ORIGINAL RESEARCH
https://dx.doi.org/10.14482/psdc.43.1.155.741

PDC PSICOLOGÍA DESDE EL CARIBE

Psychometric Properties of the Spanish Version of the Parenting Self-Regulation Scale

Propiedades psicométricas de la versión en español de la Escala de Autorregulación Parental

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Abstract

The literature shows that the study of parenting focuses primarily on parenting styles and behaviors, but minimally on the motivation of caregivers. Therefore, the self-regulatory approach to parenting has only recently begun to be investigated. In this study, the Spanish version of the Parenting Regulation Focus Scale (PRFS) was adapted and validated in a sample of caregivers (N = 844) of children under five years of age. Exploratory Structural Equation Modeling (ESEM) yielded satisfactory goodness-of-fit indices for the instrument when some items were omitted; hence, the promotion and prevention dimensions contained six items each. Group comparisons revealed that college-educated caregivers have a greater focus on promotion in parenting, whereas no differences were found regarding the focus on prevention. The results of this study pave the way for a deeper understanding of the parental regulatory approach in Latin America, thereby contributing to the cross-cultural analysis of parenting dynamics.

Keywords: self-regulation, parenting, psychometric, ESEM.

Resumen

La literatura muestra que el estudio de la crianza se centra en los estilos y comportamientos parentales, pero poco en la motivación de los cuidadores. Por lo tanto, el enfoque de autorregulación en la crianza apenas ha comenzado a investigarse. En este estudio, se adaptó y validó la versión en español de la Escala de Enfoque de Regulación Parental (PRFS) en una muestra de cuidadores (N = 844) de niños menores de cinco años. El Modelamiento de Ecuaciones Estructurales Exploratorio (ESEM) arrojó un buen ajuste del instrumento cuando se omitieron algunos ítems; así, las dimensiones de promoción y prevención quedaron conformadas por seis ítems cada una. Las comparaciones entre grupos revelaron que los cuidadores con educación universitaria presentan un mayor enfoque en la promoción en la crianza, pero no se encontraron diferencias en el enfoque en la prevención. Los resultados de este estudio abren el camino para una comprensión más profunda del enfoque regulatorio parental en América Latina y, en consecuencia, en el abordaje transcultural de las dinámicas de crianza.

Palabras clave: autorregulación, crianza, psicometría, ESEM.

Citation/Reference: Amar Amar, J. J., Molina-Palencia, C., Romero Orozco, D., & Aragón Barcelo, J. (2026). Psychometric Properties of the Spanish Version of the Parenting Self-Regulation Scale. *Psicología desde el Caribe*, *43*(1), 50-65.

Received: March 2, 2025
Accepted: April 10, 2025

Introduction

Parenting constitutes a dynamic process mediated by sociocultural factors. Currently, although there are no exhaustive theories on the influence of parenting on child development, various studies exist regarding the impact of parenting style on this area (Sahithya et al., 2019). Parenting depends, to a great extent, on the family, as it generates the scenarios in which children develop their potential and skills, and, among its functions, it strengthens the child development across various dimensions (Lopéz & Guainaro, 2016). In addition, according to the literature, parents should provide children with an upbringing that allows for cognitive stimulation, as well as the teaching of values, principles, and favorable behaviors (Prats et al., 2018).

Notwithstanding these findings, the literature shows that research on parenting focuses primarily on parental styles and behaviors, whereas the motivation of the caregivers remains scarcely explored (Morris et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2022) regarding their decisions on parenting guidelines (Jungert et al., 2015). In turn, parenting styles refer to the set of attitudes and parental behaviors that parents consistently and frequently use in various contexts to control their children's behavior, and are determined by patterns of control, responsiveness, warmth, and punishment (Sahithya et al., 2019). In addition, parenting style influences the socialization processes of children (Ibáñez & Madariaga, 2019). However, the importance of knowing caregivers´ motivation lies in its usefulness at the intervention level, as researchers, clinicians, and social workers can use this knowledge to help parents learn new parenting skills that match their parental motivations.

In Latin America, studies generally focus on the role of parents in children's motivation (Gutiérrez & Escartí, 2006; Macián-González & Tejada, 2020; Torre et al., 2019; Mayorquín & Zaldívar, 2019). However, some studies have addressed the relationship between parental motivation and adherence to child medical and psychotherapeutic treatments (Pereira & Barros, 2019; Nock, 2006). Consequently, within these studies, parental motivation is identified as a relevant factor in treating child behavioral problems. For example, parental motivation is related to parents' perceived barriers to treatment engagement, which is subsequently associated with treatment attendance (Nock, 2006).

