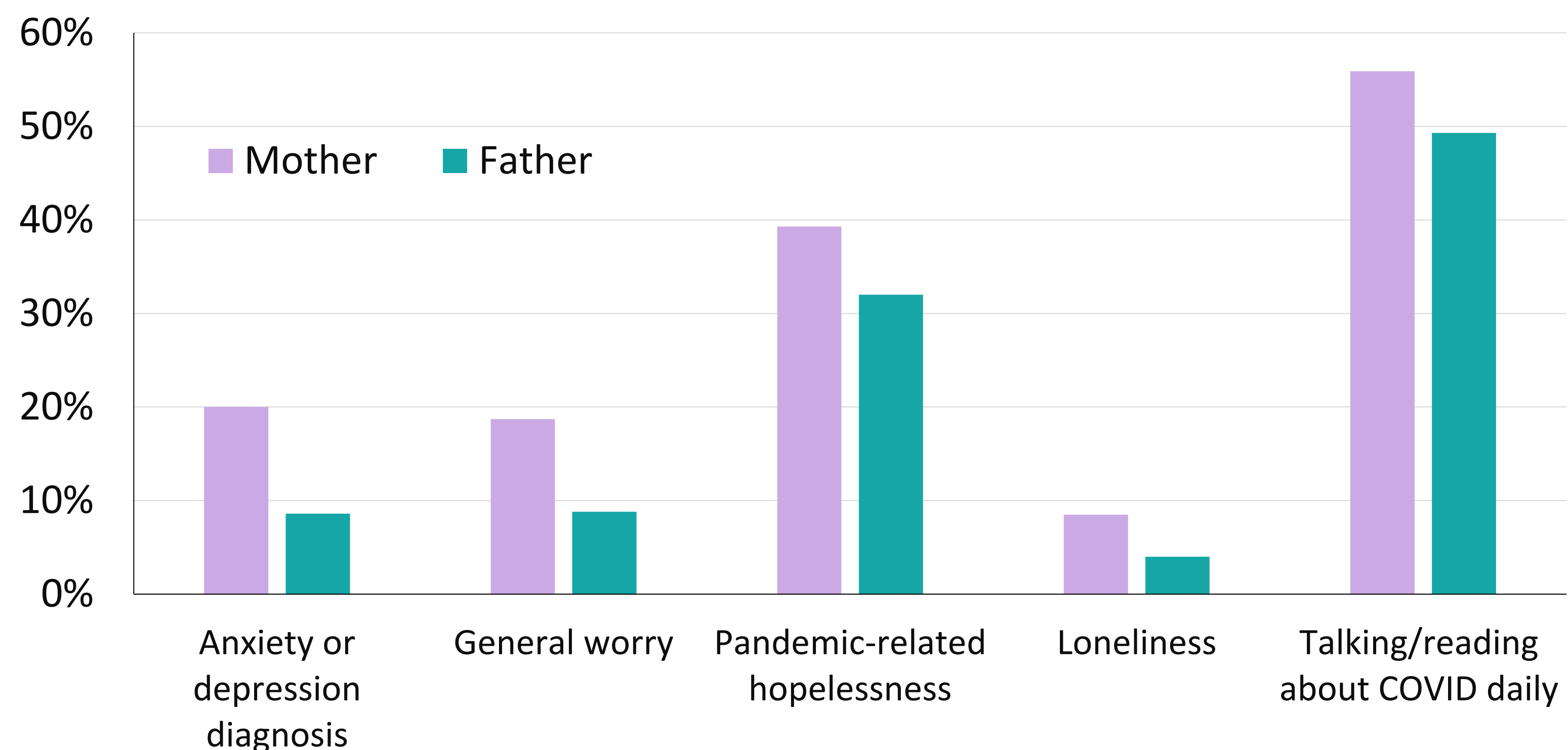
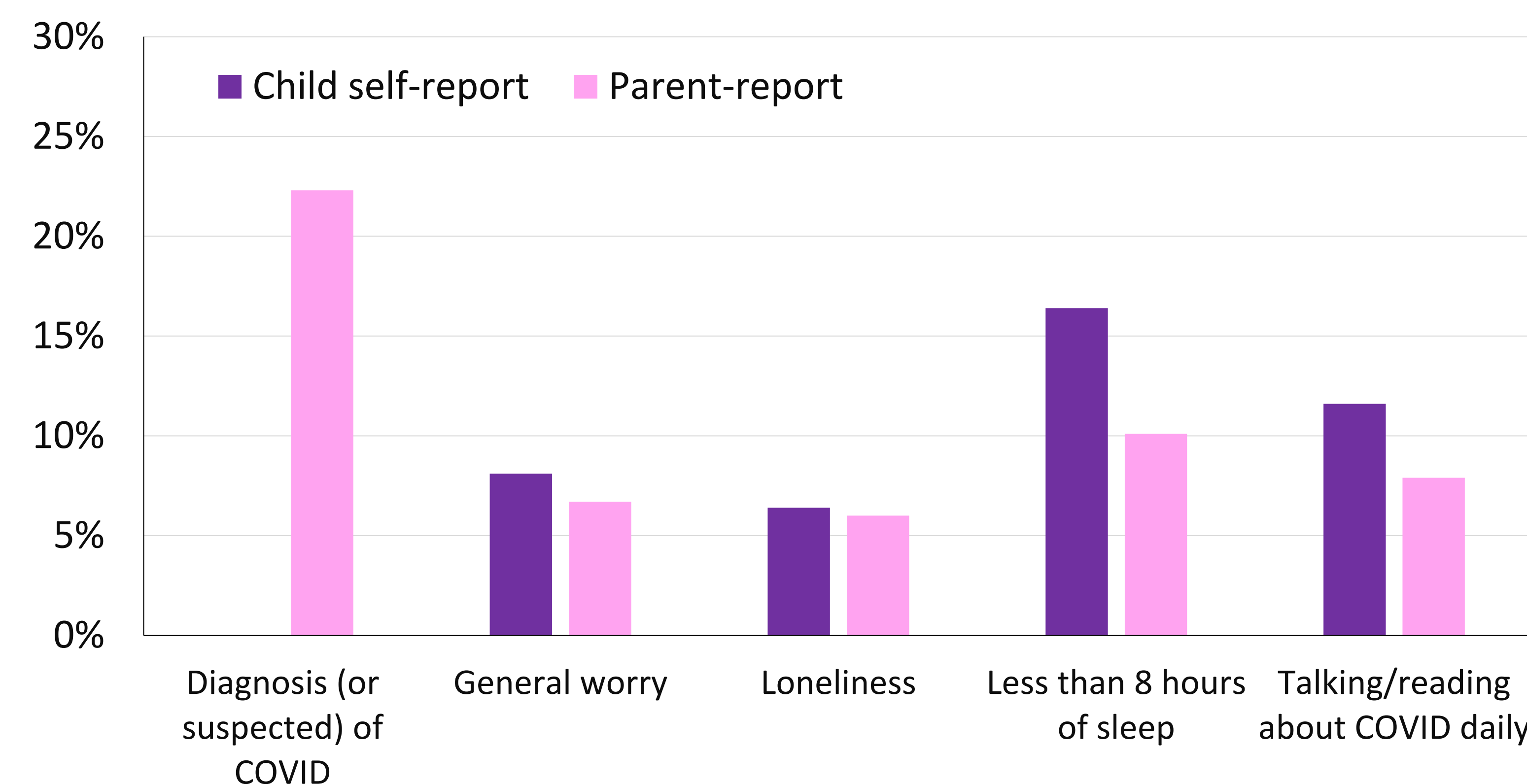


