MOTHERS' USE OF SCREENS TO KEEP YOUNG CHILDREN BUSY: THE ROLE OF MARITAL CONFLICT AND HOUSEHOLD CHAOS

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ABSTRACT

MOTHERS' USE OF SCREENS TO KEEP YOUNG CHILDREN BUSY: THE ROLE OF MARITAL CONFLICT AND HOUSEHOLD CHAOS

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Screen devices have become integrated into family environments very rapidly. Although there is a growing concern over screen use among young children, little is known about the antecedents of instrumental use of screen devices to fulfill specific parental needs (e.g., keep children busy, calm the children down). Past studies suggest that parents use screens more to distract their young children when they are under stress. This study aimed to examine the role of two critical stressors, household chaos and marital conflict, in using screen devices to keep children busy above the effect of child temperament. A large sample of mothers (N = 2230) of 0- to 36-month-olds (1145 boys, 1085 girls) in Turkey completed the measures of child temperament, marital conflict, household chaos, and parental screen use to keep children busy (PSUC). The results of the hierarchical regression analyses revealed that household chaos and marital conflict uniquely and positively predicted PSUC for both boys and girls above and beyond the effect of child temperament and the critical child and parent demographic characteristics. Furthermore, explanatory analyses revealed one significant interaction effect between temperamental emotionality and household chaos in predicting PSUC. The interaction pattern suggested that children with high emotionality are exposed to less screen devices than those with low emotionality in high chaotic environment. Considering the adverse effects of screen use on young children, policies and parenting practices that can reduce screen time of parents in chaotic and conflicting settings were discussed.

ÖZET

ANNENIN ÇOCUKLARI OYALAMAK IÇIN EKRAN KULLANMA DAVRANIŞLARI: EVLILIK ÇATIŞMASI VE EVDEKI KARMAŞANIN ETKISI

LADIN GÜRDAL

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Araçsal Ekran Kullanımı, Çocuk Mizacı, Ev Kaosu, Çift Çatışması

Ekrana dayalı medya teknolojileri hızlı bir şekilde ailelerin hayatlarına dahil olmuştur. Küçük çocukların ekran kullanımı konusunda toplum ve bilim çevrelerindeki yaygın bir endişeye karşın, ekran cihazlarının ebeveynlerin araçsal (örneğin, çocukları meşgul etmek, sakinleştirmek) kullanımının nedenleri hakkında çok az şey bilinmektedir. Geçmiş çalışmalar, ebeveynlerin stres altındayken çocuklarını oyalamak için daha fazla ekran kullandığını göstermektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı çocukları meşgul etmek amaçlı ekran kullanımında etkisi olabilecek iki kritik stres kaynağının, ev içi kaos ve evlilik çatışmasının, rolünü, çocuk mizacını kontrol ederek incelemektir. Türkiye'de 0-36 aylık (1145 erkek, 1085 kız) çocuğu olan annelerden oluşan büyük bir örneklem (N = 2230), çocuk mizacı, evlilik çatışması, ev kaosu ve çocukları oyalamak için ebeveyn ekran kullanımı (ÇOEKÖ) ölçeklerini tamamlamıştır. Hiyerarşik regresyon analizleri, hem erkek hem de kız çocukları için, kaos ve evlilik çatışmasının ÇOEKÖ'yü, çocuk mizacının ve kritik çocuk ve ebeveyn demografik özelliklerinin etkisinden bağımsız olarak yordadığını göstermiştir. Ayrıca, mizacın düzenleyici etkilerini anlamak için yapılan analizler, ÇOEKÖ'ü yordamada duygusallık ve kaos arasında anlamlı bir ortak etki olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu örüntü, yüksek duygusallığa sahip çocukların, yüksek kaotik ortamda düşük duygusallığa sahip çocuklara oranla daha az ekran cihazına maruz kaldığını göstermiştir. Ekran kullanımının küçük çocuklar üzerindeki olumsuz etkileri dikkate alınarak, ekran başında kalma sürelerini azaltabilecek politikalar ve etkili ebeveynlik uygulamaları tartışılmıştır.

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To my family and friends...

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Introduction

Screen media devices have become integrated into the life of infants and toddlers, and parents play a crucial role in regulating when and how their children use such devices. Even though government and health authorities suggest a maximum of one hour of screen time for children younger than three years (Council 2016; Organization 2019), the evidence shows that the use exceeds the recommended levels in that age group (Kulakci-Altintas 2020; Rideout and Hamel 2006). In the existing literature, the children's media use was treated mainly as the independent variable, highlighting the negative impacts of technology use on young children, such as delays in language acquisition and impairments in cognitive and socioemotional functioning (Chonchaiya et al. 2015; DeLoache et al. 2010; Richert et al. 2010; Supanitayanon, Trairatvorakul, and Chonchaiya 2020; Tomopoulos et al. 2010). Nevertheless, these adverse effects might be mitigated by parents if they use appropriate mediation practices (Clark 2011; Collier et al. 2016; Richert et al. 2010; Shin and Huh 2011). For instance, monitoring media use and co-using media together with the child contribute to children's healthy development via increased parental involvement and decreased exposure to harmful content (Mendoza 2009; Nikken 2019).

However, recent studies imply that screen use among young children mostly takes place without parental mediation (Elias and Sulkin 2019; Nabi and Krcmar 2016; Nikken 2019; Radesky, Kistin, Zuckerman, Nitzberg, Gross, Kaplan-Sanoff, Augustyn, and Silverstein 2014).To describe this type of use, Nikken (2019) introduces the concept of *'instrumental use of screen media devices'* to point out the instances where the parent fulfills a need (e.g., keeping the child busy, soothing the child, facilitating feeding, and sleeping processes) by using the devices without necessarily supervising the child. Since parents might not always have the time and resources to mediate the child's screen use, they can choose to ease the parenting demands by

using these devices to satisfy needs (Evans and Wachs 2010; Nikken 2019; Wartella et al. 2013). Research documenting the association between marital conflict and negative parent-child relationship highlight the spillover hypothesis, suggesting that emotions experienced in one family subsystem is transferred to other subsystems (Erel and Burman 1995). Considering this framework, stresses in other realms than parenting itself, might deplete the necessary parenting resources and direct parents to use screen devices instrumentally. Given that parenting stress and relational well-being are related to the frequent the use of screen devices among young children, stressors, in general, can predict use of media devices to satisfy the need caused by depleted resources.

Besides parenting factors, child factors also play a role in parental screen use. For instance, parents use media more frequently if the toddlers have a "difficult temperament" rather than an "easy" temperament (Linder, Salcedo Potter, and Garrity 2020; Radesky et al. 2016; Radesky, Silverstein, Zuckerman, and Christakis 2014; Thompson, Adair, and Bentley 2013). Furthermore, children with weak metacognitive and executive functioning (Danet et al. 2022) and self-regulation difficulties (Radesky, Silverstein, Zuckerman, and Christakis 2014) are more distracted by their caregivers than others via screen media devices.

Although previous studies have examined several parental and child factors in excessive or instrumental use of the screen in child-rearing, two critical factors have been left unexamined. First, the role of family climate, especially the effect of marital conflict, chaos, and disorganization at home in the excessive use of media screens, has not been investigated. Second, the interactive or additive effects of the parent and child-related factors have not been examined with a few exceptions (Danet et al. 2022; Elias and Sulkin 2019; Lauricella, Wartella, and Rideout 2015; Nabi and Krcmar 2016; Pempek and McDaniel 2016). To fill these gaps, the current study aims to investigate the role of marital conflict and household chaos in using screens to distract or keep the child busy after controlling for the effect of the child's temperament characteristics.

In the following sections, first, the family media environment (1.2), media exposure at early ages as a risk factor (1.3), relevant parenting theories explaining the dynamics of screen use (1.4), and media-parenting approaches in literature (1.5) will be reviewed. Second, the antecedents of instrumental use of screen devices by parents (1.6) will be summarized in two sections: parent factors (1.6.1) and child factors (1.6.2). Finally, the hypotheses of the current study will be presented (1.7).

1.2 The Family Media-Environment

Screen devices of various kinds have been embedded in the children's developmental environment so that infants have become "digital natives" (Livingstone and Blum-Ross 2019) while their parents are still "digital immigrants" (Prensky 2001). However, exposure to screens in the early years, especially under two years of age, may pose a severe risk for the child's optimal emotional and social development (Council 2016). Digital parenting practices, which is defined as parental practices regarding children's use of digital devices became an emerging concept in literature as parents are the "gatekeepers" to the access and use of screen devices in early childhood (Knowles, Kirk, and Hughes 2015). However, little is known about the micro-level aspects to shape media parenting practices.