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ISSN 2011-7485 (*on line*)

In a systematic review, Pereira and Barros (2019) found that, out of four reviewed studies, three demonstrated significant effects of parental motivation on child psychotherapeutic treatment. Specifically, in the studies by Wade and Andrade (2015) and Bloomquist et al. (2012), parents who reported higher levels of willingness and motivation attended more sessions. Similarly, in the study by Stadnick et al. (2016), motivation to participate in therapy, more specifically perceived skills, was positively associated with parent participation. The fourth study (Nock et al., 2007), conducted with a sample of low-income parents, did not find an association between parental motivation and the quality and quantity of adherence or attendance in treatment.

In terms of education, parents' motivation to participate in their children's educational process has been found to yield substantial benefits for children's intrinsic motivation toward academics. Different parenting styles are related to distinct motivations and achievement goals among children. For instance, an authoritative parenting style, which combines high expectations and demands with warmth and support, is typically associated with mastery goals, i.e., an orientation toward learning and understanding. Moreover, parental involvement that fosters childhood autonomy, including valuing independent problem-solving, providing choice, and encouraging participation in decision-making, is positively related to student effort. This investment is reflected in higher standardized test scores, higher grades awarded by teachers, and higher rates of homework completion. In contrast, controlling involvement is negatively related to these outcomes (Gonzalez et al., 2002; Cooper et al., 2000).

Therefore, the way in which parents participate in their children's homework is relevant in determining the success of this participation. The authors highlighted four dimensions that characterize the quality of parental involvement: autonomy support versus control, process versus person focus, positive versus negative affect, and positive versus negative beliefs regarding the potential of the child (Pomerantz et al., 2007). According to the authors, parental involvement can be especially beneficial when it promotes autonomy, is process-focused, is characterized by positive affect, and is accompanied by positive beliefs. In this sense, studies relate parental motivation to the level of involvement in childcare and development activities (education and health to a greater extent). However, there is a lack of empirical approaches and of studies relating parental motivation to the general framework of parenting.

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In this regard, Zhou et al. (2022) adapted self-regulation theory (SR; Higgins, 1997) to assess parental motivation. SR proposes that, behind goal-oriented behavior, two types of motivations exist, promotion and prevention, which provide insight into how people approach pleasure and avoid pain (Gao et al., 2021). Thus, promotion-oriented self-regulation encompasses aspirations, hopes, and sensitivity to positive outcomes; and prevention-oriented self-regulation encompasses representations, goals, obligations, and sensitivity to negative outcomes (Gao et al., 2021). In this manner, Higgins (1997) suggested that people can be motivated by internal values such as ambitions, values, and aspirations, or external values, such as responsibilities and duties.

Following the adaptation of SR to the field of parenting, subsequent studies associated SR with parenting styles (Chen et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2021). Building on this, caregivers' motivations may suggest the particular parenting approach they adopt toward their children (Zhou et al., 2022). Thus, mothers who are promotion-focused engage in activities that align with their ideals and ambitions, such as participating in activities conducive to successful childbirth or joining a pregnancy group. In contrast, a mother with a regulatory focus on prevention may refrain from engaging in certain types of activities to align with her sense of obligation and responsibility; for example, avoiding physical activities or behaviors that pose a high risk to a successful delivery (Zhou et al., 2022). According to SR, the development of individual differences in self-regulation orientation stems primarily from the interaction patterns that occur between caregiver and child (Keller, 2008). In this sense, promotion-oriented caregivers congratulate and show affection to their children when they behave in a desired manner, while those with a preventive orientation are more likely to criticize, scold, and, eventually, yell at their children when they make mistakes (Higgins & Silberman 1998; Keller, 2008).

