

CHILDREN'S EMOTION REGULATION IN FAMILY CONTEXT:
CONTRIBUTIONS OF COPARENTING
AND PARENTS' SELF-COMPASSION

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
OZYEGIN UNIVERSITY



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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

MAY 2023

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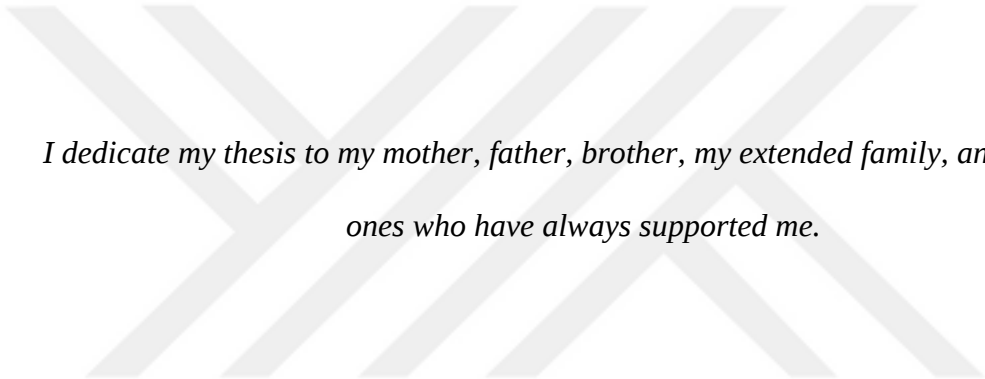
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I dedicate my thesis to my mother, father, brother, my extended family, and all loved ones who have always supported me.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study was to examine the dyadic relationship between parents' self-compassion and children's emotion regulation in early childhood, with a specific focus on the mediating role of the coparenting relationship (cooperation, conflict, and triangulation). The sample of this study consisted of 361 parental dyads (361 mothers and 361 fathers) who had at least one child between 29 and 118 months ($M = 70.15$, $SD = 18.08$). Both parents reported their level of self-compassion, the coparenting quality, and their child's emotion regulation. The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) and Actor-Partner Interdependence Mediation Model (APIMeM) analyses were conducted. APIM results showed a significant and positive relationship between parents' self-compassion and their report of child emotion regulation. In partner effects, only fathers' self-compassion was significantly and positively associated with mother-reported child emotion regulation. Additionally, both parents' self-compassion was associated with higher quality of coparenting relationship (higher cooperation, and lower conflict and triangulation) reported by themselves and their partner. However, fathers' self-compassion was not significantly associated with mothers' cooperation. Also, fathers' cooperation mediated the relationship between mothers' self-compassion and father-reported child emotion regulation, as well as the relationship between fathers' self-compassion and report of child emotion regulation. Additionally, mothers' conflict mediated the relationship between their self-compassion and father-report of child emotion regulation, as well as the relationship between fathers' self-compassion and mother-reported child emotion regulation. Implications of the findings, limitations, and future directions were discussed.

Keywords: parent self-compassion, coparenting, child emotion regulation, actor-partner interdependence model, actor-partner interdependence mediation model

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, ebeveynlerin öz-şefkati ile erken çocukluk dönemindeki çocukların duygu düzenlemesi arasındaki ilişkide, ortak ebeveynlik ilişkisinin aracı rolünü (işbirliği, çatışma ve üçgenleşme) aktör-partner ilişkilerine bakarak incelemektir. Bu araştırmanın örneklemini 29-118 aylık ($M=70.15$, $SD=18.08$) çocuğu olan 361 ebeveyn ikilisi (361 anne ve 361 baba) oluşturmuştur. Her iki ebeveyn de öz-şefkat düzeylerini, ortak ebeveynlik kalitesini ve çocuğun duygu düzenlemesini bildirdiler. Aktör-Partner Karşılıklı Bağımlılık Modeli (APIM) ve Aktör-Partner Karşılıklı Bağımlılık Aracılık Modeli (APIMeM) analizleri yapıldı. APIM sonuçları, her iki ebeveynin öz-şefkati ile kendilerinin bildirdikleri çocuğun duygu düzenlemesi arasında anlamlı ve pozitif bir ilişki olduğunu gösterdi. Partner etkisinde de, yalnızca babaların öz-şefkati, anne tarafından bildirilen çocuğun duygu düzenlemesi ile anlamlı ve pozitif bir şekilde ilişkiliydi. Ek olarak, her iki ebeveynin de öz-şefkatinin, kendileri ve eşleri tarafından bildirilen daha kaliteli ortak ebeveynlik ilişkisi (daha yüksek işbirliği ve daha düşük çatışma ve üçgenleşme) ile ilişkili olduğu bulundu. Ancak babaların öz-şefkatinin, annelerin işbirliği ile anlamlı bir şekilde ilişkili olmadığı bulundu. Ayrıca, babaların işbirliği, annelerin öz-şefkati ile babanın bildirdiği çocuğun duygu düzenlemesi arasındaki ilişkiye ve ayrıca babaların öz-şefkati ile babanın bildirdiği çocuğun duygu düzenlemesi arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık etmiştir. Ek olarak, annelerin çatışması, kendilerinin öz-şefkati ile baba tarafından bildirilen çocuğun duygu düzenlemesi arasındaki ilişkiye ve ayrıca babaların öz-şefkati ile anne tarafından bildirilen çocuğun duygu düzenlemesi arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık etmiştir. Bulguların çıkarımları, sınırlamalar ve gelecekteki yönelimler tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: ebeveyn öz-şefkati, ortak ebeveynlik, çocuk duygu düzenlemesi, aktör-partner karşılıklı bağımlılık modeli, aktör-partner karşılıklı bağımlılık aracılık modeli

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank to my supervisor Assoc. Prof. İbrahim H. Acar who has guided and supported me patiently during my graduate training and thesis process. He always encouraged and helped me so that I can do better, and he always made time for me in this challenging process. I am so grateful and feel lucky to be a student of and work with a hardworking, caring and intellectual advisor. I learned a lot from him both in my graduate training and thesis journey. I would also like to thank to my committee members Asst. Prof. M. Selenga Gürmen and Asst. Prof. Neslihan Yaman for their support during this process, for helping me improve my thesis with their valuable contributions and insightful comments to my research.

My appreciation goes to everyone that helped me in my graduate journey, which was challenging in every step. I would like to firstly thank to my best beloved friends from my undergraduate education who always cheered me up. I would also like to thank to my friends who are Özyeğin University Applied Developmental Psychology cohort members. Their friendship helped me go through the graduate training during pandemic.

Lastly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and love to my precious mother Şeyma who is my biggest supporter and rock in life, to my precious father Mehmet who is my biggest guide and role model especially in my academic life, to my uncle Ahmet Faruk Akça who is my dearest uncle with his all support, my brother Sami who is the one who always cheered me up and all my dearest family members. I would also thank my beloved elder sister Clin. Psy. Feyza Bağlan and

her dear mother for their support. I also appreciate all the people, precious principals and teachers and my loved ones who have helped me in data collection, supported me emotionally and spiritually and always been there for me.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Emotion regulation (ER) is the ability to manage and modulate intensive emotional arousal and reactions effectively (both positive and negative) in order to attain one's goals (Denham et al., 2003; Gross, 2008). It involves intrinsic and extrinsic processes that help individuals to exert control over the occurrence, intensity, and expression of emotions and thus to respond flexibly and appropriately to ongoing experiences (Cole et al., 1994; Morris et al., 2007). Briefly, being able to regulate undesired emotions adaptively and not allowing them to interfere with fulfilling personal goals and basic needs is a crucial life skill (Bridges et al., 2004). The development of emotion regulation is essential for children's well-being and healthy development, such as for social and emotional competence (Denham et al., 2003). Social-emotional competence is one of the crucial abilities in one's life to establish healthy relationships, which allows children to process social information successfully, form better peer relationships, have school readiness and better mental health (Denham & Burton, 2003; Denham, 1998; Saarni, 1999), which are foundational skills for social-emotional success in adulthood (Denham & Burton, 2003). Furthermore, emotion dysregulation constitutes a risk for various forms of psychopathology, such as children's externalizing behavior problems (Coulacoglou & Saklofske, 2017; Halligan et al., 2013).

In early childhood, children become gradually less dependent on adults for self-regulation, such as decreased need for co-regulating with a parent, and learn new strategies to modulate the intensity and duration of their emotions, such as expressing their emotions in their interactions (Cole et al., 1994; Galyer, & Evans,

2001). Preschool-aged children begin to use self-directed emotion regulation strategies to cope with emotional arousals (Denham et al., 2003). For example, with pretend play, children mimic emotions in their play and hereby, can gain mastery in regulation, which is by expressing, processing, and regulating their emotions in their safe environment (Fein, 1989; Galyer, & Evans, 2001).

In early childhood, developing emotion regulation abilities including coping with anxiety in distressful situations and tolerating frustration is a developmental task for children to accomplish (Cole et al., 1994). The fundamental factor that affects children's accomplishment in this developmental stage and the development of emotion regulation skills is the social interactions, particularly in the family context (Morris et al., 2007). A child learns the nature of interactions and the way of approaching problems firstly in his/her own family. So, the family environment and parent-child interactions become a rehearsal stage for children to learn modulating emotions and responding appropriately, which then spills over to other social interactions in life (Denham et al., 1997). For instance, children growing up in homes, where marital discord is frequent, interact with their peers more negatively (Gottman & Katz, 1989). Also, parents become the first model for children that show how to deal with emotional difficulties. For example, children with difficulties in coping with stress-arousing situations and having anxiety disorders are observed to have more anxious parents (Reeves et al., 1987). Briefly, the child's family environment plays a vital role in developing adaptive skills and healthy functioning.

In the family context, there are different components that play a role in the development of emotion regulation, such as the emotional climate of the family or the parents' well-being (Morris et al., 2007). Coparenting relationship, which is

defined as an interparental relationship based on their parenting role and child-rearing duties and is characterized by support and coordination (or lack of them) in this relationship is one dimension that reflects the emotional climate of the family (Feinberg, 2003; Morris et al., 2007). Interparental interactions around this role and duties may create various emotion-eliciting situations between parents, and the degree of displayed emotions (i.e., positive or negative) during these interactions determines the emotional climate of the family.

For children to develop healthy adaptive skills, they need to feel emotionally secure in the family environment (Davies & Cummings, 1994). But coparental conflict constitutes a risk factor for children's social-emotional development, which results in developing aggression at preschool age (McHale & Rasmussen, 1998). In addition, in conflictual families, children develop various forms of maladaptive responses in the face of interparental disputes such as antagonistic behaviors towards parents, anxious bids to distract parents, or freezing (Davies et al., 2022).

Another fundamental factor for children's development of emotion regulation is the parents' well-being, such as mental health or how they handle emotional arousals (Morris et al., 2007). Self-compassion, which is defined as approaching oneself with kindness during emotional difficulties and not allowing oneself to get lost in negative feelings, can be interpreted as a useful emotion regulation strategy in adulthood (Neff, 2003a). Therefore, self-compassionate parents may be a good model for children to learn how to cope with emotional arousals.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Family systems theory offers a comprehensive framework while studying human development and functioning. It examines the processes of child development

in relation to family subsystems and interactions, such as parent-child subsystem, couple subsystem or triadic subsystem (i.e., mother-father-child subsystem) (Minuchin, 1985). Family systems theorists also put emphasis on the interdependence of subsystems suggesting that “changes can arise at any level of the family system, and a change at one level can stimulate further change in individuals, relationships, and the whole family system” (Cox & Paley, 2003, p. 195). For example, even if negative interactions between parents may not directly involve the child, this certainly has an impact on the child's emotional development and undermines his/her sense of emotional security when being exposed to these kinds of interactions repeatedly (Cox & Paley, 2003; Davies & Cummings, 1994). Because witnessing quarrels between adults even in the background evokes emotional distress in children and challenges their adaptive skills (Cummings, 1987). So, while studying children's development of emotion regulation, multiple levels of family systems, and transactions between them should be considered.

