

Summary

Parental Identity Scale: An Examination of its Psychometric Properties and Determinants

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In recent years, there has been increasing interest in the concept of parental identity as a significant construct for understanding parenting experiences and parental psychological well-being (Cast, 2004; Schrooyen et al., 2021). Parental identity is defined as a multidimensional structure encompassing individuals' beliefs, values, and goals related to their parenting roles, and it contributes to consistent parenting behavior and psychological functioning. However, empirical studies on this construct remain limited, especially in non-Western contexts. The primary aim of this study is to adapt the Parental Identity Scale, developed by Schrooyen et al. (2021), into Turkish and examine its psychometric properties.

The study is based on the Identity Formation Model developed by Luyckx et al. (2006, 2008), which includes five identity processes, three of which—commitment, exploration in breadth, and ruminative exploration—are reflected in the Parental Identity Scale. While commitment and exploration processes have been linked to positive outcomes such as well-being and effective parenting, ruminative exploration is associated with indecisiveness, emotional distress, and burnout (Piotrowski, 2020; Schrooyen et al., 2021).

The research also draws on Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which emphasizes the critical role of fulfilling three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—in supporting healthy identity development and reducing psychological distress. In the parenting context, these needs have been shown to be associated with stronger parental identity development (Beyers et al., 2021; Schrooyen et al., 2021). Conversely, the frustration of these needs may hinder identity development and increase the risk of parental burnout. Parental burnout is defined as a chronic condition that arises from an imbalance between parenting demands and resources (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018).

In addition, demographic variables such as parent

gender, age, education level, and number of children are also considered. As parental identity is a relatively new construct, research examining its associations with these variables is scarce or yields inconsistent findings (Fadjukoff et al., 2016; Piotrowski, 2018; Schrooyen et al., 2021). Therefore, this study aims to provide a valid and reliable instrument for assessing parental identity in the Turkish context and to contribute to the literature by exploring its associations with psychological needs, parental burnout, and demographic factors.

Method

Participants

In this study, participants were recruited using the snowball sampling method. The sample consisted of parents living in Turkey who were married and had at least one child between the ages of 0 and 18. Participants were selected among parents who did not have children with disabilities or special needs and who did not have psychiatric disorders. These exclusion criteria were based on the assumption that having a child with special needs may have distinct effects on parental burnout and that psychiatric disorders might be associated with burnout.

A total of 414 parents participated in the study, with ages ranging from 21 to 59 years ($M = 37.85$, $SD = 7.67$). Of the participants, 64.5% were female ($n = 267$) and 35.5% were male ($n = 147$). Regarding educational attainment, 36.5% had a high school education or lower, 13.3% had an associate degree, 39.1% held a bachelor's degree, and 11.1% had a graduate degree or higher. In terms of the number of children, 39.6% had one child, 42% had two children, and 18.4% had three or more children.

Data Collection Tools

Demographic Information Form. Developed by the researchers to gather information on the child's age,

gender, parental education level, marital status, number of children, and parental age.

Parental Identity Scale. This scale was originally developed by Schrooyen et al. (2021) based on Luyckx et al.'s (2008) Five-Dimensional Identity Formation Model. Although the original scale included five subdimensions, based on previous research, the current study adopted the three-factor structure proposed by Schrooyen et al. (2021, 2024), comprising 12 items. These subdimensions are: internal commitment (4 items), broadening exploration (4 items), and obsessive exploration of options (4 items). The scale is rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale. Developed by Chen et al. (2015) to assess satisfaction in autonomy, relatedness, and competence. The scale consists of 24 items across six subdimensions: support and frustration of autonomy, relatedness, and competence. It is rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The Turkish adaptation was conducted by Mouratidis et al. (2018). The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scale within the scope of this study are .89 for basic psychological need satisfaction and .88 for need frustration.

Parental Burnout Inventory. Developed by Roskam et al. (2018) to measure parental burnout across four dimensions: emotional exhaustion, contrast with previous parental self, feelings of saturation, and emotional distancing. It consists of 23 items rated on a seven-point Likert scale (0 = *never* to 6 = *every day*). Higher scores indicate higher levels of parental burnout. The original scale had a Cronbach's alpha of .96, while the Turkish adaptation by Arıkan et al. (2020) reported .90. In this study, the internal consistency coefficient was .91.

Analysis of The Data

To examine the construct validity of the scale, the adequacy of the sample size for factor analysis was evaluated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity confirmed the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted using Principal Component Analysis with Promax rotation. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed with the Maximum Likelihood estimation method to assess the factor structure and model fit. Model fit indices included RMSEA ($\leq .08$), SRMR ($< .10$), CFI and NFI ($\geq .90$), and GFI and AGFI ($\geq .85$). Convergent validity was evaluated based on standardized factor loadings ($\geq .50$), Composite Reliability (CR $\geq .70$), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE $\geq .50$). Cronbach's alpha values above .70 were considered acceptable for internal consistency. The assumption of normality was assessed through skewness and kurtosis

values, which were mostly within the ± 2.0 range, and linearity was checked via scatterplots. Pearson correlation coefficients were used to examine the associations between variables. Finally, stepwise regression analyses were conducted to identify the significant predictors of parental identity. All analyses were performed using SPSS v27 and R Project v3.6.1.