To date, parental self-regulation has been mainly addressed in Asian and Anglo-Saxon contexts, to evaluate the motivations of parents and children in their parenting and caregiving processes. Despite this trend, little research has explored its applicability in the Latin American context, unlike the extensive attention given to Higgins' (1997) theory regarding student motivation and school dropout (Matheu et al., 2018). This gap in knowledge reduces the opportunity to evaluate parental self-regulation from a cross-cultural perspective. Although, the existing instrument to measure SR in parenting was developed by Zhou et al. (2022), it lacks of validation in other cultural contexts outside of its original design

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ISSN 2011-7485 (*on line*)

setting. Therefore, it is crucial to utilize instruments that consistently quantify the attributes they intend to measure (validity) and ensure that these measurements present the lowest possible measurement error (reliability). Therefore, it is necessary to develop valid and reliable psychometric instruments to assess parental self-regulation in countries where little research has been conducted, such as Colombia. To address this need, the present study aims to establish the validity and reliability of the Colombian version of the Parental Self-Regulation Scale in a sample of caregivers of children in rural and urban contexts in the Caribbean region of Colombia.

Methodology

Participants

This study involved the participation of 844 caregivers of children aged 0 to 5 years. The caregivers were mainly women (93.42%) and young adults (MAge = 30, SD = 8.92%) predominantly from low (89.90%) and middle (8.12%) socioeconomic levels, and largely without university studies (85.18%). At the time of their participation in the study, 26.58% of the caregivers were engaged in work activities, 67.47% were engaged in housework, and 5.94% were studying. In accordance with the calculations of Wolf et al. (2013), we chose to exceed the minimum sample size of 460 observations to ensure sufficient statistical power when evaluating the different structural equation models.

Instruments

Parenting Self-Regulation Scale

This instrument was developed by Zhou et al. (2022) with the aim of assessing the parental self-regulation of caregivers. This 16-item scale measures promotion self-regulation (e.g., "It is important for your child... to be willing to take chances") and prevention self-regulation in child rearing (e.g., "It is important for your child... to think about their safety first"). Notably, the items in the original version of the instrument had six response options, which eliminated the possibility of recording neutral responses. However, in the present study, the number of response options in each item was reduced to include neutral responses (1 = "strongly disagree", 5 = "strongly agree"). To achieve this, a translation of the items into Spanish was carried out through a triangulation performed by psychologists fluent both English and Spanish.

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Demographical Questionnaire

The demographic characteristics of the participants were collected from a set of questions on gender (*male, female, and other*), age, socioeconomic level (*low, middle, and high*), educational level (*primary, high school, technical/technological, undergraduate, and graduate*), and occupation (*housework, student, and worker*), In addition to other characteristics that are not relevant to the present study.

Statistical Analysis

For the evaluation of the internal validity of the parenting self-regulation scale, an Exploratory Structural Equation Modeling (ESEM) was performed. To carry out this analysis, the factors were first extracted by means of an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). During this phase of the psychometric analysis, researchers can obtain different item distributions based on the inter-item correlations, which are subsequently evaluated in the ESEM, based on the absolute and incremental goodness-of-fit indices of each of the derived models. Moreover, prior to item factoring, it is important to determine whether the inter-item correlation matrix displays sufficiently high values to confirm the adequacy of the analysis. Consequently, the eigenvalues and KMO index of each item were estimated using bootstrapping (1000 random subsamples) because, by doing so, it is possible to calculate their confidence intervals. In the EFA, the principal axis factor extraction method and a promax rotation matrix were used. The number of factors was extracted iteratively from the extraction of one factor to the number of eigenvalues greater than one. Subsequently, ESEM models were estimated using the robust maximum likelihood method with the Yuan-Bentler correction, which is less sensitive to the absence of multivariate normality in the data. Finally, the models were compared on the basis of the CFI, TLI, and RMSEA indices (see cut-off points in Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Once the model with the best goodness-of-fit was established, its internal consistency of the model was determined based on McDonald's omega, which is recommended when the assumptions necessary to compute reliability with Cronbach's alpha are not met (Kalkbrenner, 2023). Finally, nonparametric statistics were used to examine the differences in SR according to the educational level and age range of the caregivers, as well as the gender of the reference child.