While family systems theory suggests a scope to discuss the family context about various components of human development, the tripartite model by Morris and her colleagues (2007), complementarily, which is also based on the family systems view, specifically examines the impact of the family on children's emotion regulation and adjustment. Morris and her colleagues (2007) argue that the family context influences children's ER through three processes: observation of parents' emotion regulation (e.g., modeling, social referencing, emotion contagion), emotion-related parenting practices (e.g., emotion coaching, reactions to emotions) and emotional climate of the family (e.g., attachment/parenting style, marital relations, emotional expressivity). Based on the model of Morris and her colleagues (2007),

the current study involves the coparenting relationship as reflecting the emotional climate of the family, and parents' self-compassion as being a model for children in coping with difficult emotions. Since the frequency and amount of positive or negative emotions in relationships color the emotional climate of the family (Thompson & Meyer, 2007), the coparenting relationship is one of the interparental systems where parents reflect the emotional atmosphere between them (Feinberg, 2003). As to being a model in emotion regulation, children observe their parents in order to know how to react in certain situations (Denham et al., 1997), and the attitude of parents in the face of an emotional difficulty or personal failure, whether self-compassionate or self-critical, may be a reference for children in similar situations (Morris et al., 2007).

Studies about within-family processes, parents and child development usually focus on the impact of mothers on children and exclude fathers. However, since the family consists of individuals and systems that continuously and reciprocally influence each other (Cox & Paley, 1997), both parents should be included when studying child outcomes. Even if forming a healthy relationship with a parent may be thought of as sufficient, each parents' individual relationship with their child cannot be not a substitute for each other, but complementary for child outcomes (Doyle et al., 2000). For example, supportive coparenting of mothers and fathers results in different emotional developmental outcomes for infants (Brown et al., 2010). Fathers are especially important for children's peer relationships in order for them to learn emotional expressions of peers and be more competent and accepted in peer relationships (Gottman et al., 1996; Parke et al., 2004). Because mothers and fathers are not integral but interdependent entities in the family that have distinct

influences on children, we aimed to collect dyadic data from both parents. And, in order to capture a more comprehensive perspective on child emotional development and discover what kind of developmental pathways the mothers and fathers have a role in, conducting a dyadic analysis would be more appropriate. Hence, this study aimed to investigate different family dynamics from both mothers' and fathers' perspectives.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Predictors of ER

In the following sections, the role of parents' self-compassion and coparenting relationship on children's emotion regulation will be mentioned.

2.1.1 Parent Self-Compassion and Child Emotion Regulation

Parents, as social agents in the immediate environment of children, are the main drivers for child development. Parents, as part of the family system, acquire personal well-being to initiate and sustain healthy within-family functioning (Ford & Gross, 2018). For example, parents' psychological well-being is the greatest predictor of children's psychological well-being (Newland, 2015). It affects children directly and indirectly by influencing the entire family system, such as their parenting skills, coparenting, and family resiliency (Newland, 2015; Regalado et al., 2004; Williams, 2018). A burgeoning body of research included in the meta-analysis of Zessin and his colleagues (2015) proposes that one of the important contributors to individuals' psychological well-being is self-compassion. Self-compassion is defined as "offering nonjudgmental understanding to one's pain, inadequacies, and failures", "not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one's suffering and to heal oneself with kindness" (Neff, 2003a, p. 87). When experiencing personal failure or emotional hardship, self-compassion manifests itself with three components: (a) self-kindness - approaching oneself with kindness and understanding as opposed to self-criticism and harsh judgment, (b) common humanity - recognizing that challenges and emotional difficulties are common to everyone as opposed to feeling alone and isolating oneself, and (c) mindfulness -

responding to difficult emotions with balanced awareness as opposed to emotionally overwhelming or suppressing (Neff, 2003a). These are actually emotion regulation strategies (e.g., awareness and acceptance of emotions) that are consciously activated in order not to be dragged along by an emotional “tornado”. Relatedly, in several studies, self-compassion was found to be an important contributor to adaptive emotion regulation for clinical and nonclinical adult populations (Diedrich et al., 2014; Inwood & Ferrari, 2018).

Fundamental beliefs about emotions, such as attitude towards them and controllability of emotions, are another predictor of one’s well-being. It is a factor that shapes parents’ emotion regulation and determines whether they initiate extrinsic emotion regulation processes with their children (De Castella et al., 2013). Ford and Gross (2018) suggest that when individuals have the ability to evaluate the emotions within the frame of the context -whether useful or harmful- and believe in the controllability of emotions rather than uncontrollability, this impacts their emotion regulation processes, as well as predicts the way they encourage children’s emotion regulation. Since self-compassion adopts an attitude that approaches one’s own negative emotions with understanding and responds to them mindfully, this may affect how parents perceive and direct their children’s emotions in stressful situations. Self-compassionate parents may be more accepting of the difficult emotions of their children, as they are of their emotions. Therefore, the parents’ self-compassion may help children cope with the difficulties by initiating extrinsic emotion regulation processes due to its potential contribution to fundamental positive beliefs about emotions.

As the previous literature suggests, one of the important predictors of children's ability to regulate emotions and exhibit appropriate responses to emotional experiences is how parents regulate their emotional arousal (Denham et al., 1997). Observing and modeling parents are one of the essential learning mechanisms of children (Bandura & Walters, 1977; Morris et al., 2007). Children reference their parents in emotion-eliciting situations in order to know how to interpret the situation and respond (Hajal & Paley, 2020; Saarni et al., 2006). For example, children of anxious parents become more fearful, and due to parents' transmission of anxiety, these children elicit increased negative reactions in novel and ambiguous situations (Aktar & Bögels, 2017). Because self-compassion is a useful coping strategy against distressing feelings (Neff, 2003a), self-compassion of parents may reinforce children's development of emotion regulation mechanisms through observation of handling difficult emotions (Inwood & Ferrari, 2018). However, the link between parents' self-compassion and children's emotion regulation skills is unexplored.

Given that the current study will explore both mothers and fathers' self-compassion pertaining to children's emotion regulation, it is important to understand whether there are gender differences in self-compassion. Findings from previous work suggest that women report less self-compassion than men (Yarnell et al., 2015). Women are found to be more self-critical and use more poor coping self-talk than men (DeVore & Pritchard, 2013), whereas using positive self-talk is one of the strategies that enhances individuals' self-compassion (Georgakaki & Karakasidou, 2017).

2.1.2 Coparenting Relationship and Child Emotion Regulation

Coparenting relationship as part of the family systems is an aspect of interparental relationships that involves parents'/parental figures' sharing responsibility of child-rearing, supporting (or undermining) each other's parenting and collaborating with each other. It excludes romantic, and sexual aspects of couple relationship, and refers to how parents handle the childrearing duties together (Feinberg, 2002). Coparenting is investigated in three dimensions: (a) cooperation - supporting each other's parenting and exchanging information regarding the child, (b) conflict - parents' dispute about principles and demands in child-rearing, and (c) triangulation - dragging the child into interparental conflict and leading the child to take side of one parent (Pinquart & Teubert, 2015). Coparenting relationship is central to family functioning having a stronger impact on parents' parenting and child outcomes than other aspects of interparental relationship, such as marital relationship (Feinberg, 2003). It is described as "the executive subsystem" regulating different family subsystems by family system theorist S. Minuchin (1974, p. 145). Cooperation in their parental role leads both parents to a warmer, more committed, and communicative relationship with their children, as well as predicts higher social-emotional functioning in children, such as self-esteem and positive play behavior with peers, compared to children with uncooperative parents (Camara & Resnick, 1989). A meta-analysis examining the effect of coparenting on children revealed its significant role in changes in children's psychological adjustment (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010).

Children observe how parents interact with each other and handle problematic situations. They are a constant audience of their parents' relationships,

disagreements, and reconciliations (or lack of it) (Minuchin, 1985). Exposure of children to unsolved, hostile, and frequent interparental conflicts has detrimental impacts on the development of children. In this kind of environment, children observe aggression as a way to deal with interpersonal discordance. As a result, coparenting conflict and triangulation appear to be contributing factors to develop externalizing and internalizing symptoms in children, which are associated with emotion regulation problems (Aldao et al., 2016; Halligan et al., 2013; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). Experiencing hostile parental interactions also constitutes a risk factor for children by decreasing their sense of security in their immediate environment, which is crucial for buffering the outcome of anxiety-arousing situations (Bowlby, 1973). Reduced sense of emotional security weakens children's ability to effectively cope with daily stresses and display emotional and behavioral regulation (Davies & Cummings, 1994). While these studies reveal the influence of negative coparenting relationship on children's functioning, which results in emotion dysregulation, positive and supportive coparenting relationship was found to be positively associated with children's emotion regulation abilities (Park & Nahm, 2015; Qian et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2021).

Previous work has shown that mothers and fathers differ in their coparenting practices (Acar et al., 2021; Seward & Rush, 2015; Therbon, 2004). The divergence in coparenting may be more salient in patriarchal cultures, given parenting roles of mothers and fathers are distinctly determined (Seward & Rush, 2015; Therbon, 2004). From this point of view, mothers' and fathers' coparenting could be differently related to children's emotion regulation (Brown et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, studies investigating the distinctive influence of mothers' and fathers' perceived coparenting relationship on child outcomes have been limited.

2.1.3 Link from Parent Self-Compassion to Coparenting Relationship

Parents' individual characteristics and psychological state are one of the predictors of the quality of interparental subsystems (Baum, 2004; Rutter & Quinton, 1984). Self-compassion was found to have an impact on interpersonal relationships, such as romantic relationships. Neff and Beretvas (2013) pointed out that self-compassion is a strong predictor of positive relationship behavior within-family relations, even more influential than attachment style to partner. Kindness towards self contributes to kindness toward the partner, thus increases the relatedness and supportiveness between couples. On the other side, in this study, participants who were self-critical were hard on their partners. A scoping literature review by Lathren and her colleagues (2021) also demonstrated that self-compassion was the underlying mechanism for positive interpersonal relationships.

Overall, parents' individual characteristics, such as their well-being, is associated with their supportive coparenting behaviors (Williams, 2018), thus, parents' self-compassion may affect the quality of coparenting relationship. The very same study of Williams (2018) has also shown that one parent's level of well-being influences how they perceive their partner's coparenting behaviors. Because low levels of well-being were found to be related to lower levels of self-compassion and higher self-criticism (Ehret et al., 2015), when one parent approaches oneself in a more critical way, this may also be the way they approach other parent's failures, and thus negatively affect how their partner cooperates with and supports the individual in the childrearing domain. Self-compassion of parents is a relatively new

research topic in developmental psychology. Even though its impact on other couple relationships has been investigated (Neff & Beretvas, 2013), the influence of self-compassion on coparenting is yet unexplored. Also, whether one's level of self-compassion determines one's own and other parent's perception of coparenting relationship is another conceptual association to discover.

2.2 Bringing all together: Indirect Association from Parents' Self-Compassion to Children's Emotion Regulation through Coparenting Relationship

As family systems theory suggests, there are many components in the social context of a child that affect the development of emotion regulation. The subsystems and individuals in the family cannot be considered as independent entities. That is, different subsystems (e.g., parent-child subsystem, couple subsystem) affect each other within and across levels. Individuals in the family are a system all by itself, as well (Cox & Paley, 1997). Therefore, the psychological state of parents determines how they affect other individuals and subsystems (Newland, 2015; Regalado et al., 2004; Williams, 2018). As a significant contributor to parents' psychological well-being (Zessin et al., 2015), self-compassion was found to be contributing to within-family functioning including parental warmth, greater emotional awareness of child's emotional states and self-regulation in the parenting relationship (Gouveia et al., 2016). These are important parental attitudes for children to acquire adaptive emotion regulation abilities (Cassidy, 1994). Also, previous studies revealed that children of mindful parents, which is associated with parents' self-compassion, exhibit higher adaptive emotion regulation (Zhang et al., 2019). Therefore, each parents' self-compassion as reflecting their psychological state may have an impact on children's development of emotion regulation.