There are several recommendations by government and health authorities, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), regarding the exposure of young children to media screens. AAP recommended that parents strictly keep their infants aged 0–2 years away from technological devices (Brown, on Communications, and Media 2011). The AAP maintained its zero-screen time rule for children under 18 months in its recent version, and a daily one-hour limit was set for 18–24-month-olds infants with the condition of at least one parent supervising the child during screen use (Council 2016). Similar recommendations suggesting zero screen time for children under the age of one and a maximum of 60 minutes for those under age three were issued by World Health Organization, 2019). Despite these recommendations, early exposure to screen devices is still increasing (Christakis and Zimmerman 2009; Elias and Sulkin 2017; Wartella et al. 2013). In the United States, the average daily background television exposure for toddlers is five and a half hours (Lapierre, Piotrowski, and Linebarger 2012), and the average direct screen exposure, not including the background exposure, of infants under the age of two is one hour per day, and this duration doubles for infants between the ages of two to four (Rideout and Hamel 2006). A similar pattern of screen use is also seen in the Turkish context. More than 80% of the parents allowed their child to use technological devices, and the daily smartphone use of toddlers aged 0-3 ranged from 0 to 5 hours, while the majority was using 2-3 hours per day (Kulakci-Altintas 2020)

1.3 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) provides a comprehensive contextual framework for the interacting systems surrounding children and how these reciprocal interactions influence children's development. Therefore, it provides a rich framework for understanding the multiple interactive factors in screen use. The theory includes five nested ecological systems: The innermost one is the microsystem indicating the immediate environments and direct contacts such as family and school interactions. The mesosystem refers to the interactions between the components of microsystem (e.g., how the home environment influences peer relationships). The exosystem includes contexts with an indirect effect on the child, such as where the parents work. The macrosystem encompasses the broad cultural context (e.g., ideologies, cultural beliefs), and differs from other systems by referring to an already established cultural and societal context independent of the individual child and family environment. Lastly, the chronosystem highlights the effect of time and lifetime transitions on other systems and developmental processes (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 1988; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998; Bronfenbrenner, Husen, and Postlethwaite 1994).

The theory is relevant for this study and has been adapted and used widely in media-related studies. Screen devices and digital experiences are more than an individual preference; they are embedded in a larger context, and individual child characteristics are not independent from the broader cultural context. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge the children's developmental context that shapes their media habits and vice versa (Jordan 2004). Television was initially theorized to be included in a child's exosystem as it accesses from an external source (Bronfenbrenner 1979); however, the widespread use of different technological devices today might expand the layers in which the media is situated. The current study aims to understand the role of the non-digital home environment in the instrumental use of media, which can be conceptualized as an overlap between the microsystem (e.g., household chaos and marital conflict), the mesosystem (how these influence media exposure of the child), which is a product of mesosystem (e.g., digital culture). Furthermore, the individual child characteristics, such as age and temperament, will be used as control variables to see the unique effect of marital conflict and home chaos.

1.4 Media Exposure in Early Ages as a Risk Factor

The impact of early screen use on various social, cognitive, and emotional child outcomes has been studied extensively in recent years. A substantial body of literature has documented adverse effects of early use of screen media devices, focusing on developmental and health-related risks of excessive screen use before 36 months of age (Radesky, Silverstein, Zuckerman, and Christakis 2014). A major focus on this area of research has been put on language development: Meta-analytic findings suggest that more screen time implies more delay in language development, especially at early ages. This line of research highlights the importance of socially contingent interactions as a key factor for healthy language acquisition (DeLoache et al. 2010; Striano and Reid 2006; Tomasello 2005). For instance, young children learn a variety of tasks better when instructed face-to-face than online, which is called as "video deficit" (Anderson and Whitaker 2010). Also, even though co-viewing can facilitate language acquisition (Madigan et al. 2020), children younger than 30 months cannot learn novel words from screen devices without parent co-viewing (DeLoache et al. 2010; Richert et al. 2010). In that regard, use of screen devices in early ages poses a risk factor especially when they hinder crucial social interactions. In addition to language delays, other cognitive impairments, such as lower fine motor and visual reception abilities, have been predicted by early screen exposure (Supanitayanon, Trairatvorakul, and Chonchaiya 2020; Tomopoulos et al. 2010)

Furthermore, the association between increased screen time and poorer sleep quality is well documented for infants from infancy to early childhood (Benita, Gordon-Hacker, and Gueron-Sela 2020; Hale and Guan 2015; Marinelli et al. 2014; Ribner et al. 2019). Bellagamba et al.(2021) found that not only increased screen time but also greater access to screen devices in a home environment at 8 to 36 months of age is related to longer sleep onset latency at night and less sleeping time in total. Past research has also documented that a high level of exposure to screen devices at an early age delays gross motor skills (Pagani, Fitzpatrick, and Barnett 2013) and increases the likelihood of being overweight (Appelhans et al. 2014). Lastly, screen exposure in toddlerhood may lead to impairments in socioemotional functioning, such as higher emotional reactivity, aggression, and externalizing behaviors (Chonchaiya et al. 2015).

1.5 Media-Parenting Approaches

Media parenting refers to the specific methods used by parents regarding young children's media use (Beyens and Eggermont 2014; Elias and Sulkin 2019; Tang et al. 2018). Recently, researchers have paid heightened attention to the topic, considering the increased usage of screen devices and their adverse effects on children. There are several approaches regarding how and why parents implement screen use into their parenting practices, which can be clustered in three main directions: The most common one is *"parental mediation practices"*. The term parental meditation was first used to refer to the active role of parents in managing the experiences of their children with television (Austin, Knaus, and Meneguelli 1997; Dorr, Kovaric, and Doubleday 1989; Lin and Atkin 1989) and evolved into a hybrid communication theory to explain parental efforts to mitigate the negative effects of technology (Clark 2011). The theory differentiated between three types of parental mediation: restrictive mediation (e.g., setting time and content-based limits), active mediation (e.g., parentchild discussion of media content), and co-use (e.g., playing screen-based games together) (Nathanson 1999; Nikken and Jansz 2006; Warren 2003). Recent studies have incorporated novel types, such as technical mediation, monitoring, and supervision (Livingstone and Helsper 2008). Overall, all these mediation strategies lead children to use media more desirably and are associated with positive child outcomes (Shin and Huh 2011).

A second approach regards the role of screen devices in parenting in terms of the distraction of parents from performing necessary parenting practices due to their interaction with a technological device, which is called *"parental screen distraction (PSD)"* (Blackman 2015) or *"technoference"* (McDaniel and Coyne 2016; McDaniel and Bruess 2013).Parental use of technology results in everyday interruptions in parent-child interactions, leading to lower responsivity (Radesky et al. 2015), and worse parent-child attachment quality (Xie et al. 2019). However, this approach focuses more on parental distraction because of media, but not distracting the child with media.

Lastly, there is relatively new literature about the different motivations of parents behind the implementation of screen devices into their parenting practices to ease parenting and reduce parenting-related stress, which is called *"instrumental use of media"* (Nikken 2019). This type of use of screens increased within the context of Covid-19 among parents since schooling and working from home were integrated into the family environment (Eales et al. 2021). Previous literature has shown that the "babysitters" function of the screens to keep the child occupied and busy is

the primary motivation behind parents' instrumental use of devices (Kabali et al. 2015). Indeed, most parents indicated that they are very likely to use TV as a babysitter (Garvis and Pendergast 2011; Sikorska 2020), especially to occupy their children when they have something else to do such as chores (Wartella et al. 2013). Similarly, in the Turkish context, "keeping the child busy when the mother has chores to do" was the primary motivation behind using TV and the second most common motivation for using mobile devices among the mothers of preschoolers (Sümer 2018). Some other functions that ease parenting are regulating and facilitating the child's schedule (e.g., mealtime and sleep), rewarding desirable behaviors, controlling behavior, soothing the child ("i.e., pacifier"), and increasing child-parent bonding (Beyens and Eggermont 2014; Nabi and Krcmar 2016; Rideout and Hamel 2006; Sümer 2018; Tang et al. 2018; Zimmerman, Christakis, and Meltzoff 2007).

An important constraint of parental mediation studies is the laid assumption that parents constantly have the time and resources to mitigate the adverse effects of screen devices. However, mediation and instrumental use of screen devices are not mutually exclusive parenting practices. Since screen devices are nested in the family environment, parents are not always able to actively regulate their children's screen use and utilize other strategies when needed (Nikken 2019). For instance, parent reports show that they can implement limited mediation strategies as they became less able to monitor and restrict their children's media use, especially after Covid-19. The same study has shown that parental stress regarding media mediation increased, and parental guilt decreased after Covid-19 (Eales et al. 2021). In that regard, using screens for specific purposes such as keeping the child busy or pacifying the child might have become more prominent than the mediation strategies in some family environments with certain characteristics.

1.6 Antecedents of Instrumental Media Use by Parents

Belsky (1984) suggests that parenting practices are influenced by three components: parent factors, child factors, and contextual factors. Similarly, as suggested in previous sections, Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model proposes that healthy development requires complex, and reciprocal interactions between the child and the environment across time (Bronfenbrenner 1979). In this respect, both parent factors arising from environmental characteristics and child factors regarding instrumental use of screen media devices will be separately summarized in the following sections.

1.6.1 Parent Factors

Elias and Sulkin (2019) suggest that various challenges that parents encounter might shape their use of screen devices as a parenting tool. A body of literature has documented the negative association between stress and dysfunctional parenting. More specifically, parenting stress, the perception of not being able to meet the demands of parenting because of not having the necessary resources, might influence the quality of the parenting practices (Abidin 1992; Belsky 1984; Mash and Johnston 1990; Rodgers 1993). Emotional security hypothesis suggests that the child's sense of security is influenced by parental stress, especially when the parents have disputes in their relationships and/or have socioeconomic hardship (Davies and Cummings 1994; Eisenberg, Cumberland, and Spinrad 1998). Increased parental stress can also create chaos at home, which in turn affects both parenting behaviors and the child's adjustment (Coldwell, Pike, and Dunn 2006). Research has shown that parents who experience stress due to a lack of resources such as time and money are more likely to engage their young children in unhealthy lifestyle practices (Beyens, Eggermont, and Nathanson 2016; Stenhammar, Sarkadi, and Edlund 2007), such as excessive use of screen devices (Pempek and McDaniel 2016) and less limit setting for technology (Walton et al. 2014). As parents with high levels of parenting stress struggle to find the resources to satisfy the demands of parenting (Beyens, Eggermont, and Nathanson 2016; Neece, Green, and Baker 2012), they might be relying on on-screen media devices as a coping mechanism for the experienced stress (Shin et al. 2021). However, in other studies, child screen media use (Linder, Salcedo Potter, and Garrity 2020) and instrumental use of screen devices by parents (Tang et al. 2021) have not been documented to be linked with parenting distress. Accordingly, it might not be parenting stress per se but overarching contextual stressors that lead parents to use screen devices instrumentally to keep their children busy.