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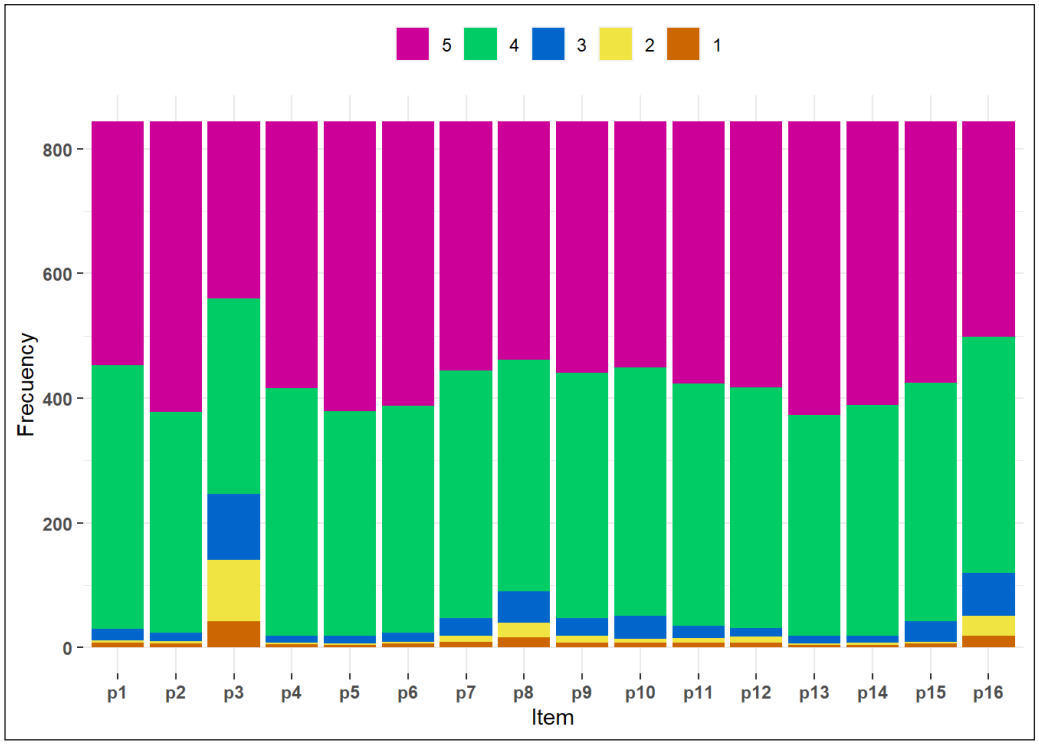
ISSN 2011-7485 (*on line*)

Results

Descriptive analyses of the instrument showed that most of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the items. Regarding item p3 (“. . . to do challenging things even if it leads to failure”), a distinct response pattern was detected, indicating that participants agreed less with this statement compared to the other items. Also, this item showed the greatest dispersion of responses (IQR = 2).



Source: own elaboration.

Figure 1. RFP Response Distribution

To determine whether the inter-item correlation matrix was factorizable, the KMO index was calculated, which revealed strong indicators at the general level (KMO = .95), as well as for each item of the instrument. By extension, when the spectral decomposition of the correlation matrix was carried out, the eigenvalues were obtained, through which possible one-, two-, and three-factor models were identified.

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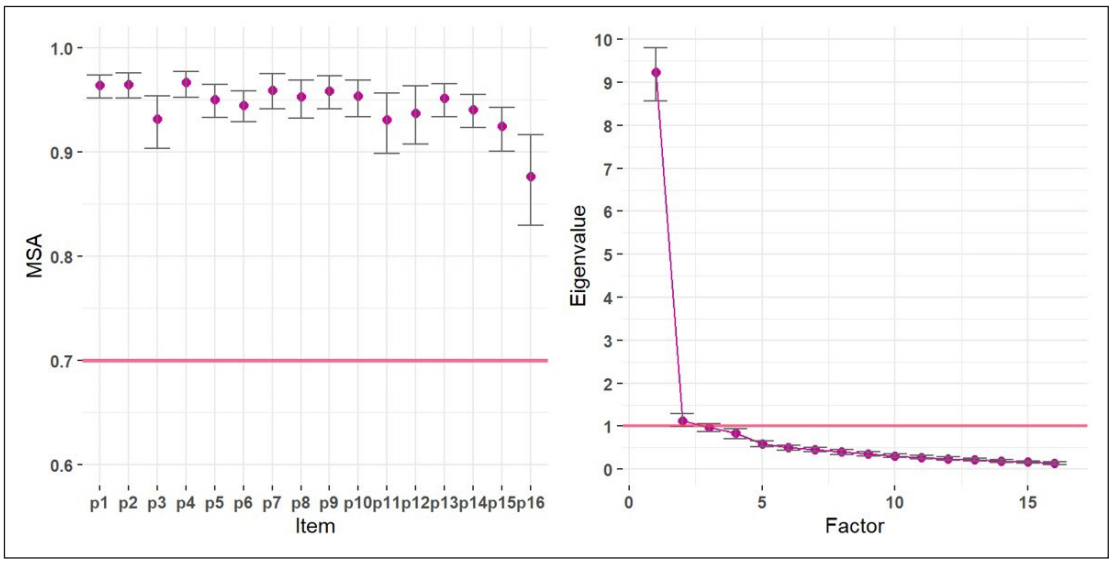