Although the self-compassion of parents may be influential on child outcomes, it may be an underlying mechanism for supporting or inhibiting interparental relationships within a family (Regalado et al., 2004). In detail, considering the interdependence across family systems, the parents also determine the quality of couple subsystems (Cox & Paley, 2003). Individual characteristics and psychological state of mothers and fathers are significant in predicting their coparenting quality (McDaniel et al., 2018). In the current study, we studied self-compassion as representing the functioning of parents and observe its impact on their own and their partner's coparenting relationship as reflecting the interparental subsystem, which is the most influential couple system on children's functioning (Camara & Resnick, 1989; Minuchin, 1974). Since parents' psychological well-being is important for the quality of interparental relationships (Neff & Beretvas, 2013; Rutter & Quinton, 1984), self-compassion of individuals may also predict a more positive coparenting relationship reported by themselves. Because self-compassionate people view the couple relationship more positively and feel happier in the relationship than individuals with low self-compassion (Neff & Beretvas, 2013). Further, self-compassionate individuals were found to have more empathic concern for others, which refers to considering others' well-being, such like they do to themselves (Neff & Pommier, 2013). Therefore, a self-compassionate individual may support their partner more in coparenting regarding their partner's well-being, which may lead the partner to perceive and report a better coparenting relationship.

Overall, dynamics in the couple subsystem are substantial for children's healthy functioning. Although findings from previous studies suggested that coparenting relationship could be contributing to children's emotion regulation (Park

& Nahm 2015; Qian et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2021), the dyadic approach that involves both parents' perception of coparenting relationship has yet not been examined. Therefore, we will examine the coparenting reported by both mother and father predicting children's emotion regulation. More specifically, we will examine the impact of both parents' self-compassion on children's emotion regulation by testing the mediator effect of the coparenting relationship.

2.3 The Current Study

2.3.1 The Significance of the Current Study

This study will contribute to the extension of previous literature by examining the contributions of different family subsystems (e.g., parents' self-compassion and coparenting relationship) to children's emotion regulation. Alongside parents' self-compassion being relatively a new area in family and parenthood studies, its influence on child emotion regulation, and on coparenting relationship has been yet unexplored. Self-compassion of parents may prevent many negative impacts of family adverse life experiences by buffering the emotional burden. Thereby, it may add a substantial protective and promotive factor in children's life by promoting healthy relationships and functioning in the family (Lathren et al., 2020; 2021). Enhancing the understanding of the contributions of self-compassion in the family context and child development may add novel directions in supporting children's emotional development, as well as family well-being in family therapies and intervention programs.

Studies investigating the roles of parents on child outcomes may have excluded fathers' role sometimes due to difficulties in data collection or unwillingness of fathers to research. Mothers can be treated as representatives of

parenting and the only caregiver in the family because caretaking responsibility is attributed mainly to them (Minuchin, 1985; Rentzou et al., 2019). However, utilizing solely mother reports gives an incomplete picture about children's functioning and their environment pertaining to researched phenomena. Thus, the current study will examine both mothers' and fathers' perceptions of coparenting relationships and self-compassion. The impact of mothers' and fathers' level of self-compassion on the couple system and on the child was not investigated before. In this way, we can have a broader perspective on the family environment of the child, and how differently or similarly these patterns proceed for both parents. In addition, mothers and fathers perceive children's emotional states from different perspectives (Klimes-Dougan et al., 2007; Morey & Gentzler, 2017; Shewark & Blandon, 2014). On that ground, assessing children's emotion regulation by both mother and father reports may provide a comprehensive picture regarding differentiated paths from self-compassion and coparenting relations.

2.3.2 The Purpose and Research Questions of the Current Study

Based on family systems theory and the theoretical model of emotion regulation (Morris et al., 2007), the present study aimed to examine the contributions of parents' (father and mother) self-compassion and coparenting relationships to children's emotion regulation. Specifically, this study explored the indirect effects of parents' self-compassion on children's emotion regulation through the coparenting relationship. To fulfill the purpose of the current study, the following research questions and corresponding hypotheses were addressed:

RQ1: To what extent are mothers' and fathers' self-compassion associated with their own perception of the coparenting relationship and children's emotion regulation?

H1a: Mothers' and fathers' self-compassion will be positively associated with a supportive coparenting relationship (cooperation) and negatively associated with coparenting conflict and triangulation.

H1b: Mothers' and fathers' self-compassion will be positively associated with children's emotion regulation.

RQ2: To what extent are mothers' and fathers' self-compassion associated with their partner's coparenting relationship?

H2a: Mothers' and fathers' high levels of self-compassion will be positively associated with a supportive partner's coparenting relationship (cooperation).

H2b: Mothers' and fathers' high levels of self-compassion will be negatively associated with coparenting conflict and triangulation.

RQ3: Are mothers' and fathers' self-compassion indirectly associated with children's emotion regulation through their perception of the coparenting relationship?

H3a: Mothers' and fathers' high levels of self-compassion will lead to a supportive coparenting relationship (cooperation), which in turn, could increase children's emotion regulation.

H3b: Lack of self-compassion may undermine partners' coparenting cooperation or induce negative effects of coparenting triangulation and conflict, which may place an adverse effect on children's emotion regulation.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

3.1 Participants

Considering there was no previous research examined the proposed conceptual model, we based our required sample size on similar previous work (Breitenstein et al., 2017; van den Brink et al., 2018; Yuan, 2016) and power analysis for Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (Ackerman & Kenny, 2016), which was grounded on APIM power analyses with medium effects sizes to detect (Actor: .29 and Partner: .20).

The sample consisted of 368 parental dyads with a child in the early childhood period. Children's (196 boys and 165 girls) ages ranged from 29 to 118 months ($M = 70.15$ months, $SD = 18.08$ months). Children were typically developing with no special developmental or educational needs. Both parents were instructed to provide information pertaining to the same child in the early childhood period in cases where they had more than one child in this age range. After testing multivariate outliers, 361 dyads remained (See data screening section for details). In 361 parental dyads, only 4 of them were divorced.

The majority of parents reported a high level of monthly household income. 0.8% of dyads reported monthly income level as 5000TL and lower, 3.6% as between 5001-6000TL, 3.9% as between 6001-7000TL, 6.4% as between 7001-8000TL, 5.0% as between 8001-9000TL, 5.0% as between 9001-10000TL, 3.9% as between 10001-11000TL, 5.0% as between 11001-12000TL, 5.5% as between 12001-13000TL and 60.1% as 13000TL and higher.

The sample consisted of mostly well-educated mothers and fathers. 8.6% of mothers reported their educational level as primary school, 7.5% as secondary school, 19.1% as high school, 49% as university, 13.3% as postgraduate and 2.2% as a doctorate. 5.8% of fathers reported their educational level as primary school, 7.8% as secondary school, 19.4% as high school, 49.9% as university, 13% as postgraduate and 3.6% as a doctorate. To create a family socioeconomic status (SES) variable, we averaged standardized monthly household income and educational level of parents (z-transformations). See Table 1 for detailed information.

Table 1
Participants' Demographic Information

	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
Child Sex				
Boys	196 (54.3)			
Girls	165 (45.7)			
Child Age (In Months)	361	70.15	18.08	29-118
Mothers' Occupation Status	361			
Employed	146 (40.4)			
Unemployed	215 (59.6)			
Fathers' Occupation Status	361			
Employed	355 (98.3)			
Unemployed	6 (1.7)			
Mothers' Education Status	360			
Primary School	31 (8.6)			
Secondary School	27 (7.5)			
High School	69 (19.1)			
University	177 (49.0)			

Postgraduate	48 (13.3)
Doctorate	8 (2.2)
Fathers' Education Status	359
Primary School	21 (5.8)
Secondary School	28 (7.8)
High School	70 (19.4)
University	180 (49.9)
Postgraduate	47 (13.0)
Doctorate	13 (3.6)
Marital Status	360
Married	356 (98.7)
Divorced	4 (1.3)
Family Income (monthly)	358
5000TL and lower	3 (0.8)
5001-6000TL	13 (3.6)
6001-7000TL	14 (3.9)
7001-8000TL	23 (6.4)
8001-9000TL	18 (5.0)
9001-10000TL	18 (5.0)
10001-11000TL	14 (3.9)
11001-12000TL	18 (5.0)
12001-13000TL	20 (5.5)
13000TL and higher	217 (60.1)

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, Child's Sex (Girls= 1, Boys= 0).

3.2. Measures

3.2.1 Child Emotion Regulation

We used the Emotion Regulation Subscale of the Emotion Regulation Checklist, which consists of 8 items (ERC; Shields & Cicchetti, 1997). The subscale consists of socially appropriate emotional displays (e.g., “*My child responds positively to neutral or friendly overtures by adults*”). Both parents reported the child's emotion regulation to capture the dyadic view of the children's emotion regulation. Parents rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *never* to 4 = *always*. We averaged the items to create the composite score, and higher scores indicated higher levels of emotion regulation. The Emotion Regulation Checklist has been used and validated among Turkish children (Yagmurlu & Altan 2010). In the current research, the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for the Emotion Regulation subscale reported by mothers was .65 and by fathers .63. Even though we found low internal consistency, these values were similar to previous studies ($\alpha=.62$ in Çelebi, 2022; $\alpha= .55$ in Seçer, 2017 and $\alpha= .59/.66$ in Bandon et al., 2008).

3.2.2 Coparenting Relationship

To measure the quality of the coparenting relationship, The Coparenting Inventory for Parents with Preschoolers (CI-PP; Pinquart & Teubert, 2015), which consists of 12 items, was used. Both mothers and fathers reported their perception of coparenting quality in terms of three subscales: (a) cooperation (4 items) (e.g., “*If there is a problem with our child, we search for a solution together*”), (b) conflict (4 items) (e.g., “*My partner and I disagree on fulfilling our child's wishes and demands*”), and (c) triangulation (4 items) (e.g., “*My partner and I discuss our problems regarding child-rearing in front of our child*”). Responses were given on a

4-point Likert-type scale (1 = *not at all true* and 4 = *completely true*). The Coparenting Inventory for Parents with Preschoolers has been used and validated among Turkish parents (Acar et al., 2021). We averaged the items to create the composite score, and higher scores indicated higher levels of that construct. In the current study, all dimensions showed satisfactory internal consistency for mothers and fathers (for mothers; cooperation: $\alpha=.83$ & conflict: $\alpha=.75$ & triangulation: $\alpha=.77$; for fathers; cooperation: $\alpha=.78$ & conflict $\alpha = .74$ & triangulation: $\alpha = .74$).

3.2.3 Self-Compassion of Parents

To measure parents' self-compassion, Self-Compassion Scale: Short Form (SCS-SF; Raes et al., 2011), which is a shortened version of the long version by Neff (2003b) was used. The Turkish adaptation of SCS-SF was done by Yıldırım and Sari (2018). The adapted version consists of one dimension and 11 items (e.g., "*When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need*"). We averaged the items to create the composite score, and higher scores indicated higher levels of self-compassion. Responses were given on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *never* and 5 = *always*). In the current study, the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) by mothers was .85 and by fathers .81., which indicates acceptable reliability.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

First of all, ethical approval for the study protocol was obtained from Özyeğin University Research Ethics Committee. Couples with children in early childhood were contacted through online platforms, kindergartens, and primary schools. Qualtrics was used for online data collection by utilizing made-up matching codes for couples. Hardcopies of measures, along with consent forms were

distributed to parents via kindergartens and primary schools for in-person data collection. Completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher in an enclosed envelope in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants. In online data collection, after filling out the informed consent form, participants were presented with the survey questions. Participation in this study was voluntary. Parents who had children with developmental disabilities were not included due to the nature and purpose of the study. Data were collected from a Turkish sample.

For both online and hardcopy data collection, participants were asked to form a Couple ID to match the couples, which included a common nickname with a word, number, and punctuation.

3.4 Data Analytical Approach

3.4.1 Data Screening

We transferred the collected data to the. Preliminary analyses were conducted with 361 parent dyads, which corresponds to 722 participants. Firstly, in order to calculate the composite scores of each variable, after reversing the required items, we averaged all the related items.

Secondly, for the missing value analyses, we revealed no more than %5 of the missing data. The percentage of missing values of each subscale is demonstrated in Table 2. We conducted Little's (1988) MCAR (Missing Completely at Random) test, which resulted in $\chi^2(41) = 41.280, p = .458$. The result of the applied missing value analysis (MVA) demonstrated that the missing values were completely random.