Beyens and Eggermont (2014) highlighted that additional research is needed to investigate family factors that promote the instrumental use of screen media devices. Household chaos, the degree to which the home environment is disorganized, might be an antecedent of parental use of screen devices to keep their children busy. High levels of background noise and lack of structure and order (e.g., absence of family routines and predictability) are common indicators of household chaos (Ackerman and Brown 2010; Evans and Wachs 2010; Matheny Jr et al. 1995) Even though it is associated with SES, household chaos has shown to be a distinct construct to predict parenting behaviors above and beyond the SES (Dumas et al. 2005). Considering the interplay between context and person suggested by the Bioecological Model, a structured home setting characterized by routines is beneficial to children's health

in terms of decreased chance of obesity (Anderson and Whitaker 2010) and nutritional health issues (Hammons and Fiese 2010). On the other hand, a chaotic home environment might harm the critical parent-child proximal processes (Zvara et al. 2014). A growing body of research indicates that household chaos is associated with less sensitive parenting in terms of being less attentive and receptive to child signals (Coldwell, Pike, and Dunn 2006). A suggested mechanism is that parents who are overwhelmed with the stress imposed by the chaos, have less energy and capacity to invest in positive parenting practices. (Ackerman et al. 1999; Conger, Conger, and Martin 2010). Accordingly, greater household chaos is associated with increased screen use among preschoolers (Emond et al. 2018). Even though no significant association between instrumental use of screens to control children's behavior (e.g., reward the good behavior) and household chaos has been documented (Tang et al. 2021), parents who experience high levels of household chaos might have different motives to use screens. In that respect, considering the effect of chaos-induced stress, parents might be using screen devices to keep their young children busy and reduce the demands of parenting. Furthermore, it may be more convenient for these parents to use screens to fulfill needs than to develop consistent mediation strategies in an environment where structure and routines are lacking.

Perceived negative marital quality is another mechanism that leads to adverse child outcomes via decreased parenting quality through increased parenting stress (Gottman and Katz 1989; Lavee, Sharlin, and Katz 1996) Previous research has documented negative emotions experienced in one family subsystem can be carried out to other systems. This is termed as the "spillover" effect. Therefore, the negativity experienced in the marital area can be carried into the parenting domain (Erel and Burman 1995) The lack of responsivity and emotional unavailability caused by the marital conflict (Davies and Cummings 1994) might be an underlying factor for using screen devices to keep children busy. For instance, research suggests a negative relationship between relational well-being and child screen use (Pempek and McDaniel 2016), which may indicate that problems within romantic relationships might divert parents' focus away from the child through a mechanism of reduced parent-child interaction, and increased child media use. Another proposed mechanism is that parents who experience high levels of marital conflict also tends to argue about the media use of the children (Mares et al. 2018) and might employ inconsistent screen-assisted parenting practices. However, the link between marital conflict and instrumental screen use is not established yet since these focused on the frequency of screen use of the child and media-related conflict rather than the instrumental use of screen devices by parents. Building on the given literature, this research aims to fulfill the gap in the role of contextual stressors that are nested in

the microsystem of the parent, such as marital conflict and household chaos, as they may influence their media-parenting practices through the spillover effect.

1.6.2 The Role of Child Attributes

Media exposure in the first three years of life is also associated with several child characteristics, especially temperament, which is the biologically grounded individual differences in behavioral style that can be seen as early as childhood (Rothbart and Bates 2006; Sanson, Hemphill, and Smart 2004). According to the transactional view, not only are child behaviors are being influenced by parenting practices; but also, parents interact with their children in different ways based on the temperamental characteristics of the child, suggesting a bidirectional association (Rothbart and Bates 2006; Sameroff 1975; Thomas and Chess 1977). Several studies have demonstrated that parents are more likely to use screens for children with certain temperamental characteristics (e.g., temperamental difficulty and high level of activity) than for children who do not have such qualities. In turn, these child characteristics shape their future media habits. For instance, longitudinal evidence has shown that difficult temperament predicts greater exposure to media at age two, resulting in spending more than 2 hours per day in front of a screen (Radesky, Silverstein, Zuckerman, and Christakis 2014). Similarly, highly active children are being exposed to screen devices more often than less energetic children (Nabi and Krcmar 2016) ; and regulation difficulties of children are linked to the media exposure above and beyond the effect of SES and parenting strain (Linder, Salcedo Potter, and Garrity 2020). Several past studies have documented the link between child temperament and instrumental use of screen devices. Parents of children with socio-emotional difficulties are more likely to calm down children with screen media devices (Radesky et al. 2016), and parents of highly energetic children use screen media devices to spare some time for themselves (Nabi and Krcmar 2016) compared to the parents of children who are low on these temperamental traits. Additionally, parents are more likely to pacify their children with weak metacognitive and executive functioning via screen media devices, and this relationship is not moderated by household chaos (Danet et al. 2022).

On the other hand, according to Sümer (2018), the frequency of screen usage to soothe their upset child is not associated with children's self-regulation abilities. Similarly, no association has emerged between the instrumental use of screens and the detached temperament of the child (Nabi and Krcmar 2016). Considering the mixed results, even though some temperamental characteristics act as a risk factor

for early media exposure, it might be relatively easier for some children with specific temperamental characteristics to keep themselves busy on their own without necessitating an external distractor such as screen media devices. In the current study, considering the child temperamental characteristics' critical role in parents' screen use (Nabi and Krcmar 2016; Radesky et al. 2016; Radesky, Silverstein, Zuckerman, and Christakis 2014), the effects of the fundamental dimensions of child temperament, emotionality, sociability, and activity will be examined. Moreover, their effects will be controlled for examining the effects of household chaos and marital conflict on the screen use above and beyond the child's temperament characteristics.

1.7 Current Study

As discussed in previous sections, the past studies mainly focused on parental mediation as a supportive parenting practice, leading to positive child outcomes (Shin and Huh 2011) or technoference as a dismissing parenting practice, resulting in negative child outcomes by reducing parental sensitivity and blocking parent-child interactions (Elphinston and Noller 2011; McDaniel and Coyne 2016; Roberts and David 2016). The research on the instrumental use of screen devices by parents is relatively new, and there is a need to examine the critical antecedents (predictors) of different types of instrumental use. For instance, Tang et al. (2021)found no significant association between the instrumental use of screens to control children's behavior and household chaos. However, the association between the instrumental use of screens to keep children busy and household chaos is unknown. To address this gap, the current study narrowed down the dependent variable to a type of instrumental media parenting practice driven by a specific purpose, which is keeping the child busy with a screen device. Three dimensions of temperament (sociability, emotionality, and activity) were used as control variables to see the unique contribution of the home environment, more specifically the level of chaos and marital conflict, above and beyond the effect of individual child characteristics.

Most studies addressing the instrumental use of media focused on a broad age group of children (Elias and Sulkin 2019; Lev, Elias et al. 2020). However, the antecedents of instrumental use might differ for parents of young children, as parenting is more demanding in the first three years of children's lives, in the period where parents need to provide extensive care to their young children (Lev, Elias et al. 2020).

Considering the lack of studies specifically examining screen use behavior in the early developmental trajectories in previous studies, this study targets mothers with chil-

dren under three years old. Concerning the role of gender difference in screen use, past research has demonstrated varying parenting patterns based on both the parent and the child's gender. For instance, limiting children's screen time is inversely related to stress for mothers, and the association is positive for fathers, suggesting differential stress coping mechanisms for fathers and mothers. Similarly, parenting stress predicts technoference among mothers but not fathers (Tang et al. 2021) Regarding the child gender, it has been shown that boys spend more time with screen devices than girls (Atkin et al. 2014; Desai et al. 2010), and parents tend to implement mediation strategies in their parenting practices for girls' screen use more than boys' screen use (Ferreira, Ponte, and Castro 2017; Mascheroni and Ólafsson 2014). Thus, in the current study, the potential effects of a chaotic home environment and marital conflict on mothers' screen use behaviors to keep their children busy were tested separately for boys and girls.