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Figure 2. KMO and Eigenvalues

During In the factor extraction phase, three initial models were obtained. Within Model 1, all items were agglomerated into a single factor that explained 55.2% of the variance in the data. Moreover, in this model, all items exhibited adequate factor loadings (λ>.35). Subsequently, when extracting Model 2, the items were grouped according to the findings of Zhou et al. (2022), where items p1 through p8 constituted the first factor (promotion) and items p9 through p16 formed the second factor (prevention). However, in this model, item p3 exhibited weak loadings on both factors, whereas item p13 loaded similarly on both dimensions. The extraction of Model 3 revealed that items p3 and p8 were placed on a new factor, while items p13 and p14 displayed moderate loadings on Factors 1 and 2. These cross-loading issues suggested the possibility of removing items that loaded in a unexpected manner. To address this, a two-factor model (Model 4) was constructed, excluding items p3 and p8 because they did not load on any factor related to the theoretical Framework; similarly, another two-factor model (Model 5) was evaluated by excluding items p3, p8, p13, and p14. In this manner, the final modifications aimed to ensure that the resulting factors were more distinct from each other.

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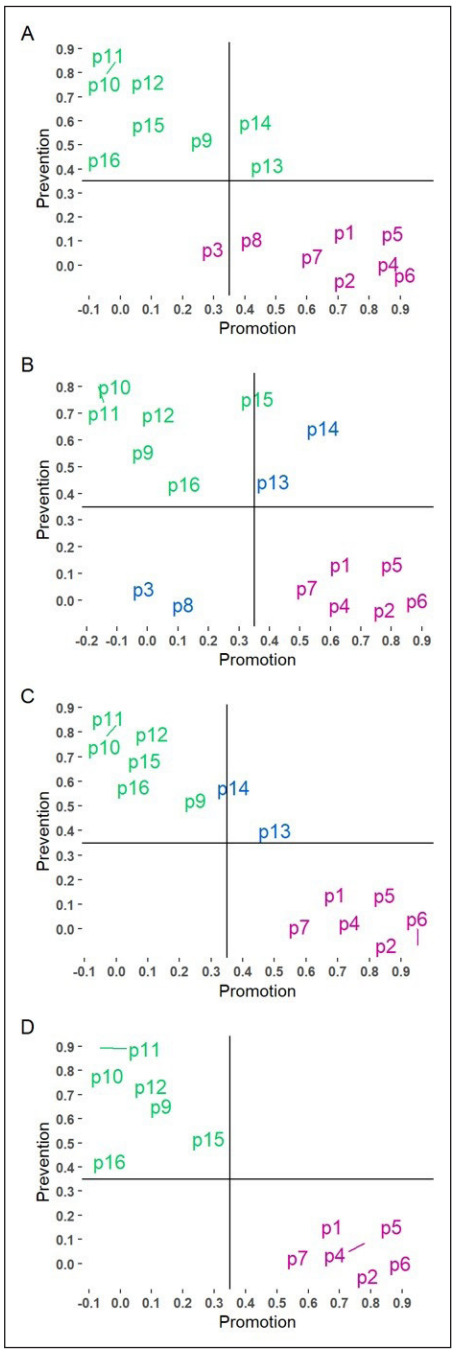

Note. A = Model 2, B = Model 3, C = Model 4, D = Model 5. The vertical and horizontal lines indicate λ = .35. Model 1 was not plotted because its unidimensionality does not allow for a straightforward visual interpretation.

Source: own elaboration.