Thirdly, we analyzed the data in order to assess the multivariate outliers. In order to detect multivariate outliers, we used Mahalanobis Distance method

(Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). We found 7 outliers, $\chi^2 (10, N= 368) = 35.5640$, $p=.0001$. After deleting the outliers, 361 parent dyads (722 participants) remained for further analyses. Also, in order to assess the normality assumption, we tested skewness and kurtosis. To meet the criteria for the assumption of normality, while the values of skewness are considered to be between +2 and -2, the values kurtosis are to be +7 and -7 (George & Mallery, 2019; for critical values of kurtosis see Byrne, 2010) (Table 2).

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Demographic and Study Variables

	<i>Missing (%)</i>	<i>Min-Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>
Mothers						
Coparenting Dimensions						
Cooperation		1.50-4.00	3.63	.514	-1.758	2.816
Conflict		1.00-3.75	1.94	.681	.423	-.623
Triangulation		1.00-3.25	1.40	.505	1.717	3.082
Self-Compassion	0.3%	1.27-5.00	3.42	.683	-.272	.104
Child Emotion Regulation	0.6%	2.00-4.50	3.31	.406	-.505	.068
Fathers						
Coparenting Dimensions						
Cooperation		2.00-4.00	3.64	.459	-1.801	3.787
Conflict		1.00-3.75	1.83	.662	.484	-.690
Triangulation		1.00-3.75	1.37	.492	1.578	2.372
Self-Compassion	0.6%	1.18-5.00	3.62	.657	-.460	.315
Child Emotion Regulation	1.4%	2.13-4.00	3.27	.401	-.440	-.383

Note. Min = Minimum, Max = Maximum, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Considering that data collection was conducted both online and in-person, we ran a comparative analysis of the main study variables across parents from these two data collection modes. The results of an independent t-test revealed significant differences between online and in-person data in relation to the study variables (see Appendix E for detailed information). Specifically, parents from the online data group reported higher levels of coparenting cooperation, self-compassion, and child emotion regulation, while exhibiting lower levels of coparenting conflict and triangulation.

Given the notable disparity between the two data collection methods, we further explored the potential association between demographic variables, such as child age, child sex, parents' education level, and income, and the observed differences. A chi-square test was performed to examine these associations. The results indicated that parents who completed the online data collection had significantly higher levels of education ($\chi^2(6) = 46.992, p < .001$, $\chi^2(6) = 48.371, p < .001$ for mothers and fathers, respectively) and family income ($\chi^2(10) = 65.284, p < .001$) compared to parents who participated in the in-person data collection.

These findings clearly demonstrate that socioeconomic status (SES) played a significant role in driving the differences observed between the two data collection methods. Consequently, we incorporated family SES as a covariate in our subsequent statistical analyses to control for its potential influence on the observed differences.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Preliminary Analysis

We performed Pearson's bivariate correlation in order to evaluate the associations between focal study variables, which were both parents' coparenting (cooperation, conflict, and triangulation), self-compassion, and both parents' report of their child's emotion regulation, as well as demographics (i.e., child age, gender, and family SES). See Table 3.

Each variable was tested for mothers and fathers. Results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between mothers' and fathers' self-compassion $r(357) = .326, p < .001$. We also found a significant positive correlation among the coparenting dimensions, which are cooperation, conflict, and triangulation. The correlation between mothers' and fathers' cooperation was significantly positive ($r(360) = .652, p < .001$), as well as between mothers' and fathers' reports of conflict ($r(360) = .622, p < .001$), and of triangulation ($r(360) = .702, p < .001$). The report of child emotion regulation by mothers and fathers was also significantly and positively correlated ($r(359) = .671, p < .001$).

The associations between parents' self-compassion and coparenting dimensions were tested. Results indicated that mothers' self-compassion was significantly and positively correlated with their coparenting cooperation ($r(359) = .274, p < .001$) and significantly and negatively correlated with their coparenting conflict ($r(360) = -.402, p < .001$). Also, fathers' self-compassion was significantly and positively correlated with their coparenting cooperation ($r(359) = .210, p < .05$),

and significantly and negatively correlated with their coparenting conflict ($r(359) = -.360, p < .001$).

The associations of variables with child emotion regulation were tested.

While fathers' coparenting cooperation was significantly and positively correlated with child emotion regulation reported by fathers ($r(359) = .280, p = .002$), mothers' coparenting cooperation was also significantly correlated with child emotion regulation reported by mothers ($r(359) = .219, p < .001$). Pearson Bivariate Correlation results of all study variables were demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3
Intercorrelations Among Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Self-Compassion													
1. Mothers	-												
2. Fathers	.33**	-											
Coparenting Cooperation													
3. Mothers	.27**	.16**	-										
4. Fathers	.23**	.21**	.66**	-									
Coparenting Conflict													
5. Mothers	-.40**	-.24*	-.47**	-.44**	-								
6. Fathers	-.28**	-.36**	-.40**	-.48**	.62**	-							
Coparenting Triangulation													
7. Mothers	-.29**	-.26**	-.41	-.37	.55	.42	-						
8. Fathers	-.24**	-.37**	-.34	-.33	.44	.49	.70**	-					
Child Emotion Regulation													
9. Mother reported	.20**	.20**	.22**	.24**	-.17**	-.14**	-.10	-.10	-				
10. Father reported	.18**	.27**	.20**	.28**	-.26*	-.24**	-.21**	-.21**	.67**	-			
Demographics													
11. Child age	.003	-.004	-.40	-.80	.10*	.10*	.09	.10*	-.07	-.09	-		
12. Child sex	-.06	-.02	.08	.03	-.001	.01	.01	-.02	-.06	-.03	.50	-	
13. Family SES	.08	.08	.20	.04	-.09	-.12	.05	-.09	.20*	.10	-.30**	-.10*	-

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$ (two-tailed). Child sex (girls=1, boys=0), SES = Socioeconomic Status

4.2 Parent Differences in Study Variables

In order to examine differences between mothers and fathers across main study variables, we conducted Paired sample t-tests. Results demonstrated that the difference between mothers ($M = 3.42$, $SD = .68$) and fathers ($M = 3.62$, $SD = .65$) on their self-compassion was statistically significant, $t(357) = -4.86$, $p < .001$, $d = .26$, fathers reported higher than mothers. Also, the difference between mothers ($M = 1.94$, $SD = .68$) and fathers ($M = 1.83$, $SD = .66$) on coparenting conflict was statistically significant, $t(360) = -4.86$, $p < .001$, $d = .18$, mothers reported higher than fathers. No statistically significant difference was observed between mothers' and fathers' coparenting cooperation, $t(360) = -.66$, $p = .51$, and triangulation, $t(360) = 1.43$, $p = .15$, as well as between mothers' and fathers' report of child emotion regulation, $t(355) = 1.94$, $p = .053$. See Table 4 for the t-test results.

Table 4
Results of the t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Comparison of Mothers vs. Fathers

Variable	Mothers		Fathers		t-test	p-value (two-tailed)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Coparenting Cooperation	3.63	.514	3.64	.459	-0.664	.507
Coparenting Conflict	1.94	.681	1.83	.662	3.480	.001
Coparenting Triangulation	1.40	.505	1.37	.492	1.434	.152
Parent Self-Compassion	3.42	.683	3.62	.657	-4.864	.000
Child Emotion Regulation	3.31	.406	3.27	.401	1.940	.053

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation.

4.3 Actor–Partner Interdependence Models (APIM)

In this study, we used the actor–partner interdependence models (APIM) in order to investigate the actor and partner effects of study variables, as well as to show the interdependence between partners (Cook & Kenny, 2005). We examined the relationship between both parents' self-compassion (predictor variable) and emotion regulation of children in early childhood (outcome variable). To analyze APIM model, we employed structural equation model and the program lavaan by using a website which enables to conduct dyadic data analysis, APIM_SEM (Rosseel, 2012; Stas et al., 2008) (see https://apimsem.ugent.be/shiny/apim_sem/). In the current study, we only conducted one APIM model analysis.

4.3.1 Association between Parents' Self-Compassion and Child's Emotion Regulation reported by Both Parents

Association between both parents' self-compassion and their child's emotion regulation was tested through the APIM model using APIM_SEM (Stas et al., 2008). Firstly, the analyses used structural equation modeling with maximum likelihood estimation using the program lavaan (Rosseel, 2012). The tests of coefficients are Z tests. Effect sizes for actor and partner effects are partial correlations. Betas are given twice, one using the overall standard deviation across all persons (o) for standardization and a second using the standard deviation for mothers and fathers separately (s). If betas are to be compared across members, the beta (o) value should be examined. For all these analyses, alpha is set at 0.05.

Secondly, in order to test if the sex of parents makes a statistically meaningful difference, a model comparison was performed between a model with distinguishable members and a model with indistinguishable members. This overall

test of distinguishability yielded a chi square statistic with 15 degrees of freedom which equals 60.766 ($p < .001$). Because this test of distinguishability was statistically significant, we concluded that members could be statistically distinguished based on their sex.

Thirdly, the actor effect for the mothers' self-compassion was equal to 0.086 ($p = .008$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.15]). The overall standardized effect for the mothers was 0.142 (partial $r = .150$). The actor effect for the fathers' self-compassion was equal to 0.139 ($p < .001$, 95% CI [0.07, 0.21]) and the overall standardized actor effect for the fathers was 0.230 (partial $r = .222$). When tested if the two actor effects were equal, the difference was found not to be statistically significant, $p = .307$, 95% CI [-0.15, 0.05]. The overall actor effect was equal to 0.112 and is statistically significant ($p < .001$, 95% CI [0.07, 0.15]).

Fourthly, the partner effect from fathers' self-compassion to mother-reported child emotion regulation was equal to 0.087, which is statistically significant ($p = .021$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.16]), and its overall standardized effect was 0.145 (partial $r = .145$). The partner effect from mothers' self-compassion to father-reported child emotion regulation was equal to 0.056 and was not statistically significant ($p = .070$, 95% CI [-0.01, 0.11]) and its overall standardized partner effect was 0.092 (partial $r = .103$). When tested if the two partner effects were equal, the difference was found not to be statistically significant ($p = .543$, 95% CI [-0.07, 0.13]). The overall partner effect was equal to 0.072 and statistically significant ($p < .05$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.11]).

Lastly, the relative sizes of the actor and partner effects were considered. If the standardized actor effects of both mothers' and fathers' self-compassion were greater than .1 in absolute value and they were statistically significant, k (i.e., the

ratio of the partner effect to the actor effect) can be interpreted. This is the case for this dataset. The value of k for the mothers equaled 1.02, and the k of the fathers was equal to 0.4. In order to investigate dyadic patterns in the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model, the regular bootstrapping method (i.e., non-parametric bootstraps) was used to calculate the confidence interval of k . For mothers, it can be concluded that the couple model ($k = 1$) is plausible. This can be deduced from their 95% percentile confidence interval which ranges from 0.09 to 5.41. For fathers, it can be concluded that the couple ($k = 1$) and the actor-only models ($k = 0$) are both plausible. In particular, their confidence interval ranged from -0.06 to 1.26. Finally, based on the bootstrapped confidence interval of the difference between both k 's ($k_{diff} = k(\text{Mothers}) - k(\text{Fathers})$), we can also conclude that there was no significant difference between both k 's ($p = .938$, 95% CI [-1, 5.86]). Actor-only models ($k = 0$) are both plausible. In particular, their confidence interval ranged from -0.06 to 1.26. Finally, based on the bootstrapped confidence interval of the difference between both k 's ($k_{diff} = k(\text{Mothers}) - k(\text{Fathers})$), we can also conclude that there was no significant difference between both k 's ($p = .938$, 95% CI [-1, 5.86]).

