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**Topic: Developmental Abstract**

**How Does Economic Hardship Influence Preschool Children's Behaviour Problems? The Moderating Role of Delay of Gratification**

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**Objectives:** This paper aims to investigate the mechanisms through which economic hardship influences children's behaviour problems, with parental stress and parenting practices as mediators, and children's Delay of Gratification as a moderator.

**Design:** A two-wave national study "Singapore Early Childhood Development Longitudinal Study (SGLEADS)" was designed to investigate the factors shaping child development in Singapore, by interviewing 5000 children below 7 years old and their primary caregivers.

**Methods:** The 759 parent-child pairs (child aged 3-6 years; total  $n = 2900$  by September 2019) in this study were a subset of the nationally representative sample in Wave 1. Children went through a Delay of Gratification task. Economic hardship, parental stress (psychological distress and parenting stress), and children's externalized and internalized behaviour problems were reported by primary caregivers. Structural Equation Modelling was used to examine the proposed model.

**Results:** Economic hardship shaped children's externalized and internalized behaviour problems through increased parental stress; further, increased harsh punishment and decreased parental warmth served as secondary mediators, partially mediating the effects of parental stress on children's behaviour problems. Child's Delay of Gratification buffered the impacts of economic hardship on children's externalized behaviour problems: when children have a higher level of ability to delay gratification, the association between economic hardship and externalized behaviour problems became non-significant.

**Conclusions:** Parental stress, harsh punishment and parent warmth are key mediators between poverty and early childhood behaviour problems. Delay of gratification can serve as a protective factor for young children growing up in poor families to achieve adaptive behavioural outcomes.