Abstract
A child’s environment, especially the caregiving context, strongly influences the biological, psychological, and social components of child development. Given the importance of parenting practices for child development, it is vital to have a better understanding of the factors that promote or undermine healthy, effective parenting behaviors. The current study examined the relations among caregiving efficacy, parenting stress, and parenting behaviors among low-income caregivers of preschool-age children. Three hypotheses were tested: (1) Higher caregiving efficacy will be associated with greater positive parenting behaviors and fewer negative parenting behaviors; (2) Higher parenting stress will be related to fewer positive parenting behaviors and greater negative parenting behaviors; and (3) Parenting stress will moderate the relation between caregiving efficacy and parenting behavior. Results from hierarchical regression analyses indicated that hypotheses one and two were supported. Although hypothesis three was not supported, findings suggest that parenting stress is a stronger predictor of positive parenting behaviors than caregiving efficacy. The findings of this study can inform intervention strategies for low-income families. Workshops that teach families how to handle parenting stress in healthy ways and help caregivers increase their sense of efficacy with respect to parenting challenges may be particularly beneficial.