Finally, given the interactional nature of child and parent characteristics to shape the home-technology environment (Danet et al. 2022; Elias and Sulkin 2019; Lauricella, Wartella, and Rideout 2015; Nabi and Krcmar 2016; Pempek and McDaniel 2016), the effect of chaos and conflict might be exacerbated by certain temperamental traits, such as activity and emotionality. On the other hand, instrumental screen use might be less for children who are low on these traits even in the presence of chaos and conflict. To explore these dynamics, moderating effect of temperament on household chaos and marital conflict in predicting instrumental screen use was tested. It is important to note that there is a lack of relevant literature focusing on how child temperament moderates household chaos and marital conflict in determining parental instrumental screen use. Therefore, no specific moderation hypothesis was included in the study, and the analyses were conducted with an exploratory purpose. Based on the reviewed studies above, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- **Hypothesis 1:** Since boys spend more time with screen devices than girls in early years, mothers would use screen media devices more often for their boys than girls.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Household chaos would significantly and uniquely increase instrumental use of screen media to keep children busy independent of child temperament and critical demographic characteristics of mother and child.
- **Hypothesis 3:** Marital conflict would significantly and uniquely increase instrumental use of screen media to keep children busy independent of child temperament and critical demographic characteristics of mother and child.

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

The present study has drawn participants from a more comprehensive project entitled *"Socio-cultural and Psychological Antecedents and Consequences of Child-rearing Styles Across Generations and Developmental Stages in Turkey"* funded by TUBITAK (1003-118K050). The study used a convenience sampling approach where the participants were reached through social media dissemination.

The online Qualtrics survey was initiated by 5064 mothers. Initially, 1377 mothers were excluded because of not meeting at least one of the following criteria: (1) having at least one child under the age 3, (2) completing at least the 81% of the survey, (3) specifying gender, (4) being married, (5) living in Turkey. Of the remaining 3687 respondents, 1452 participants were excluded from the data set because of having missing items in the questionnaires of interest, and 5 were detected as outlier at least one of the study variables (explained in chapter 3). The final sample of the study consists of 2230 mothers of children (1145 boys, 1085 girls). The age of the mothers ranged from 20 to 58 (M = 30.94, SD = 4.40), and the age of the children ranged between 0 to 36 months (M=22.13, SD = 0.82). Regarding the level of education, 2.7% of the mothers completed primary school, 8.1% completed middle school, and 24.1% completed high school as the highest degree. Most mothers, 59.5%, had a bachelor's degree diploma, and 5.2% attained a master's degree diploma. 0.4% had no formal education. Approximately half of the parents had a monthly household income ranging between 2850-8000 TL (54.6%), one-fourth of the parents earned less than 2850 TL (23.2%), and 22.2% earned more than 8000 TL. The detailed description of demographic characteristics was presented in Table 1.

2.2 Measurements

2.2.1 Demographic Characteristics Form

The mothers were asked to complete a detailed demographic information form since this study is part of a larger project. Only the demographic characteristics regarding child age, maternal age, maternal education, and monthly household income were used for the present study. As seen in table 2.1, parents were asked to choose the highest level of school completed among the 6 options to indicate their level of education. In the data analysis phase, these options were recoded into 3 categories: lower than high school, high school, and higher than high school. Similarly, they were given 6 options to indicate their household income, and these responses were also recoded into three categories: Low, middle, and high SES. The other questions were about paternal age and education, maternal and paternal occupation and employment, child-related changes in maternal employment, maternal age at marriage and the birth of the first child, number of household members and children, and the type of housing.

2.2.2 Parental Screen Use in Childcare (PSUC)

Parents were asked to answer the following two questions about their screen media use as a parenting tool: “Do you leave a screen (e.g., TV, tablet) on to keep your child occupied?”, and “Do you give your child a mobile phone or a tablet to keep them occupied?”. The items were written by the research team for the present study, and parents reported on a 5-point scale (1 = never, 5 = always). Higher scores indicate higher instrumental use of screens. Considering that only two items were used, reliability coefficient representing inter item correlation, was relatively low (.59).

2.2.3 The EAS Temperament Scale

Mothers evaluated their children’s temperamental characteristics using The EAS (Emotions, Activity, Sociability) Temperament Survey for Children (Parental Ratings) (Buss and Plomin 2014). Parents rated the items on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“never”) to 4 (“always"). The original scale consists of 20 items with four subscales; emotionality (e.g., "Gets upset easily."), activity (e.g., "Is always on

the go.") and sociability (e.g., "Finds people more stimulating than anything else."), and shyness (e.g., "Tends to be shy"). Principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation that was performed in the current study and three factors, accounting for 44.17% of the total variance were obtained. The first factor had an eigenvalue of 4.14 and explained 20.70% of the total variance. The second factor had an eigenvalue of 2.87 and accounted for 14.33% of the total variance. The third factor had an eigenvalue of 1.83 and explained 9.15% of the total variance. The loadings of the items ranged from .47 to .78 for the first factor, .33 to .72 for the second factor, and .30 to .75 for the third factor. The first factor consisting of 7 items represented sociability, the second factor consisting of eight items represented emotionality, and third factor composed by 5 items represented activity. The factor analysis revealed that shyness was not appeared as a fourth factor in the Turkish context. In the reliability analysis, Cronbach's alphas for the three scales were found as = .70, = .80, = .69, respectively.

2.2.4 Marital Conflict

Marital Conflict was assessed by O'Leary Porter Scale (OPS) developed by Porter and O'Leary (1980). Sümer et al. (2009) adapted OPS to Turkish, adding five new culture-specific items to the original 10-item scale. The reliability of the Turkish adaptation has been demonstrated with satisfactory internal consistency (= .80). An example item is "How often do you and/or your spouse display verbal hostility in front of this child?". In the current study, one item addressing the disagreement over a child's academic achievement was not included since it was not appropriate for the child's age, and two items were eliminated due to low loadings in the factor analyses. One reversed item was reverse coded and mean composite scores were calculated. Participants rated the frequency of overt parental conflict in the presence of the children on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = never, 4 = always). Higher scores indicate higher child exposure to parental conflict. The Cronbach's Alpha of the remaining 12-items was good (= .82).

2.2.5 Household Chaos

Household chaos was measured by Confusion, Hubbub, and Order Scale (CHAOS), which was developed by Matheny et al. in (1995) to assess the level of confusion and disorganization in the child's home environment. The original scale consists of 15 dichotomously scored items. The scale has been shortened by Johnson et

al. (2008) into six items that are being rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=not true, 5=definitely true). Among 6 items, 3 negatively worded items were reversed. Higher scores indicate higher levels of confusion and disorganization in the child's home environment. The Turkish adaptation of the short form (Sümer, Solak Örses, and Harma 2013) has demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency (= .82). For the current study, mothers were given the Turkish adaptation and rated the six items (e.g., You can't hear yourself think in our home) on a 4-point Likert scale to avoid possible midpoint biases. In the present study, the internal consistency was found as .61.

2.3 Procedure

The current study was conducted as part of the project titled *"Socio-cultural and Psychological Antecedents and Consequences of Child-rearing Styles Across Generations and Developmental Stages in Turkey"* funded by TUBITAK (1003-118K050). Ethical approval was taken from the Institutional Review Board for Research with Human Subjects (SBINAREK) of Boğaziçi University. The data were collected using convenience-sampling method by recruiting Turkish mothers who have at least one child between 0-36 months via social media. The mothers were asked to complete the online survey via Qualtrics. The questionnaire used in this study included five parts: Demographic Information; EAS Temperament Scale; O'Leary Porter Scale; Confusion, Hubbub, and Order Scale, and Parental Screen Use in Childcare (PSUC). Parents with more than one child aged 0-36 months, were first asked to choose one of their children in the demographics section. Then, they were asked to answer the remaining questions based on the selected target child.

3. RESULTS

In this section, data analysis strategies and study findings will be presented in four parts: First, the analyses for data screening and cleaning will be reported. Then, descriptive statistics for the study variables and correlations will be presented. Next, the results of two separate 3-step hierarchical regression analyses for boys and for girls will be given. Lastly, the analyses for the interaction effects considering the potential moderating effect of temperament will be reported.

3.1 Data Analysis Strategy and Screening

SPSS version 26.0 was used to perform the analyses. Missing variables and outliers were identified before statistical analysis. At the beginning of the study, 3687 participants were reached. Since 1452 of the participants did not complete at least one of the scales, they were excluded, the remaining responses from 2235 participants were retained for the analyses.

After the deletion of missing responses, the outlier analysis was performed. The scores of Confusion, Hubbub, and Order Scale (CHAOS), O'Leary Porter Scale (OPS), and Parental Screen Use in Childcare (PSUC) were transformed into standardized z scores. The scores that fall below -4 or above +4 were considered outliers. One participant with a standardized z score of 4.02 from the CHAOS and four participants with standardized z scores of 5.06, 4.49, 4.30, and 4.12 from OPS were excluded from the analysis. No outlier was found for PSUC. Therefore, the remaining analyses were conducted with 2230 participants.

3.2 Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations among study variables are presented in Table 3.1. As seen in Table 3.1, the mean score of PSUC (M = 2.41, SD = 0.92) was lower than the scale midpoint of 3, indicating that mothers evaluated the frequency of their instrumental use of screen devices lower than the scale mid-point. Similarly, mean scores of household chaos (M = 2.00, SD = 0.50) and marital conflict (M = 1.76, SD = 0.44), were also lower than the scale mid-points, indicating that mothers evaluate themselves as having lower than average on these constructs. In terms of maternal report of child temperamental characteristics, the mean emotionality score (M = 2.24, SD = 0.47) was slightly lower than the scale mid-point, whereas the mean scores for both sociability (M = 2.80, SD = 0.61) and activity (M = 3.26, SD = 0.56) were higher than the mid-point of the scale.

