

## *Summary*

# Coparenting Scale: Scale Development, Validation, and Reliability Study

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Coparenting can be defined as the cooperation of parents in raising children, sharing the responsibilities, and supporting each other (McHale, 1995). This concept has been handled in different dimensions from the collaboration to conflict, and from solidarity to undermining one another of the couples in the process of raising children (Feinberg, 2003). This triadic relationship between child and parents has important effects on children's psychosocial adjustment and mental health. Especially cooperative and supportive coparenting is considered as an important factor for the social and emotional development of children. The concept of coparenting, which is associated with many different life events in different age groups, is also important in terms of attitudes, roles, and limits between the parent and child within the marriage system (Buehler & Welsh, 2009; Choi & Becher, 2019; Jacobvitz, Hazen, Curran, & Hitchens, 2004; Lindsey, Caldera & Colwell, 2005).

In the international literature, there are various instruments to assess coparenting behaviors of couples who are intact or divorced (Abidin & Brunner, 1995; Feinberg, Brown, & Kan, 2012; McHale, 1997; Teubert & Pinquart, 2011b). One of the first measurement tools in this field is the Parenting Alliance Inventory developed by Abidin and Brunner (1995). Another scale, which is McHale's (1997) 16-item Coparenting Scale, is designed to measure both overt and covert coparenting processes of married couples. The Coparenting Relationship Scale (CRS) developed by Feinberg et al. (2012) includes seven subscales based on four dimensions, which are childrearing agreement, support/undermining, division of labor and the joint management of family relations. Family Experiences Questionnaire (Frank, Jacobson, & Avery, 1988), Coparenting Questionnaire (Margolin, Gordis, & John, 2001) and Parents' Perceptions of Coparenting Relationship Scale (Stright & Bales, 2003) are among other self-report scales.

Despite all the above-mentioned scales, there is not yet a comprehensive culture-specific measurement tool for evaluating the concept of coparenting, which has been reached with empirical findings that explains parenting and child adjustment above and beyond the marriage relationship. For this reason, with the aim of filling this gap in the national literature, the aim of the present study is to develop a Coparenting Scale (CS) specific to Turkish culture and to examine its psychometric properties.

### Method

*Scale Development Process:* After deciding which sample group (age, marital status, place of residence, etc.) of the scale will be developed within which potential sub-dimensions (coparenting agreement, coparenting disagreement, division of labor, supporting/undermining coparenting, and joint family management) a pool of items that are candidates for measuring the concept has been created. While developing the item pool, theoretical definitions, data of various qualitative studies and the items of previous Coparenting Scales in the international literature were reviewed and a pool of items consisting of 51 expressions was created. A 4-point Likert scale was used for responding the items. In the next step, we applied to expert committee in order to ensure the suitability, clarity, understandability, and representativeness of the items. After ensuring the content validity, the target scale composed of 49 items and a pilot study was conducted with 10 couples.

*Participants:* The study was conducted with 677 parents ( $n = 550$  mothers, 81.2%;  $n = 127$  fathers, 18.8%) who are married, living together, and having children between the ages of 0-18. The ages of the participants ranged between 20 and 56 ( $M = 34.7$ ;  $sd = 6.07$ ). In the

research, 6.4% of the participants has primary school education, 8.7% of the participants has secondary school education, 31.2% of the participants has high school education, 19.6% of the participants has college education, 26.4% of the participants has undergraduate education and 7.7% of the participants has graduate education. All of the participants are married, living with their spouses and children. 87.9% of the parents in the sample group live in the urban areas; and 12.1% of the parents in the sample group live in the rural areas. The marriage duration of the participants ranged from 2 years to 35 years ( $M = 10.83$ ;  $sd = 6.15$ ) When the gender of the child, which was taken into consideration while filling the scale, was examined, it was determined that 325 were girls (48%) and 352 were boys (52%).

**Measures:** In the present research, in order to analyze the criterion-related validity of the Coparenting Scale, we used the Family Conflict Scale (Özdemir, Sağkal, Salman-Engin, Çakıroğlu Çevik, & Şakiroğlu, 2020), The Family Cohesion Scale (Özdemir et al., 2020), and The Perceived Romantic Relationship Quality Scale (Sağkal & Özdemir, 2018).

**Procedure:** The present research was conducted based on Aydın Adnan Menderes University Social and Human Science Research Ethics Committee's decision dated 26.12.2017 and numbered 31906847/050.04.04-08/09. Informed consent of the participants was obtained and anonymity and voluntariness of the participants were ensured.

## Results

**Descriptive Findings:** When the descriptive statistics are analyzed, it was seen that the age and the living in rural or urban residence did not exert a significant effect, while lower marriage duration and higher educational level were positively associated with coparenting outcomes.