Figure 3. Prevalence of child COVID-19 variables.



RESULTS Cont'd: Hierarchical Linear Regressions

Self-reported child sadness

- child age ($\beta = .138$, $F = 16.81$, $p < .001$), loneliness ($\beta = .302$, $F = 93.30$, $p < .001$), and sleep ($\beta = -.151$, $F = 20.90$, $p < .001$).

Self-reported child anxiety

- child age ($\beta = .137$, $F = 15.94$, $p < .001$), loneliness ($\beta = .234$, $F = 54.27$, $p < .001$), shorter sleep ($\beta = -.119$, $F = 12.36$, $p < .001$), paternal worry ($\beta = .124$, $F = 13.79$, $p < .001$), parental pandemic hopelessness ($\beta = .097$, $F = 7.98$, $p = .005$).

Parent-reported child sadness

- child age ($\beta = .068$, $F = 3.94$, $p = .048$), pre-pandemic externalizing behaviour ($\beta = .232$, $F = 7.19$, $p = .007$), child loneliness ($\beta = .345$, $F = 115.82$, $p < .001$), shorter sleep ($\beta = -.108$, $F = 10.41$, $p = .001$), school closure ($\beta = -.090$, $F = 8.04$, $p = .005$), paternal worry ($\beta = .013$, $F = 13.56$, $p < .001$), and current maternal anxiety or depression ($\beta = .083$, $F = 3.92$, $p = .048$).

Parent-reported child anxiety

- child loneliness ($\beta = .138$, $F = 17.67$, $p < .001$), shorter sleep ($\beta = -.154$, $F = 19.25$, $p < .001$), parental pandemic hopelessness ($\beta = .119$, $F = 11.18$, $p < .001$), school closure ($\beta = -.073$, $F = 4.82$, $p = .028$), maternal ($\beta = .080$, $F = 5.31$, $p = .021$) and paternal worry ($\beta = .134$, $F = 14.95$, $p < .001$), and pre-pandemic internalizing ($\beta = .187$, $F = 4.86$, $p = .028$) and externalizing concerns ($\beta = .327$, $F = 13.12$, $p < .001$).

CONCLUSION

Parent and child reports of child functioning were reasonably consistent across symptoms related to psychological functioning, which provides novel findings compared to previous Canadian research.²

Pre-pandemic child behavioural problems were associated with anxiety and sadness in children during the pandemic, especially as rated by parents.

Pre-pandemic maternal mental health was not associated with child functioning over and above the contribution of current maternal anxiety or depression, and current worry in both parents.

Child loneliness and shorter sleep duration were significant factors across parent and child reports of functioning.

Interventions are needed that address child mental health from a family perspective during and after the pandemic to prevent long-term impacts on child and family wellbeing.

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