Table 5
APIM Results Assuming Different Actor and Partner Effects for Both Roles

Effect	Role	Estimate	Lower	95% CI	Upper	p-value	Beta (o)	Beta (s)	r
Intercept	Mothers	2.751	2.398	to	3.076	<.001			
Actor		.086	.017	to	.146	.008	.249	.144	.150
Partner	F to M	.087	.016	to	.163	.021	.145	.141	.145
k		1.019	.093	to	5.406				

Intercept Fathers	2.701	2.412	to	3.036	<.001			
Actor	.139	.069	to	.208	<.001	.230	.227	.222
Partner M to F	.056	-.007	to	.114	.070	.092	.095	.103
k	.402	-.058	to	1.257				

Note: M= Mother, F= Father

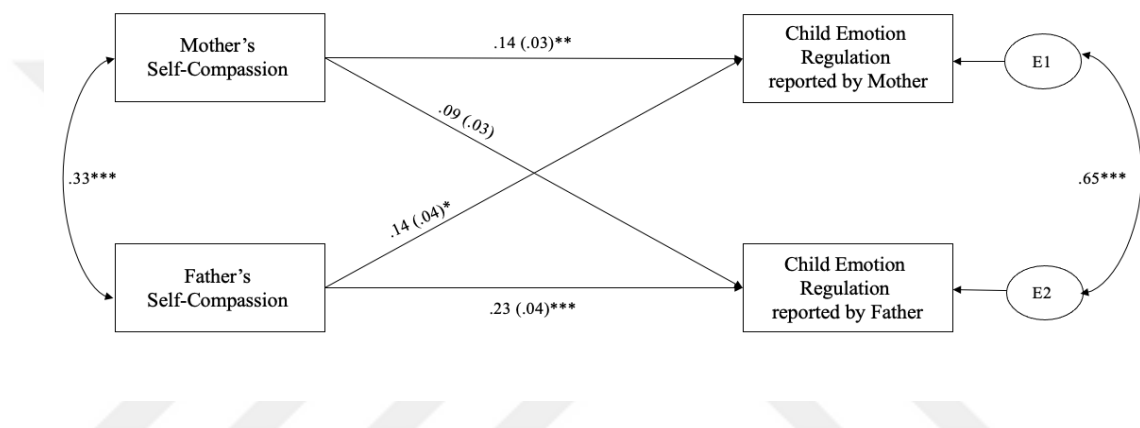


Figure 1 Basic Saturated APIM with Parent Self-Compassion as a Predictor Variable: Standardized Effect Estimates

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed). Standardized coefficients are presented. Child Sex, Child Age, and Family SES were covariates in the model.

4.4. Actor-Partner Interdependence Mediation Model (APIMeM)

In this section, the results of the three dyadic mediation models are presented. The first model considers parents' self-compassion as a predictor variable, coparenting cooperation, which is one of the subscales of the coparenting relationship, as the mediator and child's emotion regulation as the outcome variable. The second model considers parents' self-compassion as a predictor variable, coparenting conflict, which is the second subscale of the coparenting relationship, as the mediator and child's emotion regulation as the outcome variable. The third

model considers parents' self-compassion as predictor variable, coparenting triangulation, which is the last subscale of coparenting relationship, as the mediator and child's emotion regulation as the outcome variable.

In order to conduct APIMeM analyses, we used MEDYAD macro on SPSS 25.0 developed by Coutts et al. (2019). The current study includes three actor and three partner indirect effects.

4.4.1 Association between Parent Self-Compassion and Child Emotion

Regulation via Coparenting Cooperation

4.4.1.1 Direct Effects

The unstandardized direct effect estimates for the APIMeM with parents' self-compassion as the predictor and the standardized direct effect estimates of this APIMeM were demonstrated in Table 6 and Figure 2, respectively.

Mothers' self-compassion was significantly and positively associated with their coparenting cooperation ($b = .192, p < .001$), as well as fathers' coparenting cooperation ($b = .124, p < .05$). However, the direct effect of mothers' self-compassion on child emotion regulation reported by both the mother ($b = .060, p = .06$) and the father ($b = .032, p = .31$) was not significant. Similarly, fathers' self-compassion was significantly and positively associated with their report of coparenting cooperation ($b = .109, p < .05$). Unlike mothers' self-compassion, fathers' self-compassion was significantly and positively associated with child emotion regulation reported by both the mother ($b = .071, p < .05$) and the father ($b = .120, p < .05$). Only fathers' coparenting cooperation was significantly and positively associated with their report of child emotion regulation ($b = .181, p < .05$).

Table 6
Parent Self-Compassion and Child Emotion Regulation via Coparenting Cooperation

	Estimate	SE	p
Parent Self-Compassion (<i>X</i>) → Coparenting Cooperation (<i>M</i>)			
Mothers AE: <i>X1</i> → <i>M1</i>	.192	.040	.000
Fathers AE: <i>X2</i> → <i>M2</i>	.109	.038	.000
Mothers to Fathers PE: <i>X1</i> → <i>M2</i>	.124	.036	.001
Fathers to Mothers PE: <i>X2</i> → <i>M1</i>	.061	.042	.149
Coparenting Cooperation (<i>M</i>) → Child Emotion Regulation (<i>Y</i>)			
Mothers AE: <i>M1</i> → <i>Y1</i>	.070	.053	.190
Fathers AE: <i>M2</i> → <i>Y2</i>	.181	.058	.002
Mothers to Fathers PE: <i>M1</i> → <i>Y2</i>	.011	.052	.830
Fathers to Mothers PE: <i>M2</i> → <i>Y1</i>	.111	.059	.061
Parent Self-Compassion (<i>X</i>) → Child Emotion Regulation (<i>Y</i>)			
Mothers AE: <i>X1</i> → <i>Y1</i>	.060	.032	.063
Fathers AE: <i>X2</i> → <i>Y2</i>	.120	.032	.000
Mothers to Fathers PE: <i>X1</i> → <i>Y2</i>	.032	.032	.312
Fathers to Mothers PE: <i>X2</i> → <i>Y1</i>	.071	.033	.034

Note. Unstandardized Effect Estimates are presented. *X1* = mother self-compassion, *M1* = mother coparenting cooperation, *Y1* = child emotion regulation reported by mother; *X2* = father self-compassion, *M2* = father coparenting cooperation, *Y2* = child emotion regulation reported by father. AE = Actor Effect, PE = Partner Effect, SE = standard error, and *p* is two-tailed.

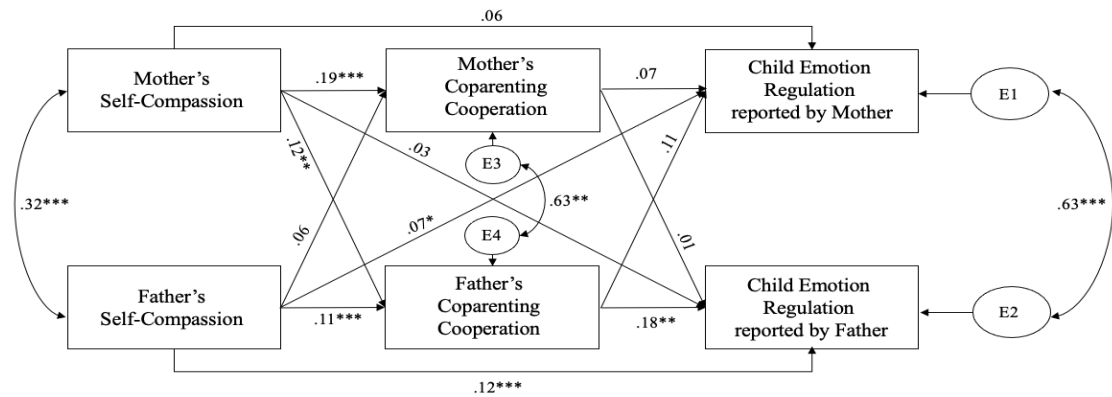


Figure 2 Parent Self-Compassion and Child Emotion Regulation via Coparenting Cooperation

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed). Child Sex, Child Age, and Family SES were covariates in the model.

4.4.1.2 Indirect Effects

In this section, we reported the indirect effects of the APIMeM with parents' self-compassion as the predictor variable of child emotion regulation via coparenting cooperation. See Table 7 for unstandardized indirect effect estimates.

We only found one indirect actor effect. The indirect fathers' actor effect of their own self-compassion on their report of child emotion regulation through their coparenting cooperation was significant ($b = .019$, 95% CI [.003, .042]). However, other indirect actor effects were not significant.

There was one indirect partner effect. Mothers' self-compassion was indirectly associated with father-reported child emotion regulation through fathers' coparenting cooperation ($b = .022$, 95% CI [.005, .044]).

Table 7
Unstandardized indirect effect estimates of coparenting cooperation between parents' self-compassion as the predictor variable of child emotion regulation

Indirect effects	Estimate	95% CI
Mothers actor-actor: $X1 \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y1$	.013	-.008, .037
Fathers to Mothers actor-partner: $X2 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y1$	.012	-.002, .034
Mothers to Fathers actor-partner: $X1 \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y2$	.002	-.018, .022
Fathers actor-actor: $X2 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y2$	.019	.003, .042
Mothers partner-partner: $X1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y1$	.013	-.002, .034
Fathers to Mothers partner-actor: $X2 \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y1$	.004	-.002, .018
Mothers to Fathers partner-actor: $X1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y2$	.022	.005, .044
Fathers partner-partner: $X2 \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y2$	.001	-.007, .009

Note. $X1$ = mother self-compassion, $M1$ = mother coparenting cooperation, $Y1$ = child emotion regulation reported by mother; $X2$ = father self-compassion, $M2$ = father coparenting cooperation, $Y2$ = child emotion regulation reported by father. CI = confidence interval. Bold values represent significant confidence intervals.

4.4.2 Association between Parent Self-Compassion and Child Emotion

Regulation via Coparenting Conflict

4.4.2.1 Direct Effects

The unstandardized direct effect estimates for the APIMeM with parents' self-compassion as the predictor and the standardized direct effect estimates of this APIMeM were demonstrated in Table 8 and Figure 3, respectively.

Mothers' self-compassion was significantly and negatively associated with their coparenting conflict ($b = -.361, p < .001$), as well as fathers' coparenting conflict ($b = -.176, p < .05$). Similarly, fathers' self-compassion was significantly and negatively associated with their own coparenting conflict ($b = -.301, p < .001$), as well as mothers' coparenting conflict ($b = -.122, p < .05$). Only mothers' coparenting

conflict was significantly and negatively associated with fathers' report of child emotion regulation ($b = -.090, p < .05$).

Table 8
Parent Self-Compassion and Child Emotion Regulation via Coparenting Conflict

	Estimate	SE	p
Parent Self-Compassion (X) → Coparenting Conflict (M)			
Mothers AE: $X1 \rightarrow M1$	-.361	.050	.000
Fathers AE: $X2 \rightarrow M2$	-.301	.052	.000
Mothers to Fathers PE: $X1 \rightarrow M2$	-.176	.050	.001
Fathers to Mothers PE: $X2 \rightarrow M1$	-.122	.053	.021
Coparenting Conflict (M) → Child Emotion Regulation (Y)			
Mothers AE: $M1 \rightarrow Y1$	-.056	.041	.173
Fathers AE: $M2 \rightarrow Y2$	-.031	.040	.446
Mothers to Fathers PE: $M1 \rightarrow Y2$	-.090	.040	.025
Fathers to Mothers PE: $M2 \rightarrow Y1$	.009	.041	.817
Parent Self-Compassion (X) → Child Emotion Regulation (Y)			
Mothers AE: $X1 \rightarrow Y1$	.069	.034	.043
Fathers AE: $X2 \rightarrow Y2$	.120	.032	.000
Mothers to Fathers PE: $X1 \rightarrow Y2$	.019	.033	.568
Fathers to Mothers PE: $X2 \rightarrow Y1$	.083	.035	.018

Note. Unstandardized Effect Estimates are presented. $X1$ = mother self-compassion, $M1$ = mother coparenting conflict, $Y1$ = child emotion regulation reported by mother; $X2$ = father self-compassion, $M2$ = father coparenting conflict, $Y2$ = child emotion regulation reported by father. AE = Actor Effect, PE = Partner Effect, SE = standard error, and p is two-tailed.