**Construct Validity Results:** In order to determine the factor structure of the Coparenting Scale, the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was applied on a 49-item form. According to the criterion of Kaiser (1970, 1974), six factors with eigenvalues above 1 were identified. As the Cattell's scree plot showed that there is a sharp decline after the sixth factor, the number of factors were reduced to six factors. The results of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyzes supported that the CS consists of a total of six dimensions, namely coparenting support, coparenting undermining, coparenting division of labor, joint management of family relations, coparenting conflict, and coparenting agreement. This six-factor structure explained 68.43% of the variance. The first factor (9 items) contributed 14.33% to variance, the second

factor (9 items) contributed 13.64%, the third factor (8 items) contributed 12.30%, the fourth factor (7 items) contributed 10.11%, the fifth factor (7 items) contributed 10.02%, and the sixth factor (6 items) contributed 8.03% to the variance. In the coparenting support sub-dimension, factor loadings varied between .54 to .80; in the coparenting undermining sub-dimension, factor loadings varied between .58 to .79; in the coparenting division of labor sub-dimension, factor loadings varied between .71 to .78; in the joint management of family relations sub-dimension factor loadings varied between .57 to .77; in the coparenting conflict sub-dimension factor loadings varied between .57 and .72 and finally in the coparenting agreement sub-dimension, factor loadings ranged between .56 and .78.

**Criterion-Related Validity Results:** Significant correlations between the total score and subscales of the CS and the Family Conflict Scale, the Family Cohesion Scale, and the Perceived Romantic Relationship Quality Scale showed that the CS has criterion-related validity. Particularly, there was a negative and highly significant relationship between the total score of CS and Family Conflict Scale ( $r = -.73$ ,  $p < .01$ ); and a positive significant correlation between the total score of CS and Family Cohesion scale ( $r = .55$ ,  $p < .01$ ) as well as the CS and the Perceived Romantic Relationship Quality Scale ( $r = .70$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

**Reliability Results:** In the reliability study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for coparenting agreement, coparenting conflict, coparenting support, coparenting undermining, coparenting division of labor, joint management of family relations, and the total score were .87, .91, .95, .94, .93, .89, and .97, respectively. A three-week interval test-retest reliability coefficients for CS total scale and subscales were .76 and above.

## Conclusions

In this study, the Coparenting Scale assessing the construct of coparenting was developed and psychometric properties of the measure were tested. The scale, consisting of 46 items and 6 dimensions, can form the basis for future studies examining the antecedents and outcomes of coparenting. The dimensions of the scale, which are called as coparenting support, coparenting undermining, coparenting division of labor, joint management of family relations, coparenting conflict, and coparenting agreement are similar to the theoretical basis suggested by Feinberg (2002). According to Feinberg's theoretical framework, coparenting includes the components of coparenting agreement/disagreement, division of labor, coparenting support/undermining, and joint management of family relations.

When the results are evaluated in terms of descriptive statistics, it is seen that as the marriage duration increases, the coparenting conflict increases and the joint management of the family relations decreases. Due to the increase in marriage conflicts as the marriage duration increases (Birditt, Wan, Orbuch, & Antonucci, 2017), this may affect the coparenting behaviors negatively. In addition, another important finding of the study was that parents with undergraduate and graduate education levels reported higher coparenting relationships than primary school graduate parents. One interpretation for this finding might be that getting higher levels of education would enhance individuals' cognitive skills (e.g., taking perspective), influence attitudes supporting coparenting (e.g., valuing cooperation and collaboration in childrearing process) and/or inform individuals about the importance of coparenting.

Although the Coparenting Scale provided strong psychometric properties in the present research, these results are not without limitations. First of all, the sample was mostly recruited from urban areas compared to rural areas and this may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the Coparenting Scale, which is a self-report scale, includes subjective evaluations and may have some limitations in capturing some dimensions of coparenting dynamics. Therefore, self-report scales and observational methods can be combined and used together in evaluating the construct of coparenting. Furthermore, the the present instrument was developed to assess coparenting relationships of intact families and thus may not be useful in assessing coparenting in separated/divorced families.

Future studies may examine the psychometric properties of the Coparenting Scale with a sample of parents that better reflect intra-cultural difference. Our knowledge of the factors that affect the quality of coparenting can be used to improve prevention and intervention efforts for families. In future studies, (i) various daily factors (parental stress, work and life stressors, etc.) that may affect coparenting behaviors of the parents, (ii) sources of the differences between parents in coparenting behaviors, and (iii) the outcomes of what it could mean for the family and child having low and high levels of coparenting relationship would be addressed.

The present study makes a significant contribution to the field in measuring the dimensions of coparenting and it has formed a valid and reliable instrument for prospective family research in Turkey. This study can be used as a guide for future studies to better understand how parents cooperate in raising children and how they do share responsibilities of a child when parenting. It is thought that the Coparenting Scale will be widely used by Turkish researchers and practitioners who wish to ob-

tain comprehensive and in-depth information about the coparenting processes in the family system as well as who wish to assess the effectiveness of intervention programs on daily coparenting experiences. In conclusion, empirical findings provided evidence that the CS is a comprehensive, valid, and reliable instrument in order to assess coparenting behaviors in Turkish cultural context.