Figure 3. Item-loadings Distribution

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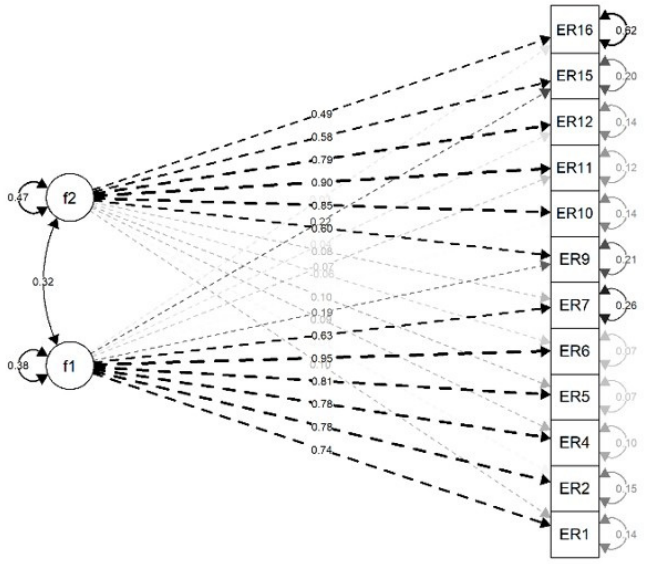
After the five study models were identified in the exploratory phase, the goodness-of-fit of each model was evaluated to determine which of these factor structures best represented the structure of the Parenting Self-Regulation Scale. The ESEM showed that Model 3 was the model that best reduced the measurement error (x2(114) = 277, CFI=.961, TLI=.959, RMSEA = .064), followed by Model 5 (x2(164)=63, CFI=.964, TLI=.964, RMSEA = .070), whereas the model with the greatest error was Model 1 (x2(706)=119, CFI=.86, TLI=.859, RMSEA=.119). Although Model 3 had the lowest error, Model 5 presented the best incremental fit indices and, at the same time, represented the factor structure closest to the theoretical model comprising the promotion and prevention factors. Consequently, the results indicate that the two-factor model that excludes items p3, p8, p13, and p14 is the one that best approximates the measurement of self-regulation.

Table. Goodness-of-fit of Models

	X^2(df)	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Model 3	277 (114)	.961	.959	.064
Model 5*	164 (63)	.964	.963	.070
Model 4	292 (88)	.944	.942	.084
Model 2	413 (117)	.929	.928	.085
Model 1	706 (119)	.860	.859	.119

Note. df = degrees of freedom, *Winner model.
Source: own elaboration.



Source: own elaboration.

Figure 4. Best Factor Structure

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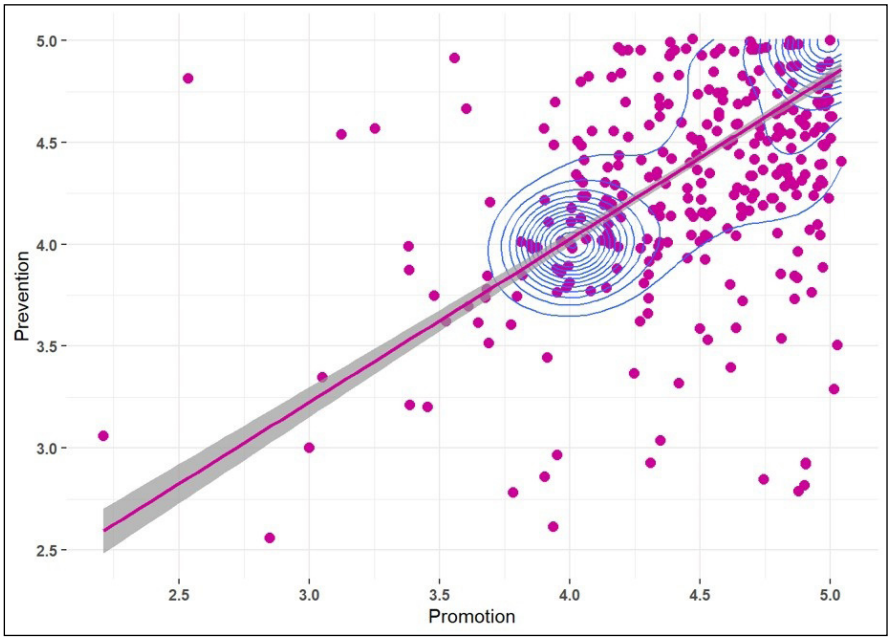
The internal consistency of Model 5 was analyzed by calculating the McDonald's omega coefficient, which showed that the promotion and prevention dimensions were reliable (ωpromotion = .93, ωprevention = .89). Likewise, the participants' scores on both scales were highly correlated, r = .79, t(842) = 38.55, p < .001, and most of them fell within the range of 4 to 5 points.