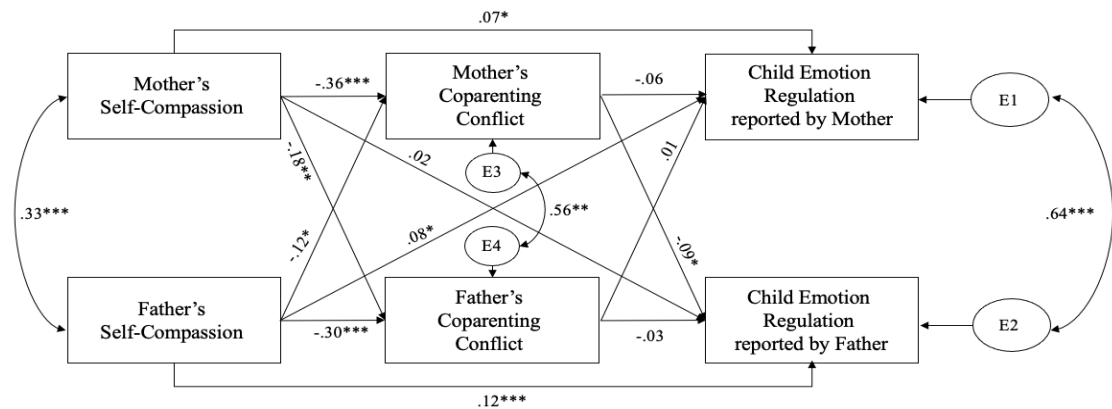


Figure 3 Parent Self-Compassion and Child Emotion Regulation via Coparenting Conflict

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed). Child Sex, Child Age, and Family SES were covariates in the model.

4.4.2.2 Indirect Effects

In this section, we reported the indirect effects of the APIMeM with parents' self-compassion as the predictor variable of child emotion regulation via coparenting conflict. See Table 9 for unstandardized indirect effect estimates.

The indirect mothers' partner effect of their own self-compassion on fathers' report of child emotion regulation through their report of coparenting conflict was significant ($b = .032$, 95% $CI [.003, .064]$).

Table 9.
Unstandardized indirect effect estimates of coparenting conflict between parents' self-compassion as the predictor variable of child emotion regulation

Indirect effects	Estimate	95% CI
Mothers actor-actor: $X1 \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y1$	.020	-.009, .052
Fathers to Mothers actor-partner: $X2 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y1$	-.002	-.030, .023
Mothers to Fathers actor-partner: $X1 \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y2$	.032	.003, .064
Fathers actor-actor: $X2 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y2$	.009	-.016, .034
Mothers partner-partner: $X1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y1$	-.001	-.018, .014
Fathers to Mothers partner-actor: $X2 \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y1$	.006	-.003, .021
Mothers to Fathers partner-actor: $X1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y2$	.005	-.009, .021
Fathers partner-partner: $X2 \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y2$	.011	.001, .028

Note. $X1$ = mother self-compassion, $M1$ = mother coparenting conflict, $Y1$ = child emotion regulation reported by mother; $X2$ = father self-compassion, $M2$ = father coparenting conflict, $Y2$ = child emotion regulation reported by father. CI = confidence interval. Bold values represent significant confidence intervals.

4.4.3 Association between Parent Self-Compassion and Child Emotion

Regulation via Coparenting Triangulation

4.4.3.1 Direct Effects

The unstandardized direct effect estimates for the APIMeM with parents' self-compassion as the predictor and the standardized direct effect estimates of this APIMeM were demonstrated in Table 10 and Figure 4, respectively.

Mothers' self-compassion was significantly and negatively associated with their coparenting triangulation ($b = -.172, p < .001$), as well as fathers' coparenting triangulation ($b = -.102, p < .05$). Similarly, fathers' self-compassion was significantly and negatively associated with their own coparenting triangulation ($b = -.244, p < .001$), as well as mothers' coparenting triangulation ($b = -.137, p < .05$).

Table 10
*Parent Self-Compassion and Child Emotion Regulation via Coparenting
 Triangulation*

	Estimate	SE	<i>p</i>
Parent Self-Compassion (<i>X</i>) → Coparenting Triangulation (<i>M</i>)			
Mothers AE: <i>X1</i> → <i>M1</i>	-.172	.038	.000
Fathers AE: <i>X2</i> → <i>M2</i>	-.244	.039	.000
Mothers to Fathers PE: <i>X1</i> → <i>M2</i>	-.102	.037	.006
Fathers to Mothers PE: <i>X2</i> → <i>M1</i>	-.137	.040	.001
Coparenting Triangulation (<i>M</i>) → Child Emotion Regulation (<i>Y</i>)			
Mothers AE: <i>M1</i> → <i>Y1</i>	-.029	.060	.628
Fathers AE: <i>M2</i> → <i>Y2</i>	-.025	.061	.682
Mothers to Fathers PE: <i>M1</i> → <i>Y2</i>	-.091	.059	.123
Fathers to Mothers PE: <i>M2</i> → <i>Y1</i>	.014	.062	.822
Parent Self-Compassion (<i>X</i>) → Child Emotion Regulation (<i>Y</i>)			
Mothers AE: <i>X1</i> → <i>Y1</i>	.084	.033	.011
Fathers AE: <i>X2</i> → <i>Y2</i>	.121	.034	.000
Mothers to Fathers PE: <i>X1</i> → <i>Y2</i>	.038	.032	.231
Fathers to Mothers PE: <i>X2</i> → <i>Y1</i>	.086	.035	.015

Note. Unstandardized Effect Estimates are presented. *X1* = mother self-compassion, *M1* = mother coparenting triangulation, *Y1* = child emotion regulation reported by mother; *X2* = father self-compassion, *M2* = father coparenting triangulation, *Y2* = child emotion regulation reported by father. AE = Actor Effect, PE = Partner Effect, SE = standard error, and *p* is two-tailed.

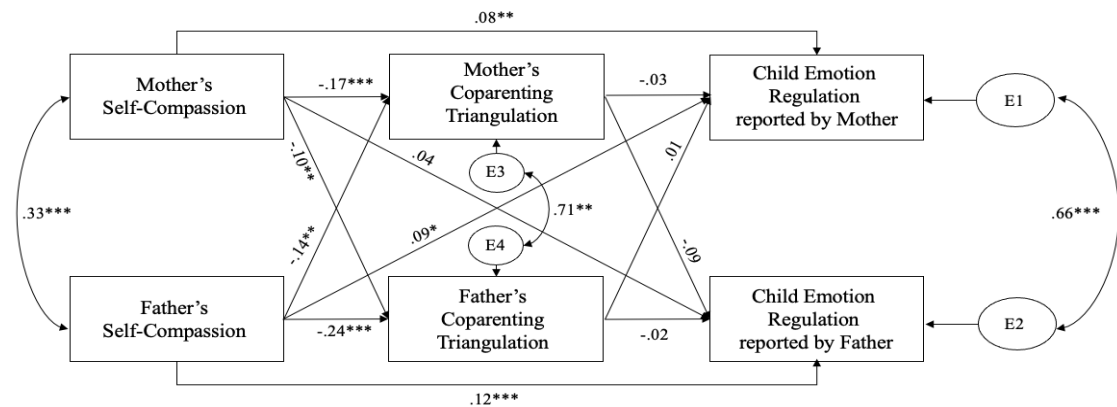


Figure 4 Parent Self-Compassion and Child Emotion Regulation via Coparenting Triangulation

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed). Child Sex, Child Age, and Family SES were covariates in the model.

4.4.3.2 Indirect Effects

In this section, we reported the indirect effects of the APIMeM with parents' self-compassion as the predictor variable of child emotion regulation via coparenting triangulation. See Table 11 for unstandardized indirect effect estimates.

The actor and partner effects of parent self-compassion on child emotion regulation through coparenting triangulation were found to be nonsignificant. Table 11 indicates further information.

Table 11.
Unstandardized indirect effect estimates of coparenting triangulation between parents' self-compassion as the predictor variable of child emotion regulation

Indirect effects	Estimate	95% CI
Mothers actor-actor: $X1 \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y1$	.005	-.016, .028
Fathers to Mothers actor-partner: $X2 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y1$	-.003	-.036, .027
Mothers to Fathers actor-partner: $X1 \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y2$	.015	-.003, .038
Fathers actor-actor: $X2 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y2$	.006	-.025, .038
Mothers partner-partner: $X1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y1$	-.001	-.017, .011
Fathers to Mothers partner-actor: $X2 \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y1$	.004	-.011, .026
Mothers to Fathers partner-actor: $X1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y2$	.002	-.012, .016
Fathers partner-partner: $X2 \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y2$	.012	-.002, .037

Note. $X1$ = mother self-compassion, $M1$ = mother coparenting triangulation, $Y1$ = child emotion regulation reported by mother; $X2$ = father self-compassion, $M2$ = father coparenting triangulation, $Y2$ = child emotion regulation reported by father. CI = confidence interval. Bold values represent significant confidence intervals.

4.4.4 Sensitivity Analysis

The sensitivity of the results in the current study was assessed by excluding four divorced couples from the analysis to determine their impact on the findings. The removal of these four couples did not alter the significance of the results in both the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) and the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model with Mediation (APIMeM). This indicates that the inclusion of these four couples in the analysis did not influence the outcomes; thus, the results reported include these couples as part of the sample.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the associations between parents' self-compassion and children's emotion regulation in early childhood with the mediating role of the coparenting relationship in a dyadic lens. The current study mainly investigated whether parents' self-compassion has a direct effect on children's emotion regulation and whether parents' self-compassion has an indirect effect on children's emotion regulation through the coparenting relationship. Examining both mothers and fathers within a dyadic analysis revealed the unique actor and partner effects.

5.1 Parents' Self-Compassion and Children's Emotion Regulation

In the present study, we found that fathers reported significantly higher levels of self-compassion compared to mothers. This finding is consistent with previous studies, as Yarnell and her colleagues (2015) showed in a meta-analysis that discovered higher self-compassion in males than females.

Coming to the results about the relationship between parents' self-compassion and child's emotion regulation, as we hypothesized, the results demonstrated that both parents' level of self-compassion had a direct actor effect on their child's development of emotion regulation. Mothers' and fathers' self-compassion was significantly and positively related to mother- and father-reported child emotion regulation, respectively. In other words, the findings revealed that both parents contributed to their child's emotion regulation abilities.

Self-compassion refers to how an individual exhibits an attitude towards their emotions in emotion-eliciting situations (e.g., responding to difficult emotions with

balanced awareness instead of being overwhelmed emotionally) (Neff, 2003a).

Relatedly, Lathren and her colleagues (2021) suggest that parents' self-compassion may also determine their attitude toward their children's expression of emotions, which is an important contributor to children's emotion regulation development (Morris et al., 2007). Considering these findings, parents' self-compassion, which indicates their attitude towards emotions, may spill over how they approach their child's emotions, thus influencing the child's emotion regulation development. A recent systematic review by Islamiah and her colleagues (2023) revealed that fathers' emotion-related parenting practices, such as their attitudes towards the children's expressions of emotions, were the strongest predictor of children's emotion regulation. Similarly, another research showed that when fathers demonstrated unsupportive emotion socialization practices with their children (e.g., responding to the child's negative emotions with negative reactions, not encouraging the child to express his/her feelings, or being irritated by the child's over-expression of positive emotions), children displayed poorer emotion regulation (Shewark & Blandon, 2015). Furthermore, the study of Fosco and Grych (2013) demonstrated that mothers' parental warmth (e.g., respecting a child's emotions or giving supportive responses to a child's distress) and being sensitive to children's emotional state had potent effects on children's emotion regulation. So, while parents with higher levels of self-compassion may exhibit more positive attitudes towards their children's emotions as they are towards theirs, parents with lower levels of self-compassion may be more critical when children express negative emotions, as they approach themselves with self-criticism (Neff, 2003a). In turn, supportive reactions of parents towards children's emotional displays due to high levels of self-compassion may

provide a safe environment for the child to express and regulate their emotions, whereas negative approach towards children's emotions due to low levels of self-compassion may prevent the regulation and maintain negative emotions of the child, as previous research discovered (Snyder et al., 2003).

Neff describes self-compassion as “a useful emotional-approach coping strategy” while dealing with emotions (2003a, p. 92). Additionally, emotion regulation abilities of parents were found to transmit to the next generation through observation of parents' way of handling their emotions (Li et al., 2019). Adding on the current study, these findings indicate that both mothers and fathers may model the emotional regulatory skills. Because self-compassion determines how the individual handles a distress, such as approaching oneself with kindness and understanding or self-criticism and harsh judgment in times of difficulties/ failures (Neff, 2003a), this attitude allows children to observe and learn to manage similar emotion-eliciting situations (Denham et al., 1997). Therefore, self-compassion of parents may influence children's emotion regulation development by observation of parents' way of coping with emotions.