Examination of correlations among child temperament and PSUC revealed that PSUC was positively correlated with child emotionality, r = .22, $p < .001$; however, it was not significantly associated with child activity and child sociability. The correlations among marital conflict, household chaos, and PSUC were in the expected direction: Marital conflict was positively and significantly correlated with household chaos, r = .37, $p < .001$. The size of the correlations indicates that the association between IVs and DV was stronger than the correlations between control variables and DVs. For instance, PSUC was positively and significantly correlated with household chaos, $r(2233) = .32$, $p < .001$, and with marital conflict $r(2233) = .26$, $p < .001$. This means that the greater the level of household chaos and marital conflict experienced by mothers, the higher the instrumental use of screens to keep their children busy.

Table 3.1 Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations among study variables (N = 2235)

	M (*SD*)	Range	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. PSUC	2.41(0.92)	1-5	.59 (.74)	.03	.04	.22**	.32**	.26**
2. Sociability	2.80 (0.61)	1-4	–	(.70)	.32**	-.17**	-.03	.01
3. Activity	3,26(0.56)	1-4	–	–	(.69)	.01	.04	-.03
4. Emotionality	2.24 (0.47)	1-4	–	–	–	(.80)	.26**	.26**
5. Household Chaos	2.00 (0.50)	1-4	–	–	–	–	(.61)	.37**
6. Marital Conflict	1.76 (0.44)	1-4	–	–	–	–	–	(.82)

Notes. Numbers in the parenthesis indicate the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of the measures. *p<.05. **p <.01.

Table 3.2 Gender Differences in Study Variables

Variable	Gender	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Sociability	Boy	2.79	0.61	.996	.318
	Girl	2.81	0.61		
Activity	Boy	3.29	0.56	6.962	.008
	Girl	3.23	0.56		
Emotionality	Boy	2.24	0.46	.479	.489
	Girl	2.25	0.48		
Chaos	Boy	2.00	0.49	.185	.667
	Girl	2.01	0.51		
Conflict	Boy	1.74	0.44	.694	.405
	Girl	1.76	0.45		
PSUC	Boy	2.37	0.89	6.962	.016
	Girl	2.46	0.95		

3.3 Gender Differences in Study Variables

Before testing the main hypotheses, a series of analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were performed to examine the mean differences between girls and boys. Mothers reported to have higher activity level for boys ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.56$) than girls ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.56$), $F(1,2228) = 6.96$, $p < .01$. There was no significant gender difference in emotionality and sociability. Girls were exposed to more screen devices ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.95$) compared to boys ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 0.89$), $F(1, 2228) = 5.82$, $p < .05$.

3.4 Predicting Parental Screen Use for Children (PSUC)

Two hierarchical multiple regressions were performed to examine the predictive power of household chaos and marital conflict to predict parental screen use for children (PSUC), after controlling for demographic characteristics (child age, maternal age maternal education, and household income) and child temperamental characteristics (emotionality, activity, and sociability). The models were tested separately for boys and girls to see the possible gender differences. To minimize multicollinearity, all the predictors were centered, and the interaction terms were computed with centered variables (Aiken, West, and Reno 1991).

Child age, maternal age maternal education, and household income were entered in step 1. Emotionality, activity, and sociability were entered in step 2, and household

chaos and marital conflict were entered in step 3. The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analyses are presented in Table 3.3.

3.4.1 Predicting PSUC for Boys

The complete hierarchical regression model, including all predictors and controls, accounted for 28% of the variance in PSUC for boys. In the first model, child age, maternal age, education level and household income predicted PUSC significantly (R^2 = .16, F(4, 1141) = 55.64, p < .001). The effects of child age (β = .37, p < .001) and maternal education (β = -.13, p < .001) were significant. Mother age and household income did not have significant effect. In the second step, the three temperamental dimensions were added to the model, and they significantly predicted PSUC (R^2 = .20, F(7, 1138) = 39.40, p < .001). Child temperament explained an additional unique variance in PUSC, after controlling for the demographic variables, ΔR^2 = .032, ΔF(3, 1138) = 15.00, p < .001. While emotionality (β= .18, p < .001), had a significant effect on PSUC, activity, and sociability did not significantly predict PSUC. At step 3, household chaos and marital conflict were entered into the equation; and the total variance explained by the model was increased to 27,5%, F(9, 1136) = 47.85, p < .001. Addition of chaos and conflict to the prediction of PSUC explained an additional unique 8% of the variance, after controlling for demographic characteristics and child temperament, ΔR^2 = .080, ΔF(2, 1136) = 62.54, p < .001. Both household chaos (β = .20 p < .001), and marital conflict (β = .16, p < .001), significantly predicted PSUC for boys. In sum, household chaos and marital conflict predicted PSUC above and beyond child age, maternal age, maternal education, household income and child temperament, supporting Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3.

3.4.2 Predicting PSUC for Girls

The complete hierarchical regression model, including all predictors and controls, accounted for and 22% of the variance in PSUC for girls. At Step 1 of the analysis, child age, maternal age, education level and household were added to the regression model; indicating that the model was significant and 11% of the variance of the composite score of PSUC could be accounted by the given demographic characteristics, R^2 = .11, F(4, 1081) = 33.37, p < .001. Conditional effects of child age (β = .30, p < .001) and maternal education (β = -.15, p < .001) were significant but conditional effect of maternal age and household income were not significant.

Table 3.3 Hierarchical Regression Models Predicting PSUC

	Boys						Girls					
Models	*b*	*SE*	*β*	*t*	95% *CI*	R^2	*b*	*SE*	*β*	*t*	95% *CI*	R^2
Step 1						.16						.11
Child Age	.03	.00	.37	13.51***	[.029, .039]		.03	.01	.30	10.30***	[.024, .035]	
Maternal Age	.00	.01	.02	.62	[-.007, .014]		.00	.01	.01	.178	[-.011, .013]	
Maternal Education	-.17	.04	-.13	-4.65***	[-.244, -.099]		-.15	.04	-.11	-3.57***	[-.236, -.069]	
Household Income	-.01	.04	-.01	-.25	[-.084, .065]		-.04	.04	-.03	-1.00	[-.129, .042]	
Step 2						.20						.17
Child Age	.03	.00	.36	13.43***	[.029,.039]		.03	.00	.28	10.07***	[.023, .034]	
Maternal Age	.00	.01	.02	.71	[-.007, .014]		.00	.01	.01	.30	[-.010, .014]	
Maternal Education	-.17	.04	-.13	-4.57***	[-.236, -.094]		-.13	.04	-.09	-3.06**	[-.209, -.046]	
Household Income	.00	.04	.00	.05	[-.072, .076]		-.02	.04	-.01	-.43	[-.101, .065]	
Sociability	.04	.04	.03	1.07	[-.037, .127]		.08	.05	.05	1.63	[-.015, .167]	
Activity	-.01	.05	-.01	-.18	[-.096, .080]		.09	.05	.05	1.70	[-.013, .183]	
Emotionality	.35	.05	.18	6.69***	[.249, .456]		.46	.06	.23	8.13***	[.347, .568]	
Step 3						.28						.22
Child Age	.03	.00	.35	13.41***	[.027, .037]		.03	.00	.27	9.85***	[.021, .032]	
Maternal Age	-.00	.01	-.01	-.46	[-.013, .008]		-.01	.01	-.02	-.79	[-.016, .007]	
Maternal Education	-.13	.04	-.10	-3.70***	[-.196, .-060]		-.09	.04	-.07	-2.28*	[-.171, .013]	
Household Income	.03	.04	.02	.73	[-.044, .097]		.04	.04	.03	.87	[-.045, .117]	
Sociability	.03	.04	.02	.78	[-.047, .109]		.07	.05	.05	1.57	[-.018, .159]	
Activity	-.01	.04	-.01	-.28	[-.096, .072]		.08	.05	.05	1.61	[-.013, .183]	
Emotionality	.18	.05	.09	3.46**	[.078, .284]		.32	.06	.16	5.54***	[.205, .430]	
Household Chaos	.38	.05	.20	7.19***	[.274, .479]		.42	.06	.22	7.42***	[.306, .527]	
Marital Conflict	.32	.06	.16	5.72***	[.214, .437]		.15	.06	.07	2.46*	[.031, .277]	

*p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001.

