



Université de
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PARENTAL LEAVE AND DISPARITIES IN CHILD OUTCOMES

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CONTEXT

- The first 1000 days of life are decisive in shaping language development.¹ Inequalities in a child's environment during this sensitive period can lead to later difficulties.²
- Child development may be positively influenced through increased time parents spend with their newborn³ during paid parental leave (PPL).
- Further research is needed on how social determinants of health contribute to variations in paid parental leave uptake.⁴
- Additionally, parental practices adopted during PPL - such as early exposure to books - may contribute to language development.⁵

OBJECTIVES

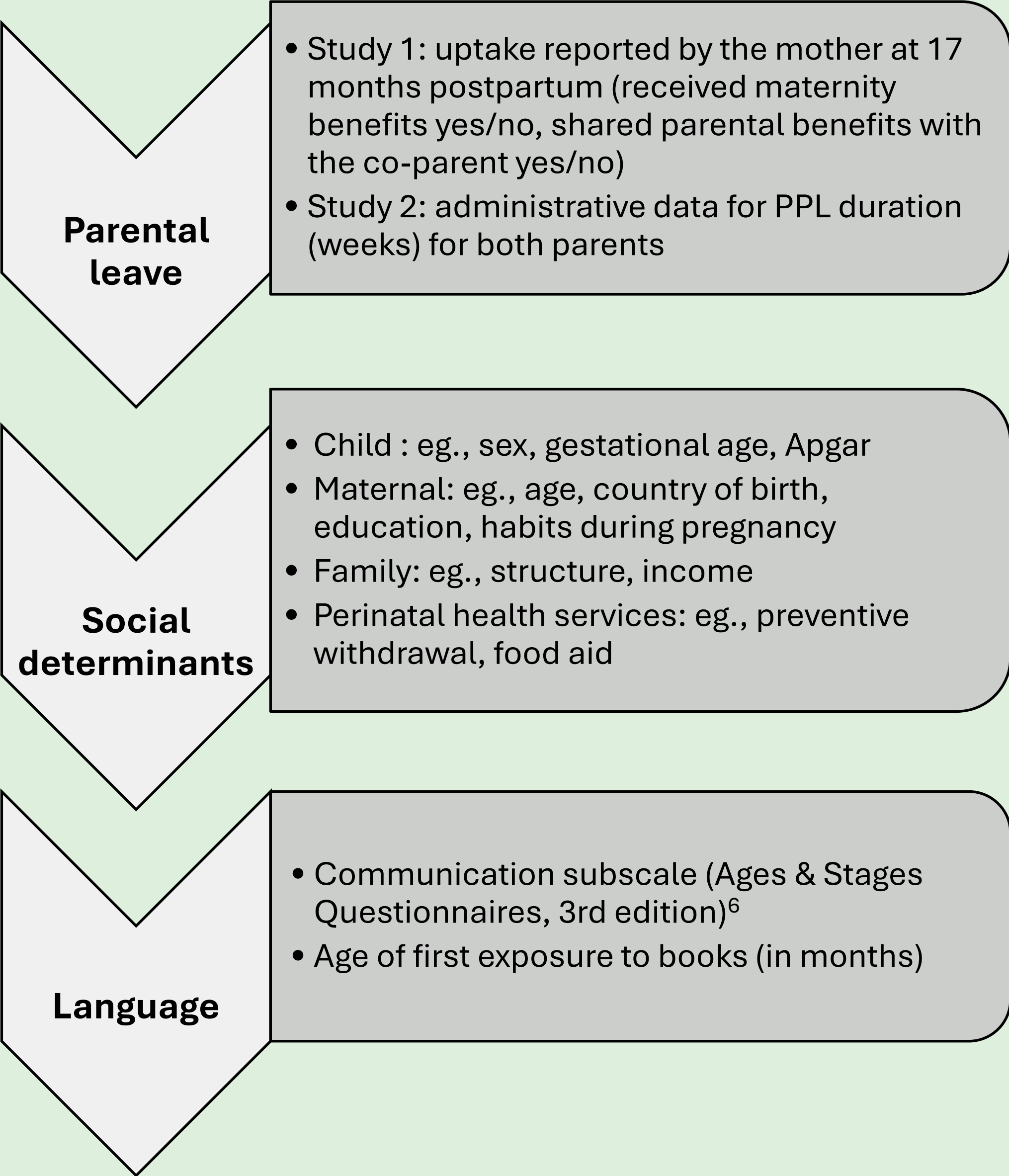
- Study 1:** Examine how social determinants of health contribute to variations in the uptake of paid parental leave among mothers.
- Study 2:** Prospectively investigate the moderating role of PPL duration for both parents in the association between the age of first exposure to books and language skills.