We should acknowledge that we investigated children's emotion regulation with the reports of both mothers and fathers, and we observed the partner effect from one parent's level of self-compassion to the other parent's report of child emotion regulation. The findings revealed that while the partner effect from fathers' self-compassion to mother-reported child emotion regulation was significant, the partner effect from mothers' self-compassion to father-reported child emotion regulation was not significant. Various studies showed that both mothers and fathers may approach their children's emotions with different attitudes, and children's emotion

regulation strategies with their mothers and fathers may vary (Ekas et al., 2011; Ekas et al., 2013; Kiel & Kalomiris, 2015; Morey & Gentzler, 2017; Shewark & Bandon, 2014). In previous studies, mothers were found to be more encouraging of the emotional displays of their children, while fathers tended to be neglecting or punitive towards negative emotional expressions (Klimes-Dougan et al., 2007; Morey & Gentzler, 2017). Relatedly, infants' emotional displays and regulation strategies were discovered to differentiate in the presence of mothers and fathers. While maternal unresponsiveness to their child's frustration resulted in consistent distressed reactions of the child, their negative reactions to paternal unresponsiveness were found to decrease over time (Ekas et al., 2011; Ekas et al., 2013). Also, children were more likely to expect mothers to help in emotion regulation, while they tended to interact with fathers mainly by playing (Lamb et al., 1982). In regard to previous studies, one explanation of the significant partner effect from fathers' self-compassion to mother-reported child emotion regulation but the nonsignificant effect from mothers' self-compassion to father-reported child emotion regulation could be due to mothers' and fathers' distinct approaches to the children's emotions (Klimes-Dougan et al., 2007; Morey & Gentzler, 2017; Shewark & Bandon, 2014). Mothers may be more engaged with and caring for their children in emotional development, compared to fathers (Morey & Gentzler, 2017), thereby, mothers and fathers may observe and thus report different levels of emotion regulation capacity of their child. That is to say, because mothers were preferred more by the children in helping with emotion regulation (Ekas et al., 2011; Ekas et al., 2013; Lamb et al., 1982), children may feel more comfortable expressing their emotions to their mothers due to their encouragement and willingness to interact on

emotions, compared to fathers (Klimes-Dougan et al., 2007; Morey & Gentzler, 2017). Thereby mothers may have more observations of adaptive emotion regulation of their children.

This result also indicates that having a self-compassionate partner influences mothers' reporting higher levels of child emotion regulation. Because there is no previous research that studied partner effect from parents' self-compassion to child emotion regulation reported by both parents, it is difficult to make interpretations. However, because we observed a significant association between both parents' self-compassion, we can suggest that fathers' individual characteristics, which was measured as self-compassion, seem important for mothers' perception of their children.

5.2 Parents' Self-Compassion and Coparenting

In this study, the quality of the coparenting relationship was investigated under three dimensions: coparenting cooperation, conflict, and triangulation. As we hypothesized, higher levels of self-compassion of both mothers and fathers predicted higher quality of coparenting relationship reported by them and their partners. The findings of the current study extended the literature by providing evidence for both actor and partner effects of parents' self-compassion on the coparenting of couples.

Firstly, as we hypothesized, the results showed that mothers' self-compassion was significantly and positively associated with their coparenting cooperation and fathers' coparenting cooperation. It means that mothers having higher levels of self-compassion was related to them and their partners to report the coparenting relationship as more cooperative. A scoping literature review demonstrated that self-compassion was related to more positive and healthier interpersonal functioning

(Lathren et al., 2021). Moreover, an intervention that targeted increasing self-compassion of women showed that women's perception of their romantic relationships improved after the intervention (Suppes, 2021). Another study explored that a mindful parenting intervention that included increasing the self-compassion of parents resulted in improvement in coparenting and family integrity (Bögels et al., 2014). So, parents with higher self-compassion may approach their partner with more kindness and less criticism, as they do to themselves (Neff, 2003a), which may encourage being more supportive of each other in childrearing, and thereby perceive the coparenting relationship as more cooperative.

Secondly, the results showed that fathers' self-compassion was significantly and positively associated with their report of coparenting cooperation, but not mothers' cooperation. This finding partly supported our cross-partner hypothesis that mothers and fathers with high level of self-compassion would have a positive association with partner's cooperative coparenting. Combining with previous finding, our study showed that while mothers' self-compassion predicted fathers' cooperative coparenting, fathers' self-compassion did not significantly predict mothers' cooperation. These results may be explained with the relation of self-compassion to communication styles. Because a previous study with divorced couples showed that while mothers' use of functional communication methods with the fathers (e.g., use of mature defense mechanisms and negotiation to manage conflicts) were associated with fathers' coparenting cooperation, fathers' communication methods with the mothers were not associated with mothers' cooperation (Cohen & Finzi-Dottan, 2013). Relatedly, people with high self-compassion were found to tend to communicate more positively and functionally in

their relationships, such as by being less verbally aggressive and more affectionate (Neff & Beretvas, 2013), which may be explained with being less critical towards the partner, such like being towards themselves (Neff, 2003a). In line with these findings, one explanation for the findings of the current study could be that self-compassionate mothers' more positive and functional communication methods with the fathers may result in fathers' report of more cooperation in the coparenting relationship, however self-compassionate fathers' more positive and functional communication methods with the mothers may be unrelated to mothers' perceiving the coparenting relationship as more cooperative.

Thirdly, as we hypothesized, the results showed that mothers' self-compassion was significantly and negatively associated with their coparenting conflict, as well as fathers' coparenting conflict. Similarly, fathers' self-compassion was significantly and negatively associated with their own coparenting conflict, as well as mothers' coparenting conflict. It indicates that parents' being self-compassionate and having a self-compassionate partner may lead them to have less conflict in coparenting and child-rearing matters. Various studies showed that the level of self-compassion affected individuals' conflict resolution methods. That is, people with higher levels of self-compassion used more functional and constructive conflict resolution (e.g., positive problem solving) and less negative conflict resolution styles (e.g., engaging in conflict; approaching problems in a negative way) in romantic relationships (Arslan, 2016; Kaya et al., 2022; Tandler et al., 2020). Also, self-compassionate people tended to follow a balanced manner to resolve conflicts; and instead of prioritizing or subordinating their needs, they provided a compromise solution in disagreements (Yarnell & Neff, 2013). Furthermore, a

mindful parenting intervention that included enhancement of parents' self-compassion resulted in reduced conflict in coparenting relationship. These parents in the intervention group showed increased awareness of their stress and responded more mindfully to their partner when they felt stressed instead of being reactive or suppressing emotions, which is one of the components of being self-compassionate (Bögels et al., 2014; Neff, 2003a). So, previous literature showed how self-compassion led individuals to appeal to conflict less and use more constructive communication style during disagreements in interpersonal relationships. Adding on these findings, high levels of self-compassion may encourage parents to adopt more functional, positive and mindful communication styles in child-rearing matters and, thus, have less conflict in the coparenting relationship.

Fourthly, as we hypothesized, the results showed that mothers' self-compassion was significantly and negatively associated with their coparenting triangulation, as well as fathers' coparenting triangulation. Similarly, fathers' self-compassion was significantly and negatively associated with their own coparenting triangulation, as well as mothers' coparenting triangulation. It illustrates that parents' higher levels of self-compassion may decrease their own and their partners' report of triangulation of the child, which includes involving him/her in conflicts about child-rearing issues and getting the child on their side (Pinquart & Teubert, 2015). Self-compassionate parents' less appeal to triangulation makes sense because self-compassionate individuals approach themselves with kindness and consider their well-being when experiencing hardship (Neff, 2003a). Thus, self-compassionate parents may approach their child with the same kindness and consideration as well, so they may not involve their child in an interparental quarrel regarding the child's

well-being since triangulation undermines the child's well-being significantly (Dallos et al., 2016; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). Also, a previous study revealed that an intervention program in which one of the components is the improvement of parents' self-compassion was found to advance the parents' emotional awareness and decline their reactivity, which resulted in decreased conflicts in front of their child (Bögels et al., 2014). This indicates that when self-compassionate parents face a problem in the coparenting relationship, they may be more mindful of their emotional arousals (Neff, 2003a) and respond to their partner according to that instead of being reactive in the presence of the child.

5.3 Indirect Effects

In this study, we examined the mediating role of coparenting dimensions (cooperation, conflict, and triangulation) between parents' self-compassion and their report of child emotion regulation.

Firstly, the results showed that mothers' self-compassion was indirectly associated with father-reported child emotion regulation through fathers' coparenting cooperation. Similarly, fathers' self-compassion was indirectly associated with their report of child emotion regulation through their own coparenting cooperation. This indicates that mothers' and fathers' self-compassion may positively influence child's emotion regulation by enhancing fathers' coparenting cooperation. Previous research demonstrated that self-compassion contributes men to become more positive and supportive behaviors in the couple's relationship (Neff & Beretvas, 2013). So, fathers who are more kind and understanding to themselves due to high levels of self-compassion (Neff, 2003a) may be also more understanding towards their partner and this can promote their cooperation in the coparenting relationship. Also, when

mothers become more self-compassionate, they may approach their partner with more kindness instead of being critical, which in turn may appeal fathers to cooperate more in child rearing matters.

Coming to the relation of coparenting relationship to children's emotion regulation, in the literature, mothers' and fathers' coparenting were found to have different impact on children's emotional outcome. For example, while fathers' supportive coparenting was related to children's attachment security to their fathers, mothers' cooperation was unrelated to attachment security to them (Brown et al., 2010). Additionally, fathers' supportive behaviors and positive perception of the coparenting relationship were found to be related to children's emotion regulation (Qian et al., 2020). Combining these findings, mothers' and fathers' self-compassion may appeal fathers to be more supportive and to exhibit more positive behaviors in coparenting relationship due to mothers' kind approach and fathers' understanding. In turn, these positive interactions observed by the child may help children learn to handle their emotions better that appear in their interactions with others.

Secondly, the results showed that mothers' self-compassion was indirectly associated with father-reported child emotion regulation through mothers' coparenting conflict. Similarly, fathers' self-compassion was indirectly associated with mother-reported child emotion regulation through mothers' coparenting conflict. This indicates that mothers' and fathers' lower levels of self-compassion may negatively influence the child's emotion regulation by escalating coparental conflict perceived by mothers. In a previous study, unlike fathers' report of coparenting conflict, mother-reported coparenting conflict was found to be prominent and have significant effect on their child's adjustment (Riina et al., 2020).

So, because mothers are more involved in childcare than fathers (Craig, & Mullan, 2011), they may perceive more issues on this matter. Previous literature attested that interparental quarrels are detrimental to children's emotional development (Cox & Paley, 2003; Davies & Cummings, 1994). So, the negative attitude towards the partner, such as a judgmental approach or verbal aggression due to lower levels of self-compassion (Arslan, 2016; Kaya et al., 2022; Tandler et al., 2020) may escalate the conflict between parents and deteriorate children's emotion regulation development. The children who grow up in homes, where interparental disputes are frequent and marital distress is high, were found to have difficulties in regulating their emotions in peer interactions. Because these children displayed more hypervigilance and also had more negative interactions with peers during play, which is probably the reflection of the mother-father relationship (Gottman & Katz, 1989). So, parents with low levels of self-compassion may model dysfunctional behaviors in social interactions when having an emotional arousal.

Bringing these findings together, we observed that while fathers' coparenting cooperation mediated the relationships between both parents' self-compassion and child emotion regulation, mothers' coparenting conflict mediated these relationships. This may be explained with the place of fathers in family dynamics that the previous literature shows the importance of fathers' cooperation and involvement in children's emotional development (Brown et al., 2010; Harris, 2010). One of the predictors of fathers' parenting practices in childcare is mothers' attitudes towards fathers. For example, mothers' level of criticism towards fathers plays a critical role in fathers' involvement and the quality of coparenting relationship (Olsavsky et al., 2020; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008). And, because self-compassion involves

approaching oneself with kindness in failures or hardships, instead of being self-critical (Neff, 2003a), parents' level of self-compassion may influence their approach towards their partner, such as being more kind or critical. When it comes to gender differences in the interparental relationships, in the cases of couple's conflict, men were found to withdraw more especially when being criticized, while women were more demanding to solve the problem, which may explain the findings of significant mediating effect of mothers' report of conflict and nonsignificant mediating effect of fathers' report of conflict (Baucom et al., 2010; Christensen & Heavey, 1993; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008). That is, mothers may have more eagerness to solve the issues on childcare and thus bringing out more issues on this matter, and fathers may have more tendency to withdraw from the coparental conflicts, which may reflect as lower report of conflict.

