

# Predicting Family Functioning from Parental Stress and Coparenting Quality: The Mediating Role of Family Communication

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## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Study Design and Participants subsection, the authors report that “A total of 386 parents participated in the study.” The manuscript does not explain how this sample size was determined. A priori power analysis should be reported, preferably based on the most demanding analysis in the study, namely the multiple-predictor mediation model. The authors should provide the assumed effect size, alpha level, desired statistical power, number of predictors/covariates, software or analytical procedure used, and minimum required sample. If no prospective power analysis was performed, a sensitivity analysis should be reported to indicate the smallest indirect or regression effect that the available sample could reliably detect.

The sampling description states that participants were recruited “from several Canadian provinces, including Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, and Manitoba” through multiple community and online channels. This requires greater methodological detail. The authors should specify the recruitment period, whether quotas were applied by province, the exact number initially screened, the number excluded and reasons for exclusion, the number who started but did not complete the survey, and how duplicate or fraudulent online submissions were detected. A participant flow statement would substantially improve reproducibility and allow readers to evaluate potential selection bias.

The outcome measure requires clarification. The Methods section notes, “Because conventional FAD scoring assigns higher scores to poorer family functioning, scores were reverse-oriented for the primary analyses in this study so that higher values consistently represented better family functioning.” The precise transformation should be stated mathematically or procedurally, because reverse-scoring an entire scale can be performed in different ways. The manuscript should also make clear whether the reported possible range of 12–48 in Table 1 represents a summed score after item reversal or a transformed conventional FAD-GF score. This is essential for reproducibility and for comparison with published norms and clinical cutoffs.

The Data Analysis section states that cases with “substantial missing data” were excluded, but “substantial” is not operationally defined. The authors should report the percentage of missingness at both the case and item levels, the criterion used for excluding a case, whether missingness patterns were evaluated using an appropriate procedure, and how residual missing values were treated. Complete-case analysis can bias estimates when data are not missing completely at random. For mediation analysis in particular, multiple imputation or full-information approaches are generally preferable when missingness is nontrivial.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

## 1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The Methods section specifies English proficiency as an inclusion criterion despite the inclusion of Quebec and a study population described broadly as Canadian parents. This decision requires justification because it may systematically exclude Francophone families and reduce the representativeness of the Quebec subsample. The authors should explicitly acknowledge whether validated French versions of the measures were considered and explain why participation was limited to English-speaking respondents. The implications for generalizing the findings to the Canadian population should also be incorporated into the limitations.

The manuscript states, “Only respondents who identified a current spouse, partner, or other parent with whom they shared meaningful responsibility for parenting the target child completed the coparenting measure.” This criterion creates an important analytical issue because the coparenting construct is unavailable for parents without an active coparenting relationship. The authors should state whether all 386 participants met this requirement and therefore contributed data to the mediation model. If some did not, the effective analytic sample for analyses involving coparenting must be reported separately, together with the missing-data handling procedure. The current wording potentially suggests that the study eligibility criteria and coparenting eligibility criteria were not identical.

The Data Collection Tools subsection reports excellent internal consistency but does not provide sufficient psychometric justification for using each instrument in the present Canadian sample. For example, the sentence “Internal consistency was assessed in the current sample using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients” should be expanded to identify the specific version of each measure, scoring procedure, prior validity evidence, and whether the instruments have been validated among Canadian parents. Because the study relies entirely on self-report scales, reporting only Cronbach's alpha is insufficient. At minimum, the authors should discuss construct validity evidence and consider McDonald's omega, particularly where multidimensional instruments are reduced to a total score.

The treatment of the Parenting Stress Index–Short Form deserves closer scrutiny. The manuscript states that “the total score was used as the principal indicator of parental stress because the conceptual model focused on the overall burden of parenting-related stress.” Because the PSI-SF comprises conceptually distinct domains—Parental Distress, Parent–Child Dysfunctional Interaction, and Difficult Child—the authors should justify aggregation empirically rather than only conceptually. Evidence of adequate higher-order structure or correlations among the subscales should be reported. A sensitivity analysis using the PSI-SF domains would also help establish whether the observed mediation is driven primarily by parental distress rather than child-related or interaction-specific stress.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

## 2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.