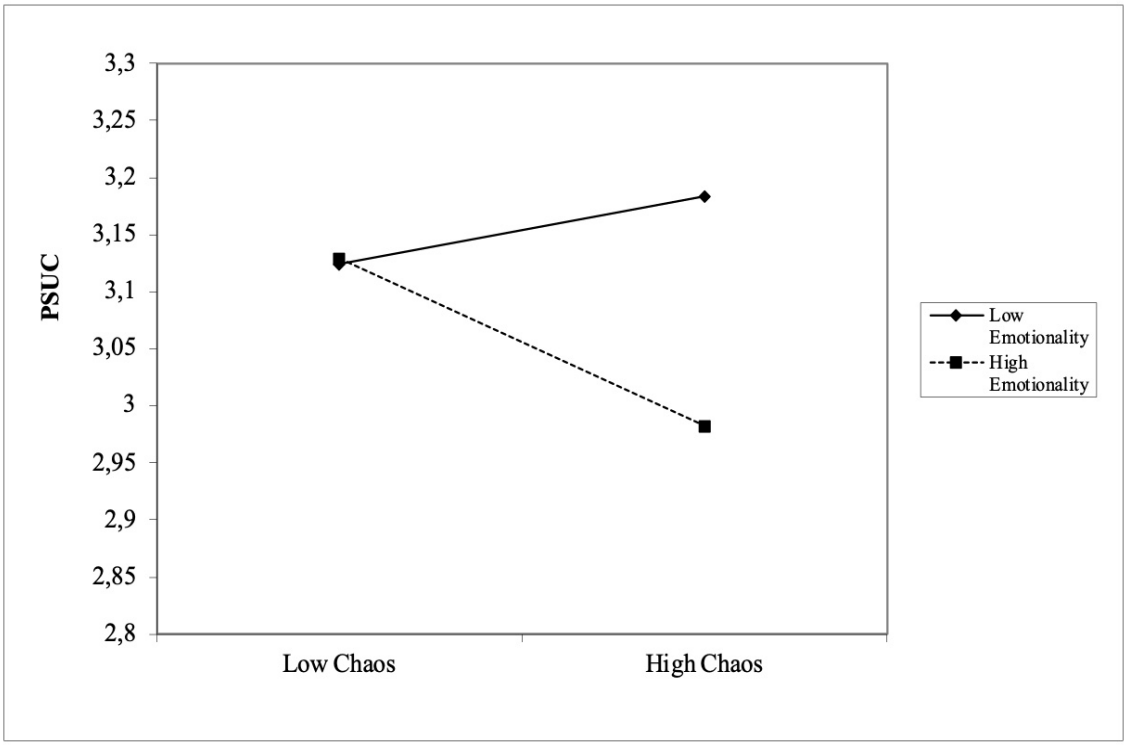
In the second step, sociability, emotionality, and activity were added to the model, and they significantly predicted PSUC ($R^2 = .16$,5, F (7, 1078) = 30.41, $p < .001$). After child temperament was included, the explained variance increased to %16,5, meaning that child temperament explained an additional unique 5,5% of the variance in PUSC, after controlling for child age, maternal age, maternal education, household income, $\Delta R^2 = .055$, $F(3, 1078) = 23.65$, $p < .001$.While emotionality ($\beta = .46$, $p < .001$), had a significant effect on PSUC, activity and sociability did not significantly predict PSUC. In step 3, household chaos and marital conflict were included in the model; and the total variance explained by the model was increased to 22,3%, $F(9, 1076) = 34.34$, $p < .001$. Addition of chaos and conflict explained a unique variance of 5,8%, after controlling for demographic characteristics and child temperament, $R^2 = .058$, ΔF (2, 1076) = 40.34, $p < .001$. Both household chaos ($\beta = .42$ $p < .001$), and marital conflict ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$), significantly predicted PSUC for girls. Household chaos and marital conflict predicted PSUC above and beyond child age, maternal age, maternal education, household income and child temperament, supporting Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3.

3.5 Moderating Effects of Interactions

To test the potential moderating effect of temperament, interaction terms between each temperament dimension and chaos and conflict were created. To that end, all predictors were centered by subtracting the mean of the variable from each score. Then, a total of six interaction terms were computed by multiplying centered temperament, chaos, and conflict variables. These possible one-way interactions between variables of the second and third steps were entered one by one and tested separately to avoid the multicollinearity effect. There was no significant moderating effect of temperament on screen use for boys. However, in predicting girls' screen use behavior, none but one interaction term, between emotionality and chaos (β = -.06, $p <$ .05) was significant. The significant interaction was plotted following the procedure suggested by Aiken and West (1991) by estimation of simple slopes of the statistical prediction of PSUC from household chaos for low emotionality (1 SD below mean) vs. high emotionality (1 SD above mean) (Table 3.4 and Figure 1).

As seen in *Figure 1*, plotting of the interaction indicated that the scores of PSUC remained almost the same for mothers of children with low and high levels of emotionality in calm homes (1 SD below mean). However, as presented in Table 3.4, the results of the simple slope test revealed that when the chaos level at home was low, girls with high and low levels of of emotionality were exposed to the same amount of screen devices. However, there was a significant difference between girls with high and low emotionality in exposing the scree devise when the chaos at home was high. High emotionality was associated with lower levels of, and low emotionality was associated with higher levels of screen use by mothers to keep their girls busy in chaotic homes. Furthermore, when emotionality was low (b = .05, t = 7,45, $p <$ .001) there was a less strong positive relation between chaos and PSUC compared to high levels of emotionality (1 SD above mean; b = 0.3, t = 7,45, $p <$ .001).

Figure 3.1 Simple slopes for statistical prediction of PSUC from chaos at low (1 SD) and high (+1 SD) levels of emotionality.



4. DISCUSSION

4.1 General Discussion

In previous studies, screen use among young children has been positively linked to family conflict and household chaos (Emond et al. 2018; Pempek and McDaniel 2016; Walton et al. 2014). However, parents' role and motivation in using screen devices as a parenting tool in chaotic and conflicting households have not been investigated. The primary aim of this study was to examine the contribution of household chaos and marital conflict in predicting parental screen use to keep children busy (PSUC). It was expected that PSUC to be higher in households characterized by high levels of chaos and conflict. The link between child characteristics and instrumental use of screen devices has been established by previous literature. Considering that boys spend more time with screen media devices, it was hypothesized that mothers are more likely to use screens instrumentally to distract their boys than their girls (H1). As the main hypotheses, it was hypothesized that chaos and conflict uniquely contribute to predicting PSUC, above and beyond child temperament (H2 and H3). In the following sections, the results of the study will be discussed in light of the relevant literature.

4.2 Major Findings of the Study

Contrary to the study hypothesis (H1) and the previous findings mainly from Western countries, comparisons of means between girls and boys on PSUC demonstrated that Turkish mothers instrumentally use screen devices more for their girls than boys. Even though screen use (e.g., video game playing) is more prevalent among boys than girls (Atkin et al. 2014; Desai et al. 2010), parents provide mediation strategies to the girls' internet use more than the boys' use (Ferreira, Ponte, and

Castro 2017; Mascheroni and Ólafsson 2014), the results of the current study suggest that girls are given screen devices as a distractor more than boys in younger ages. An explanation for this finding might be the conceptualization of the dependent variable. As indicated, the hypothesis was formulated based on the studies that explored parental mediation and screen time rather than the instrumental use of screen devices. The results of this study have indicated once more that instrumental media use is a conceptually separate construct and predicted by different demographic characteristics. Accordingly, Nabi and Krcmar (2016) suggest that parents of girls are more likely to use screens to spare time for themselves than the parents of boys. Therefore, this can lead to a better understanding of instrumental screen use as a conceptually different construct than parental mediation and child screen use.

A possible explanation might be the cultural gender socialization roles that take shape at early ages in the Turkish context. For instance, parents set more limits for girls outside play than boys, which is more prominent among Turkish parents (Karsten 2003). Considering how parents integrate technology into their parenting practices is shaped by the values, traditions, and experiences grounded in their culture (Livingstone et al. 2015), Turkish mothers might want to keep their daughters close to them while keeping them busy. Although this study focused on a young group of children, mothers' parenting belief system might be influenced by gendered socialization roles, and screen devices serve as a convenient tool for achieving this purpose. Further investigations and cross-cultural studies are needed to better understand these dynamics within and between the cultures.

Correlational findings in this study were all in the expected directions. The results revealed that PSUC was positively and significantly correlated with household chaos. Indeed, the strongest correlation of PSUC with another study variable was the positive correlation of PSUC with household chaos. As expected, in addition to its strong positive correlation with household chaos, PSUC had a strong positive correlation with marital conflict. Supporting the spillover hypothesis, these findings are in line with previous literature suggesting a negative link between relational well-being and child screen use (Pempek and McDaniel 2016); and a positive association between household chaos and screen use (Emond et al. 2018).

Among the temperamental characteristics, PSUC was significantly correlated with emotionality only. This finding is consistent with the literature, which argues that parents are more likely to instrumentally use screen media devices to calm down children with socio-emotional difficulties (Radesky et al. 2016). So, it is possible to argue that child emotionality acts as a risk factor for early media exposure. Furthermore, previous literature suggests that highly energetic children are given

screen media devices more often than less energetic children as it creates spare time for parents to relax (Nabi and Krcmar 2016). However, PSUC was not found to be significantly correlated with activity and sociability in the Turkish context. This finding was not unexpected, as the literature regarding temperament and screen use yielded mixed results. The conceptual difference in the measurement of instrumental media use could explain the lack of correlation . For instance, Nabi and Krcmar (2016) operationalized the dependent variables *"use media to help the child to relax"* and *"use media to have time away from the child"*. Instead, in the present study, the dependent variable was operationalized as *"use media to keep children busy"*. In that regard, parents need to relax their children with media devices and spare some time to themselves might be positively related to children's activity level. However, keeping the child busy with a screen media device might be unrelated to the activity level.

As indicated in the results section, to advance the understanding of the factors underlying the instrumental use of screen devices by mothers, the current study tested two sets of 3-step hierarchical regression models. Within the first step, it was found that maternal education and child age, but not maternal age and household income were significant predictors of PSUC. As expected, the results indicate that as child age increases and the level of maternal education decreases, the frequency of instrumental use of mothers increases. The proportion of the variance explained by maternal education and child age is higher for mothers of boys than mothers of girls. The second step of the analysis revealed that among the three dimensions of temperament, only emotionality predicted PSUC above and beyond the effect of demographic characteristics. In this step, the proportion of the variance explained emotionality is higher for mothers of girls compared to the mothers of boys. In line with the study hypotheses (H2 and H3), the results of the third step of the analysis indicated that marital conflict and household chaos had a unique contribution to predicting PSUC when demographic and temperamental characteristics were statistically controlled. This finding should be underlined given that household chaos and marital conflict uniquely shape screen use as a parenting tool above and beyond the effect of demographic and demographic characteristics.

