The importance of Coparenting has become increasingly acknowledged as a predictor of child development (e.g., Trehub & Pinquart, 2010). Coparenting refers to the way how mothers and fathers cooperate and support or undermine each other's effects in the parenting role. In a ecological model of coparenting, Feinberg (2003) highlights the interparental relationship as a central antecedent (cf. Margolin et al., 2001; Schoppe et al., 2004; Talbot & McHale, 2004). Many studies have evidenced spilt-over-effects of the interparental relationship into the quality of parenting which in turn influences children's adjustment (e.g., Benson, Haeberle, & Gerard, 2008; Erel & Burmann, 1995). Accordingly, the present study investigates the mediating role of coparenting in linking the interparental relationship to child adjustment.

Research Questions
- Parenting as mediator linking relationship satisfaction – child adjustment
- Coparenting as mediator linking relationship satisfaction – child adjustment
- The role of coparenting in links between relationship satisfaction, parenting and child adjustment

**Sample**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Data</th>
<th>Dyadic Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mothers fathers</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationship duration (years) (M(SD))</td>
<td>9.0(4.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>married</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child female</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age (in years) M (SD)</td>
<td>4.1(0.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2(1.0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1(1.0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Methods**

For mediation hypotheses (Baron & Kenny, 1986) Structural Equation Models (SEM) with Monte Carlo bootstrapped indirect effects (cf. Hayes, 2010) were estimated (AMOS 18). To control gender effects Multi Group Analyses (MGA) were performed. Where the chi-square differences (Δχ²) between the unconstrained and the equality constraint model in the structural weights were calculated. To analyze the dyadic data we performed an Actor-Partner Interdependence model (APIM; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook 2006). A critical alpha of .05 was assumed in our analyses.

**Results**

**Interplay between Coparenting, Relationship Satisfaction, Parenting, & Child Adjustment**

**Coparenting as Mediator**

![Diagram showing the relationship between Coparenting, Relationship Satisfaction, Parenting, & Child Adjustment with path coefficients](image)

**Coparenting**

Model: Fit: χ² = 68.09, df = 36, χ²/df = 1.89, p = .001; CFI = .96, RMSEA = .05; MGA: Δχ² = 5.39, Δdf = 7, n.s.

For mothers as well as fathers Coparenting functions as a mediator between Relationship Satisfaction and Child Adjustment: In both cases the effect disappears (full mediation).

**Usage by Parents**

Model: Fit: χ² = 22.53, df = 25, χ²/df = 2.71, p = <.001, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .03; MGA: Δχ² = 10.61, Δdf = 8, n.s.

For parents as well as fathers Coparenting affects directly for either parent, Coparenting as well as Parenting show independent effects on Child Adjustment.

**Diagnostic Analysis**

Actor-Partner Multi-Step Multiple Mediator Model (Hayes, 2009, Polyakman & Bodenmann, 2006)

Parental Coparenting and Parenting jointly mediate effects of Relationship Satisfaction on Child Adjustment (complete mediation for women and men). The effect from Relationship Satisfaction across Coparenting to Child Adjustment is identical for mothers and fathers, but there are gender differences: For mothers, Relationship Satisfaction is linked to Coparenting via Coparenting only. For fathers, Relationship Satisfaction affects directly for. Either parent, Coparenting as well as Parenting show independent effects on Child Adjustment.

**Conclusion**

- As expected, there are strong connections between Relationship Satisfaction and both parents' report on Coparenting.
- Coparenting proves a strong mediator linking Relationship Satisfaction to Child Adjustment for both parents.
- For fathers, this also holds for Parenting which is directly affected by Relationship Satisfaction and strongly linked to Child Adjustment. For mothers, however, Parenting is less affected by Partnership Satisfaction and mediates its effects on Child Adjustment only indirectly and partially.
- Coparenting and Parenting act as two serially linked mediators between Relationship Satisfaction and Child Adjustment for mothers, but as rather independent parallel mediators for fathers. Interestingly, fathers' positive parenting seems less dependent on Coparenting but rather on Partnership Satisfaction.

**Limitations**

- Our analyses focus on families formed out of wedlock. Higher variance & salience of partnership quality than for married parents?
- Cross-sectional data! Therefore, no causal interpretations are allowed ⊆ need for longitudinal investigations.

**References**