METHODS

Sample 1 consists of 3456 children (49.3% boys) and their mothers participating in the Québec Longitudinal Study of Child Development 2nd Edition ([QLSCD-2], Canada).

Sample 2 consists of 2204 children and their parents participating in the QLSCD-2 study, for whom administrative data are available.

Measures



Acknowledgments

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RESULTS

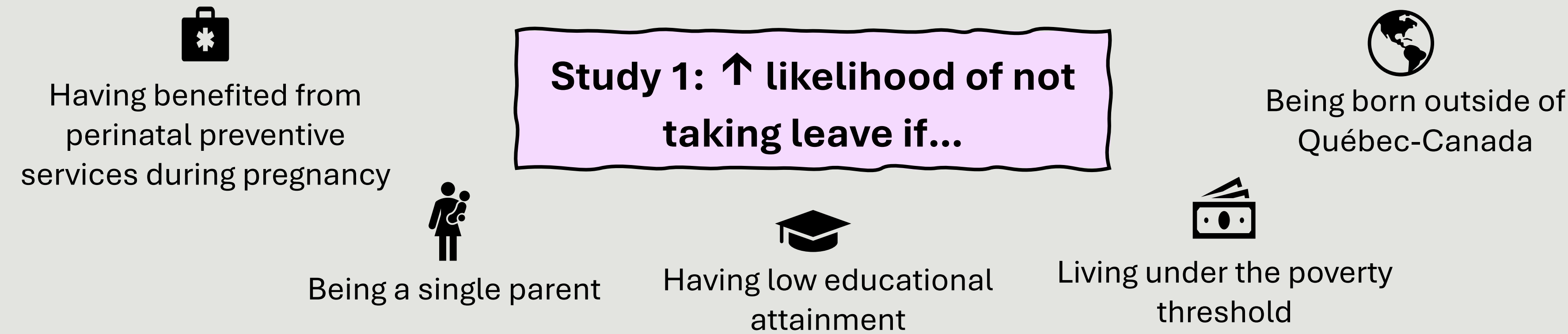
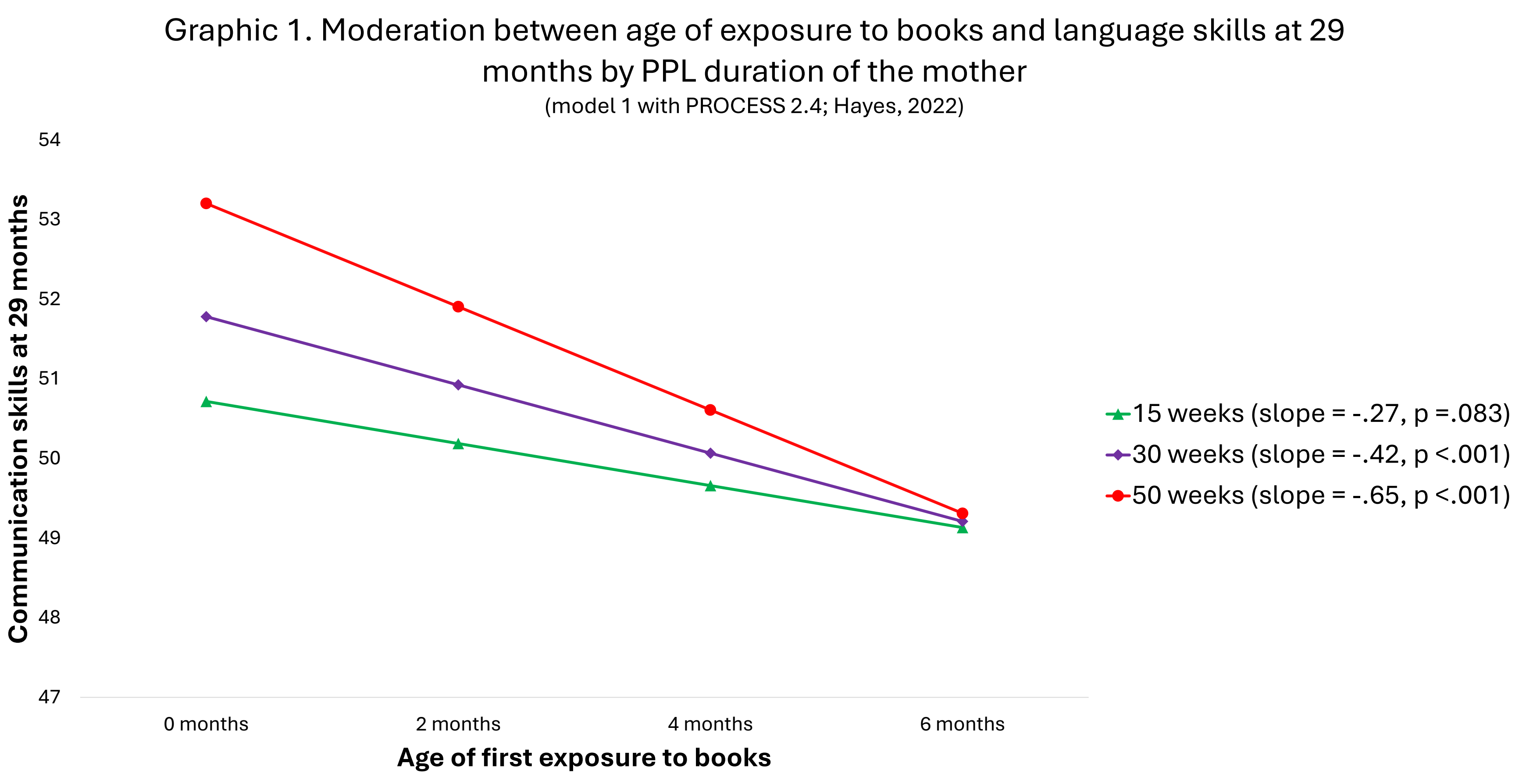