The unique contribution of marital conflict and household chaos can be explained in the light of the spillover hypothesis (Krishnakumar and Buehler 2000). Marital conflict or home chaos related stress experienced by mothers seems to be transferred into their media parenting practices. For instance, in the case of marital conflict, using screen devices to keep their child busy is a feasible option when parents become absorbed by the stress of conflict and become less available for responsive parenting. Another useful theoretical framework to speculate on these findings could be the

emotional security hypothesis (Davies and Cummings 1994). Conflicting parents who experience lack of resources and time to engage in healthy parenting practices might be using these devices to divert the child's attention away from the conflict environment or restore the sense of emotional security of the child that is threatened by the conflicting environment. In that sense, it is possible to speculate on the effect of the stress induced by the chaotic household on media parenting practices in two ways: First, as discussed previously, it can be used as a feasible option for parents who lack the energy and time to perform the daily parenting practices. Second, it might be used as a tool to reduce home chaos and prevent the child from a conflicting environment. For instance, households with high levels of chaos are characterized by high noise and a lack of routines, and schedules. Parents might be choosing to use these devices to establish some routines (e.g., eating and sleeping) or simply to distract the child from the noisy and conflicting environment. However, then it might become further challenging to sustain the established routines as the child desire a screen more frequently, and the management of child screen use can add up to the chaos. Considering this possible bidirectional link between chaos and screen time, longitudinal research is needed to better understand the pattern.

Also, it is noteworthy that, for both genders, the proportion of the variance explained by household chaos was larger compared to marital conflict. A reason might be the house environment in chaotic households: As these environments are characterized by disorganization and lack of routines, parents in chaotic environments may be struggling to establish child-related routines such as monitoring and regulating children's screen time regularly (Emond et al. 2018). Also, the lack of fixed bedtime and mealtime schedules might be encouraging parents to use screens as a facilitator. An alternative explanation might be that chaotic households are marked by noise and background television, implying that screen use is normalized in the family environment and not seen as a risk factor. Given that household chaos and screen use predict similar adverse child outcomes such as delays in language, impairment in sleep, and an increase in the chance of obesity (Emond 2020), young children who are highly exposed to screen devices in chaotic homes might be at dual risk. On the other hand, the effect of marital conflict on child screen use might be more indirect and caused simply by the parents' lack of time and resources. Still, a strong and unique contribution in predicting instrumental screen use points out a similar risk with household chaos: Both marital conflict and early screen use predict later adverse outcomes in children (e.g., socioemotional problems), and screen use in conflicting homes might put children in dual risk for developing these outcomes.

In the last step of the regression analyses, if temperamental child characteristics moderate the effects of marital conflict and home chaos on mothers' screen use were

tested. Of the 12 interaction effects tested separately for boys and girls, only the interaction between emotionality and home chaos significantly predicted girls' screen use. The results suggested that, among girls living in chaotic households, those with low emotionality had higher screen device exposure than those with high emotionality. There was no significant difference between high and low emotionality children's screen use time when the home chaos is low. Given that child emotionality and household chaos positively predict PSUC, it is particularly surprising to observe the opposite effect when both predictors take place together. One plausible speculation about this unexpected interaction pattern could be that highly emotional children might develop withdrawal tendencies in chaotic households where their needs have often been disregarded. In turn, a lack of routines and high levels of confusion in the home environment might further divert parents' attention to issues other than the withdrawn child's needs. So, the low levels of reliance on screens to keep children busy might be a sign of disregard rather than a protective parenting practice. Considering the lack of relevant literature and the surprising moderation effect, further investigation is needed to understand the underlying mechanisms better.

4.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the findings of the study rely on cross-sectional data. Even though the effect of household chaos and marital conflict above and beyond demographic and child temperamental characteristics was established through hierarchical regression, it is not possible to draw causal conclusions based on this finding. The evidence suggests that the link between temperament and media use is bidirectional, and media exposure might be reinforcing child temperament as well (Cliff et al. 2018; Nabi and Krcmar 2016). Future work could examine how the link between household chaos, marital conflict, and parental use of screens as a parenting tool operates longitudinally. For instance, we found that instrumental use of screens by mothers increases as the age of the child increases. In that respect, future research could employ longitudinal design and gather data at various periods to determine the critical ages at which household variables most strongly influence mothers' use of screens as a parenting tool.

Second, since the participants were a convenience sample recruited through social media, the sample generalizability is questionable. Even though the sample size was quite large, the reached participants represented mainly a conservative and educated population. Therefore, this sampling methodology posits an issue of rep-

resentativeness and external validity. Future research should recruit mothers from diverse backgrounds to increase the generalizability of the findings.

Third, the study data relied on mothers' self-report, which was subject to social desirability bias. As mothers rated the level of conflict and chaos in their home environment as well as the temperamental characteristics of their child, their responses could be biased. Thus, it is almost impossible to prevent the subjectivity element in parental ratings (Kagan and Fox 2006) Fourth, some critical technology-related information was not included in the study. As indicated by prior research, parental screen time is strongly linked to children's screen time (Bleakley, Jordan, and Hennessy 2013; Elias and Sulkin 2017)). In that respect, high levels of instrumental use of screen devices by mothers might stem from their overuse of screens for themselves. Therefore, parental screen time should be controlled in future studies. Also, taking Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach, the study focused on the context of early media exposure. However, it has been documented that the type of content (educational, noneducational, child-oriented, adult-oriented) affected child development differentially (Tomopoulos et al. 2010). Future studies should consider the content to better analyze the antecedents and the consequences of exposure to different content in early childhood and how parents adopt the use of these contents as a parenting tool.

Lastly, the present study measured the frequency of maternal use of screen devices to keep children busy with a limited number of items. Even though these two items were extracted through a qualitative inquiry as part of the larger TUBITAK project, the scale that was used could be more detailed and target other types of purposes underlying instrumental screen use. For instance, it has been documented that, there are other common purposes underlying maternal use of screen devices like calming the child down or rewarding the child for good behavior in the Turkish context (Sümer 2018). Future studies could also test whether household characteristics such as marital conflict and household chaos would predict the instrumental use of screen devices for these purposes.

4.4 Contributions of the Study

Despite the limitations mentioned in the previous section, the strengths and contributions of the study should be acknowledged. First, this study focuses on an emerging parenting practice within the rapid rise of mobile technologies, which has not yet drawn the needed attention in the literature. Taking Bronfenbrenner's ecological

approach, the study aimed to explore how the macrosystem, the digital revolution, had an influence on family dynamics and how the elements of microsystem (e.g., household chaos and marital conflict) predicted digital parenting practices when individual child characteristics were controlled. To date, the current study may be the first to examine the antecedents of instrumental use of screen devices with the specific purpose of keeping the child busy by considering both the parent and the child factors in the Turkish context. Furthermore, collecting data from a very large group of mothers allowed us to achieve enhanced statistical power and obtain solid and reliable results. Furthermore, although instrumental use of screen devices has more detrimental effects on younger children than older ones, critical developmental trajectories have often been neglected in media parenting research, and findings from broad age range groups are generalized. Therefore, another important strength of the study is focusing on mothers who have children in a specific age period, which is the first three years of life.

An important finding is the gender effect on parental instrumental screen use in the opposite direction. As boys spend more time with screen devices and parents implement more mediation strategies for girls, we hypothesized that parents use screens instrumentally to keep their boys busy more than they do for their girls. However, the results revealed that the use of screens to keep girls busy is more prevalent than using such devices to keep boys busy. Given that screen time is more strongly associated with lower well-being among girls compared to boys at older ages (Twenge and Martin 2020), early intervention for mothers is needed not to form the basis of future problematic screen use of their daughters.

Lastly, even though household chaos and marital conflict are highly correlated constructs, the findings provided evidence for their strong unique contribution to screen-assisted parenting practices. It is important to highlight that these unique contributions are still strong after controlling the temperamental characteristics of the child and the important demographic characteristics of the child and parents. This finding offers a crucial direction for developing appropriate intervention programs to target parents of children who live in chaotic households characterized by marital conflict, as they are at the highest risk for screen exposure at an early age. Even though health authorities suggest using screens for children younger than three years no more than one hour per day (Council 2016; Organization 2019), it might not be a feasible and sustainable strategy if parents do not have the appropriate tools and environment. It might be especially challenging for parents who experience struggles in their micro-environment (Brown and Smolenaers 2018). Based on the study findings, particularly parents experiencing high levels of marital conflict and household chaos should be targeted in these intervention programs and trained to fulfill

their needs of keeping the child busy by other parenting practices fostering positive child outcomes (e.g., parental mediation of screen media, encouraging games that keep children physically active, involving children in housework, equal distribution of responsibilities among parents) (Brown and Smolenaers 2018). Therefore, parents should be instructed about the adverse outcomes of early screen exposure to children, such as lower fine motor and visual reception abilities (Supanitayanon, Trairatvorakul, and Chonchaiya 2020; Tomopoulos et al. 2010), poorer sleep quality (Benita, Gordon-Hacker, and Gueron-Sela 2020; Hale and Guan 2015; Marinelli et al. 2014; Ribner et al. 2019) and about the potential risks such as being overweight (Appelhans et al. 2014), and developing socio-emotional problems (Chonchaiya et al. 2015; Mares et al. 2018) and develop necessary skills to replace instrumental screen use with other strategies.