On the other hand, one of the explanations for the significant mediating effect of fathers' report of cooperation and nonsignificant mediating effect of mothers' report of cooperation may be due to fathers' reporting higher levels of father involvement in childcare than mothers do (Coley & Morris, 2002). Similarly, in our study, fathers may perceive their cooperation in coparenting relationship as higher than mothers do. Moreover, another explanation can be that fathers' cooperation in the coparenting relationship was found to be affected by their relationship with mothers, unlike mothers' cooperation (Kuo et al., 2017). So, mothers' attitude towards fathers as the result of their level of self-compassion may be more important for fathers' perception of cooperation than fathers' attitude towards mothers for mothers' perception of cooperation.

Lastly, the results showed that mothers' and fathers' triangulation of the child during coparenting disagreements did not mediate any of the relationships between parents' self-compassion and the child emotion regulation. One explanation for this result could be that children may not interpret triangulation in a negative way that disrupts their emotion regulation development. Instead, it may be a way to support and relieve one parent, or interrupting the interparental dispute may reduce the intensity of conflict. So, in these situations, children may gain the ability to manage social interactions and develop adaptive behaviors to resolve problems, even though they are emotionally affected by these interactions (Byng- Hall, 2008; Dallos & Vetere, 2012).

5.4 Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

The current study contributed to the literature by filling gaps about the relationship between parents' level of self-compassion with coparenting relationship and also the impact of parents' level of self-compassion on children's emotion regulation in early childhood. It provided evidence for the impact of mothers' and fathers' self-compassion on the coparenting relationship, as well as on the children's emotion regulation. To our knowledge, no study has discovered these associations, which is the major contribution of the study to the literature.

Collecting data from both mothers and fathers was one of the main strengths of this study. This method provided a more comprehensive perspective on major study variables and also helped us to examine the family dynamics and the child development from a dyadic viewpoint. Furthermore, this research examined the children's emotional development by investigating various family subsystems, which are both parents' psychological well-being studied as their level of self-compassion,

and the interparental relationship studied as the coparenting relationship. It expanded the literature on the development of children's emotion regulation by discovering the influence of both parents' self-compassion on it.

This study especially contributes to the fatherhood literature by revealing new information about fathers' influence on the coparenting relationship and children's emotional development. Even though the sample mostly consisted of well-educated fathers; still, fathers were found to be affecting both the relationship with mothers and child outcomes.

Nevertheless, there are several limitations to be addressed. First of all, the cross-sectional nature of the data inhibits us from making causal inferences about the findings. Thus, future research can conduct a longitudinal study in order to clarify the direction of the associations between parents' self-compassion and the coparenting relationship. Secondly, self-compassion of parents, the coparenting relationship and children's emotion regulation were investigated with self-reports, which may constitute biased answers. So, the observational methods can provide more objective results and clearer observation on how mothers' and fathers' levels of self-compassion affect the coparenting relationship and children's emotion regulation abilities. Thirdly, the sample consisted of mostly well-educated families. Future research can collect data from all SES groups equally in order to obtain generalizable findings. Fourthly, the sample size of this study was not very large, which decreases the power of the study and representativeness to the population. The study variables can be examined with a larger sample size in order to extrapolate the findings for the overall population. Lastly, the internal consistency of the Emotion Regulation subscale of the Emotion Regulation Checklist was found to be low.

Future research can use additional scales to assess children's emotion regulation in order to obtain more reliable results.

5.5 Implications of The Current Study

The importance given to self-compassion has gained wide currency in recent years. Both in therapeutic contexts and interventions, the experts aim to enhance individuals' level of self-compassion because self-compassion provides a balanced ground for mental health (Ferrari et al., 2019; Neff & Germer, 2013; Neff & Germer, 2022). Furthermore, the level of self-compassion has strong associations with various types of psychopathologies (MacBeth & Gumley, 2012). Accompanied by the findings of the current study, enhancement of self-compassion can be also applied in intervention programs and couple and family therapies in order to improve family dynamics, as well as child's adjustment. Because the coparenting relationship is "the executive subsystem" in the family (Minuchin, 1974, p. 145), the factors that contribute to it and to child development gain importance. So, the current study provides evidence for the positive effect of adjusting the enhancement of self-compassion in the family intervention programs. That is, if parents' self-compassion is improved, the couple can have a more cooperative coparenting relationship with each other, and besides, the children can develop more adaptive emotion regulation skills. Additionally, coparenting interventions were found to be effective in enhancement of various aspects of family functioning, such as coparenting support between parents, couple communication, positive parent-child interactions, parents' psychological well-being, as well as emotional and physiological regulation of infants (Feinberg & Kan, 2008; Xiao & Loke, 2021). So, supporting the coparenting relationship may be a crucial intervention strategy for influencing several family

dynamics and members, and this study revealed that the coparenting relationship may be strengthened by also integrating the improvement of parents' self-compassion in the coparenting intervention programs.

Alongside improving family relationships, enhancing the self-compassion of parents can have a preventive effect on expectant parents. Previous research indicates that the way that parents establish the coparenting relationship remains stable over time (McHale, 2007). Additionally, the coparenting relationship is one of the fundamental subsystems in the family for the child's well-being (Feinberg, 2003). Therefore, improving the self-compassion of both mothers and fathers while they expect a baby can avert the intensity of conflict and triangulation in the coparenting relationship and the development of emotional dysregulation of the child.

Additionally, this study puts emphasis on both parents' impact on the couple's relationship and child development. Intervention programs for child development may be mostly applied to mothers only. However, the current study implies that the fathers' role in the family is as effective as mothers'. Similarly, previous literature indicates that including both parents in intervention programs is essential for effectiveness and sustainability of the intervention and for better child outcomes (Knox et al., 2011; Panter-Brick et al., 2014; Pruett et al., 2017). Hence, the current study also provides evidence for the impact of both parents on family dynamics and child outcomes.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

(Demographics Questionnaire)

EBEVEYN VE ÇOCUK HAKKINDA BİLGİLER

EĞER 3-8 YAŞ ARASINDA BİRDEN FAZLA ÇOCUĞUNUZ VARSA BU ÖLÇEĞİ EŞİNİZLE AYNI ÇOCUĞUNUZ İÇİN DOLDURDUĞUNUZDAN EMİN OLUNUZ

Formu Doldurduğunuz Tarih:/...../.....

Formu Dolduran Kişi: Anne () Baba ()

Çocuğunuzun yaşı: (ay olarak)

Çocuğunuz Cinsiyeti: () Kız () Erkek

Çocuğunuzun Doğum Tarihi:/...../.....

Çocuğunuzun kronik bir rahatsızlığı/hastalığı veya gelişimsel bir bozukluğu var mı?

Evet () Hayır ()

Varsa yazınız

Bu çocuğunuzun ebeveyniyle kaç yıldır birliktesiniz?.....

Başka bir çocuğunuz var mı? Evet () Hayır () Evet ise sayısı:

Diğer çocuklarınızın yaşı.....

Anne Yaş..... Baba Yaş.....

Şu anda anne çalışıyor mu? Evet () Hayır ()

Şu anda baba çalışıyor mu? Evet () Hayır ()

Anne Eğitim Durumu:

İlkokul () Ortaokul () Lise () Üniversite () Yüksek Lisans () Doktora ()

Annenin şu ana kadar almış olduğu toplam eğitim süresi: (Yıl olarak)

Baba Eğitim Durumu:

İlkokul () Ortaokul () Lise () Üniversite () Yüksek Lisans () Doktora ()

Babanın şu ana kadar almış olduğu toplam eğitim süresi: (Yıl olarak)

İlişki durumunuz nedir?

Bekâr () Evli () Boşanmış () Ayrı () Tekrar evlenmiş () Dul () Birlikte yaşama ()

Anne veya babanın herhangi bir psikiyatrik/psikolojik rahatsızlığı var mı?

Evet () Hayır ()

Varsa yazınız

Ailenin toplam aylık geliri?

5000 TL ve altı	
5001-6000 TL	
6001-7000 TL	
7001-8000 TL	
8001-9000 TL	
9001-10000 TL	
10001-11000 TL	
11000 TL-12000 TL	
12000 TL-13000 TL	
13000 TL ve üstü	

APPENDIX B

(Emotion Regulation Checklist)

Duygu Düzenleme Ölçeği

Aşağıdaki listede bir çocuğun duygusal durumu ile ilgili çeşitli ifadeler yer almaktadır.

Verilen numaralandırma sistemini kullanarak, aşağıdaki davranışları çocuğunuzda ne sıklıkla gözlemlediğinizi işaretleyiniz.

EĞER 3-8 YAŞ ARASINDA BİRDEN FAZLA ÇOCUĞUNUZ VARSA BU ÖLÇEĞİ EŞİNİZLE AYNI ÇOCUĞUNUZ İÇİN DOLDURDUĞUNUZDAN EMİN OLUNUZ:

(1) Hiçbir Zaman/ Nadiren (2) Bazen (3) Sık Sık (4) Neredeyse Her Zaman

(Sample Items)

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 4. Üzüldüğünü, kızıp öfkелendiğini veya korktuğunu söyleyebilir. | 1 2 3 4 |
| 5. Kendini başkalarının yerine koyarak onların duygularını anlar; başkaları üzgün ya da sıkıntılı olduğunda onlara ilgi gösterir. | 1 2 3 4 |

APPENDIX C

(Coparenting Inventory for Parents with Preschoolers)

Okul Öncesi Çocuğu olan Ebeveynler için Ortak Ebeveynlik Ölçeğı

Aşağıdaki listede bir çocuğun yetiştirilmesi ile ilgili çeşitli ifadeler yer almaktadır. Verilen numaralandırma sistemini kullanarak, aşağıdaki ifadeleri sağ taraftaki derecelendirme sisteminde size uygun olacak şekilde yuvarlak içine alarak işaretleyiniz.

(1) Hiçbir Doğru Değıl (2) Nadiren Doğru (3) Bazen Doğru (4) Kesinlikle Doğru

(Sample Items)

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 1. Ben ve partnerim (eşim) çocuk yetiştirme konusunda konuşuruz. | 1 2 3 4 |
| 9. Çocuğumuz eşimle aramızdaki çatışmalara dâhil olur. | 1 2 3 4 |

APPENDIX D

(Self-Compassion Scale: Short Form)

Öz-Şefkat Ölçeği: Kısa Formu

ZORLUKLAR KARŞISINDA KENDİME GENEL OLARAK NASIL DAVRANIYORUM?

Yanıtlamadan önce her bir ifadeyi dikkatle okuyunuz. Her bir maddenin sağında takip eden ölçeği kullanarak, belirtilen durumda ne kadar sıklıkla hareket ettiğinizi belirtiniz.

(1) Hiçbir Zaman (2) Nadiren (3) Bazen (4) Sık Sık (5) Daima

(Sample Items)

2. Beğenmediğim kişilik özelliklerimle ilgili kendime karşı sabırlı ve anlayışlı olmaya çalışırım. 1 2 3 4 5

7. Bir şey beni üzdüğünde duygularımı dengede tutmaya çalışırım. 1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX E

Results of the independent t-test comparing in-person and online data

Variable	In-person		Online		<i>Welch's t-test</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Mother Coparenting Cooperation	3.42	0.66	3.81	0.30	-7.277*
Mother Coparenting Conflict	2.22	0.72	1.69	0.55	7.995*
Mother Coparenting Triangulation	1.62	0.65	1.23	0.34	7.359*
Father Coparenting Cooperation	3.46	0.60	3.81	0.29	-7.219*
Father Coparenting Conflict	2.10	0.71	1.57	0.48	8.522*
Father Coparenting Triangulation	1.56	0.59	1.19	0.28	7.573*
Mother Self-Compassion	3.24	0.75	3.60	0.58	-5.068*
Father Self-Compassion	3.47	0.73	3.80	0.53	-4.976*
Mother-reported Child Emotion Regulation	3.23	0.46	3.40	0.32	-4.011*
Father-reported Child Emotion Regulation	3.18	0.44	3.39	0.33	-5.015*

Note. * $p < .001$

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