Table 1. Descriptive statistics by PPL users

	1. No leave (n=299, 8.6%)	2. Maternity leave only (n=80, 2.3%)	3. Maternity & non-shared parental (n=1927, 55.8%)	4. Maternity & shared parental (n=1150, 33.3%)	Anova / Chi-square
Age of first exposure to books (months; M [SD])	4.21 (4.24)	4.52 (4.52)	3.59 (3.57)	3.52 (3.52)	1=2<3=4 $p<.001$
Communication subscale (M [SD])	50.05 (12.05)	52.14 (13.73)	54.17 (9.82)	53.50 (10.81)	1<3=4 $p<.001$
Living below poverty threshold	46.6%	22.2%	9.1%	8.8%	1>2>3=4 $p<.001$

Study 2



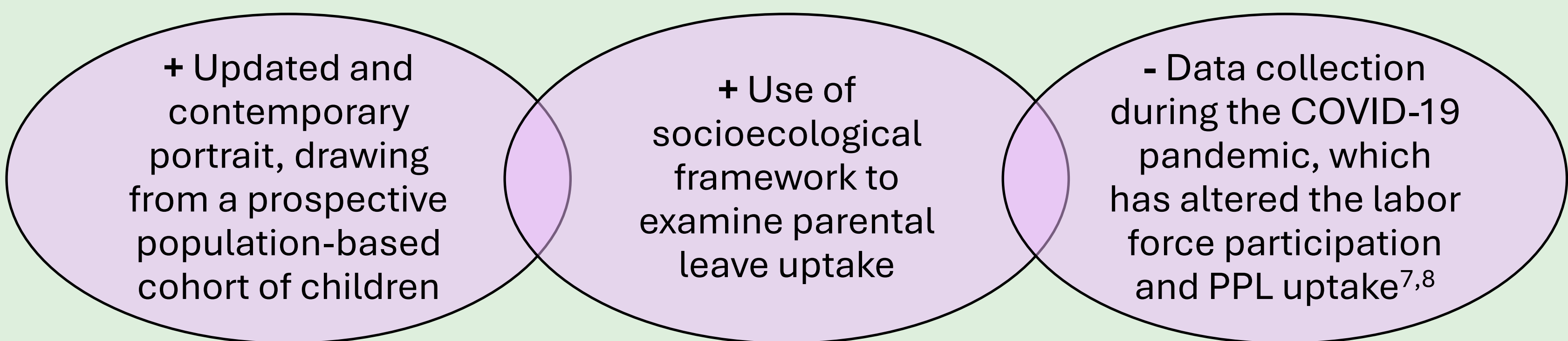
The average duration of PPL was 43.77 weeks for mothers and 8.03 weeks for fathers. After controlling for the child's sex and the co-parent's PPL duration, the association between the age of first exposure to books and language skills at 29 months was moderated by the mother's PPL duration ($p = .03$), but not by the father's duration ($p = .14$). A minimum of 17.8 weeks of maternal PPL was required to observe a significant impact.

DISCUSSION

Key findings

- Mothers in the "No leave" group are more likely to experience increased socioeconomic hardship.
- Mothers planning to take an extended period of PPL are more likely to introduce books earlier.
- Mothers play a particularly influential role in early language development through reading. Nevertheless, both parents should be encouraged to actively engage in shared book reading during this period, as it may represent a critical window for supporting language outcomes.
- From a public health perspective, it is essential to promote access to policies that support child development, particularly among families who stand to benefit the most from such programs.

Strengths & Limitations



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