4.5 Conclusion

The main aim of this thesis was to understand the unique contribution of household chaos and marital conflict in predicting the instrumental use of screens above and beyond the effect of child temperament and critical parent and child demographics. Both predictors relatively strong and unique contribution to understanding excessive screen use in the early years have critical implications: First, parents experiencing high levels of chaos and conflict need to fulfill their needs by implementing screen-assisted practices into their parenting the most. Consequently, children raised in chaotic and conflicting environments are at the highest risk for high exposure to screen devices at an early age and develop adverse outcomes. Considering the rapid increase in the usage of screen devices, this issue needs more public attention and awareness. Accordingly, appropriate family policies accompanied by effective prevention and intervention programs should be developed to eliminate the adverse outcomes of excessive screen use in the early years.

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APPENDIX A

A.1 Informed Consent Form for Parents

Değerli Ebeveynler,

TÜBİTAK'ın ülkemizin öncelikli konularında desteklediği araştırmalar kapsamında dört üniversitenin ortaklığı ile yürüttüğümüz araştırma projemiz için yardımınıza ihtiyacımız var. **Çalışmanın temel amacı** Türkiye'deki çocuk yetiştirme tutum ve davranışlarını incelemektir. Bu araştırmaya aşağıdaki bağlantıdan katılarak görüş ve deneyimlerinizi paylaşırsanız çok memnun oluruz.

Çalışmaya katılım tamamen **gönüllülük esasına** dayanmaktadır. **Anketin tamamlanması cevaplama hızına göre bir saate yakın sürebilmektedir.** Konunun geniş kapsamı nedeniyle anket görece uzun olmasına karşın, ebeveynlere kendi davranış ve tecrübelerini değerlendirme ve gözden geçirme fırsatı vermesi bakımından çok faydalı olabilmektedir. **Anketin hepsini bir defada tamamlamak zorunda değilsiniz, her girdiğinizde sistem sizi kaldığınız yerden başlatacaktır.** Anketin tamamlanması bu çalışma bakımından çok önemlidir. Bu bakımdan sonuna kadar tamamlamanızı rica ediyoruz. **Anketi cep telefonundan doldurabilirsiniz ancak bilgisayar üzerinden doldurursanız daha rahat ve hızlı cevap verebilirsiniz.**

Sizden kimlik belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmemektedir. Cevaplarınız tamamıyla gizli tutulacak, sadece araştırmacılar tarafından değerlendirilecektir. Araştırmayla ilgili sorularınızı aşağıdaki e-posta adresini kullanarak araştırma yürütücülerine yöneltebilirsiniz.

Anketteki hiçbir sorunun doğru ya da yanlış cevabı yoktur. Araştırma sonuçlarının yansız olması ve çocukların sağlıklı gelişimini etkileyen faktörlerin doğru saptanması için vereceğiniz bilgilerin sizin gerçek duygu ve düşüncelerinizi yansıtması çok önemlidir. Rahatsızlık hissettiğiniz bir durum olursa, anketi yarıda bırakabilirsiniz. Çalışmamıza katıldığınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz.

Proje Yürütücüleri:
Prof. Dr. Nebi Sümer (Sabancı Üniversitesi)
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* Lütfen cevabınızdan sonra sağ alt köşedeki oka basarak ilerleyiniz.

Bu çalışmaya katılmayı;

o Kabul Ediyorum

o Kabul Etmiyorum

APPENDIX B

B.1 Demographic Information Scale

1. Cinsiyet: Kadın/Erkek
2. Doğum yılınız:
3. Eğitim Durumunuz:
   - Okuryazar değil
   - Diplomasız okur
   - İlkokul mezunu
   - İlköğretim/ortaokul mezunu
   - Lise mezunu
   - Üniversite mezunu
   - Yüksek lisans/doktora
4. Aylık hane geliri:
   - 2850 TL'den az (asgari ücret altı)
   - 2850 TL (asgari ücret civarında)
   - 2580 TL-6000TL
   - 6001 TL-8000 TL
   - 8001 TL-10000 TL
   - 10001 TL-15000 TL
   - 15 000TL ve üzeri
5. Bu anket kapsamında çocuğunuz hakkında bilgi almak istiyoruz. Şimdi 0-36 ay arasında olan bir çocuğunuzu seçiniz ve aşağıdaki soruları ona göre cevaplayınız.:
6. Tüm sorular cevaplanırken dikkate alınacak çocuğun cinsiyeti:

- Kız
- Erkek

7. Tüm sorular cevaplanırken dikkate alacağınız çocuğunuzun doğum yılını aşağıdan seçiniz: 2000-2020

8. Tüm soruları cevaplarken dikkate alacağınız çocuğunuzun doğduğu ayı aşağıdan seçiniz: Ocak-Aralık

APPENDIX C

C.1 Parental Screen Use for Children Scale (PSUC)

1. Çocuğunuzu oyalamak için bir ekranı (örneğin TV, tablet) açık bırakır mısınız?
   - Hiçbir zaman
   - Çok nadir
   - Ara sıra
   - Çoğunlukla
   - Her Zaman
2. Çocuğunuzu oyalamak için eline cep telefonu veya tablet verir misiniz?
   - Hiçbir zaman
   - Çok nadir
   - Ara sıra
   - Çoğunlukla
   - Her Zaman

APPENDIX D

D.1 Turkish Form Of EAS (Emotions, Activity, Sociability) Temperament Survey For Children (Parental Ratings)

Aşağıda çocukların gösterdiği bazı davranışlar sıralanmıştır. **Çocuğunuzun gösterdiği davranışları dikkate alarak** her bir maddeyi değerlendiriniz ve gösterilen **davranışın sıklığına göre** uygun seçeneği işaretleyiniz.

__ 1- Hiçbir Zaman
__ 4- Her Zaman

1. Utangaçtır
2. Kolayca ağlar.
3. İnsanlarla bir arada olmayı sever.
4. Yerinde duramaz.
5. Tek başına oynamaktansa başkalarıyla oynamayı tercih eder.
6. Duygusal olmaya eğilimlidir.
7. Yavaş hareket eder.
8. Kolayca arkadaş edinir.
9. Uyanır uyanmaz koşturmaya başlar.
10. Onun için insanlar diğer şeylerden daha ilgi çekicidir.
11. Sık sık huysuzlanır ve ağlar.
12. Arkadaş canlısıdır.
13. Çok enerjiktir.
14. Tanımadığı insanlara ısınması zaman alır.
15. Kolayca keyfi kaçar.
16. Yalnız bir çocuktur.
17. Sakin, sessiz oyunları aktif ve hareketli oyunlara tercih eder.
18. Yalnızken ayrı kalmış hisseder.
19. Keyfi kaçtığında şiddetli tepki gösterir.
20. Tanımadığı insanlarla kolay arkadaşlık kurar.

APPENDIX E

E.1 Turkish Form Of EAS (Turkish Form of O'leary Porter Scale (OPS)

Her evlilikte tartışmaların olması normaldir. Eşler belli konularda anlaşmazlığa düşerler. Kimi zaman tartışmaları belirli zamanlara ve ortamlara sınırlamak zorlaşır. Aşağıdaki davranışları **çocuğunuzun önünde** eşinizle ne sıklıkta yaptığınızı uygun rakamı seçerek belirtiniz.

__ 1- Hiçbir Zaman
__ 4- Her Zaman

1. Parasal konular hakkında tartışmak
2. Çocuğunuzun disiplini ile ilgili problemleri tartışmak
3. Ailede kadının üstlenmesi gereken roller ile ilgili tartışmak
4. Kişisel alışkanlıkları nedeniyle (örneğin; içki-sigara içmek, dağınık olmak vb.) eşinizi eleştirmek
5. Kişisel alışkanlıklarınız nedeniyle (örneğin; içki-sigara içmek, dağınık olmak vb.) eşinizin sizi eleştirmesi
6. Eşinizle tartışmak
7. Evliliğinizdeki öfkeyi eşinize yönelik fiziksel davranışlarla ifade etmek
8. Birbirinize öfkeli sözler söylemek
9. Eşinizle birbirinize olan sevginizi göstermek
10. Çocuğunuzun neler ve ne kadar yediği konusunda tartışmak
11. Çocuğunuzla yeterince ilgilenmediği konusunda tartışmak
12. Çocukların üzerine gereğinden fazla düşme konusunda tartışmak
13. Çocuğunuz okul başarısı ve ders çalışması konusunda tartışma

APPENDIX F

F.1 Turkish Short-Form of Confusion, Hubbub, and Order Scale

Aşağıda verilen ifadelerin sizin ev hayatınıza ne kadar benzer olup olmadığını uygun seçeneği işaretleyerek belirtiniz.

__ 1- Hiçbir Zaman
__ 4- Her Zaman

1. Her sabah yaptığım şeylerin belli bir düzeni, sırası (uyanma saati, kahvaltı gibi) vardır.
2. Bizim evde gürültüden doğru düzgün düşünemem bile.
3. Evimiz her zaman karman çormandır.
4. Evimizde yapılması gereken şeylere yetişiriz.
5. Evimizde genelde televizyon açıktır.
6. Evimiz sakindir.