Results

This study aimed to adapt the construct of parental identity into Turkish and to examine the psychometric properties of the relevant measurement tool. The adaptation process was conducted in accordance with the translation guidelines proposed by Van de Vijver and Hambleton (1996). Due to cultural adaptation challenges and validity concerns, the original five-factor structure of the scale was reduced to a three-factor model as suggested by Schrooyen et al. (2024); however, results from exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses indicated that the scale functioned as a two-factor model in the Turkish sample. Specifically, the dimensions of commitment through broadening exploration and internal investment (Cronbach's alpha: .79) merged into a single factor, whereas obsessive ruminative exploration (Cronbach's alpha: .61) remained a distinct factor. The factor loadings were found to be adequate, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) supported the construct validity of the scale. Furthermore, Item 11, which had a low factor loading and failed to discriminate between the two factors, was removed, and subsequent analyses were conducted with the remaining 11 items.

According to the results of the correlation analysis, the broadening exploration and internal investment subdimension of parental identity was positively correlated with the satisfaction of basic psychological needs ($r = .46, p < .001$) and parental education level ($r = .11, p = .012$); and negatively correlated with number of children ($r = -.21, p < .001$), age ($r = -.13, p < .001$), parental burnout ($r = -.12, p = .02$), and frustration of basic psychological needs ($r = -.14, p = .003$). In contrast, the ruminative exploration subdimension of parental identity was positively associated with psychological need frustration ($r = .38, p < .001$), psychological need satisfaction ($r = -.12, p < .01$), and parental burnout ($r = .24, p < .001$); and negatively associated with parental gender ($r = -.15, p < .001$). In this dimension, mothers scored higher than fathers.

Examining the results of the regression analyses, basic psychological need satisfaction was found to be the strongest positive predictor of the broadening exploration and internal investment subdimension ($F(1, 413) = 109.37, p < .001, \beta = .46, p < .001$), explaining 21%

of the variance. In the second step, number of children was a negative predictor ($F(2, 413) = 62.37, p < .001, \beta = -.15, p < .001$), accounting for an additional 2% of the variance. In the third step, parental education level positively predicted this identity dimension ($F(3, 413) = 43.74, p < .001, \beta = .10, p = .023$), explaining an additional 1% of the variance. As for the regression predicting the ruminative exploration dimension, frustration of basic psychological needs was the strongest positive predictor ($F(1, 413) = 68.79, p < .001, \beta = .38, p < .001$), accounting for 14% of the variance. In the second step, parental burnout positively predicted this dimension ($F(2, 413) = 40.36, p < .001, \beta = .15, p < .001$), explaining an additional 2% of the variance. In the third step, parental gender negatively predicted obsessive exploration ($F(3, 413) = 29.86, p < .001, \beta = -.12, p < .001$), also explaining 2% of the variance. In other words, mothers scored higher than fathers in the obsessive ruminative exploration dimension of parental identity.

Discussion

This study aimed to adapt the Parental Identity Scale into Turkish and investigate its psychometric properties in a culturally relevant context. Unlike the original three-factor model, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses in this study supported a two-factor structure. Specifically, the dimensions of commitment and broadening exploration merged into a single factor, suggesting that Turkish parents tend to experience decision-making and internal investment processes as interconnected. This newly defined factor, named Broadening Exploration and Internal Investment, indicates that parenting in this cultural context may be perceived more holistically. Meanwhile, Ruminative Exploration of Alternatives emerged as a distinct and valid factor, consistent with previous cross-cultural findings, reinforcing its construct stability across different populations.

The removal of one item due to cross-loading issues reflects a linguistic nuance and points to the importance of cultural adaptation beyond literal translation. Reliability and validity results were acceptable, although the ruminative exploration subscale had a relatively lower alpha coefficient. The scale demonstrated expected associations with related constructs: internal investment was positively predicted by basic psychological need satisfaction and education level, while ruminative exploration was positively associated with need frustration and parental burnout. Gender differences also emerged, with mothers scoring higher in ruminative identity processing—possibly reflecting societal expectations around caregiving roles.

Conclusion

The findings confirm that the Turkish version of the Parental Identity Scale is a psychometrically sound instrument for use with parents of children aged 0–18. Results emphasize that parental identity development is closely linked with basic psychological needs, and that unmet needs may contribute to ruminative, maladaptive exploration processes, which in turn are associated with higher parental burnout. The study also highlights the protective role of well-established parental identity against psychological distress. These insights pave the way for future research exploring parental identity in various developmental stages and cultural contexts, as well as for designing interventions that support identity consolidation in parents. The validated scale now enables both national and cross-cultural studies to examine parenting-related identity processes in more depth.