Source: own elaboration.

Figure 5. Correlation between Promotion and Prevention Scores

Scores on both subscales were compared according to the educational level and age range of the participants. The results showed that caregivers with a college education had a greater focus on parenting promotion (Me = 4.83, IQR = .74), compared to caregivers without that level of education (Me = 4.39, IQR = 1, W = 34,638, p = .008). In contrast, no significant differences were found when examining the prevention approach between both groups (W = 38,480, p = .329). Additionally, the results showed that the caregiver's age group was neither related to promotion self-regulation (χ2(3) = 2.37, p =.499) nor to prevention in parenting (χ2 (3) =1.47, p = .688). Finally, similar results were achieved when comparing promotion (W = 46,797, p = .970) and prevention (W = 45,671, p = .617) according to the child's gender.

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Discussion

This study aimed to determine the validity and reliability of the Spanish version of the Parenting Self-Regulation Scale. In this sample, the instrument demonstrated adequate psychometric properties that support its validity and reliability. Psychometric analyses showed that the scale presents the two theoretical factors of the self-regulation theory (promotion and prevention). Moreover, different factor models were compared, which led to a slightly different distribution of items than that reported by Zhou et al.(2022).

In order to reconcile the statistical fit of the model with its theoretical structure, it was necessary to eliminate items p3, p8, p13, and p14. Items p3 and p8 were eliminated because they did not significantly load on either factor; this could be due to the fact that the content of these items explicitly refers to decision-making in risk situations, which is not necessarily part of the promotion approach (Arboleda & López 2016). Similarly, items p13 and p14 were found to have similar loadings on both the prevention and promotion approaches, which prompted the decision to eliminate them. Indeed, many psychometric studies opt for the elimination of items that load on different factors (e.g., Hübel et al., 2023; Kramer et al., 2023; Sharp et al., 2022), as their presence hinders the sufficient differentiation of the domains of the construct.

This study examined whether there were differences in self-regulation across educational level by gender and age groups. The results indicated that parents with a university education tend to exhibit higher promotion-focused parenting self-regulation than caregivers who do not have this level of education. In addition, there were no differences when examining the prevention approach in both groups, which aligns with previous studies (Keller, 2008). In our sample, this difference by educational level could be due to the fact that the study was conducted in a vulnerable population, so university study could differ considerably from that of the rest of the sample, given their conditions (Richaud et al., 2013). Likewise, there were no differences according to age group or the gender of the child. These outcomes coincide with those found in previous studies (Zhou et al., 2022).

In the original psychometric study by Zhou et al. (2022), the sample consisted primarily of White Anglo-Saxon participants. In that study, high reliability indices were also detected, reflecting the potential use of the instrument to

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advance the cross-cultural study of parental motivations. Consequently, the results of the present study represent an advance in this field, as the adaptation of the regulatory focus model to parenting studies is recent, and there is currently no research in non-Anglo-Saxon countries measuring this construct, especially in samples of caregivers living in conditions of poverty.

Traditional studies relate motivation to the level of participation in activities and their connection to specific parenting behaviors. In contrast, the present results allow for the identification of the motivational orientation within parenting, which enables researches to differentiate the underlying motivational orientations of parents. For example, parents who apparently show low motivation in terms of participation in activities do not necessarily imply low motivation, but rather a motivational orientation toward promotion. Ultimately, these implications at the conceptual level raise new research questions. For example, what is the influence of parental motivational orientation on academic success? What factors determine parental motivational orientation? And what aspects of child development are influenced by parental motivational orientation? These and other questions highlight the importance of the scale in research and intervention.

The main limitation of this study is that a representative sampling method was not implemented, so generalization of the results requires caution. Also, considering the discrepancies between the original version of the instrument and the Spanish version, it is recommended that future studies examine which version is best suited to the context of each study, in order to reach a consensus and increase comparability between populations.

Declaration of conflict of interest: This article does not represent any conflict of interest for the authors, the journal, the publisher, or the funders.

Funding: This study is part of the research project entitled "Strengthening the Scientific Capacity of the Centre for Research in Human Development to Increase Competitiveness in the Department of Atlántico in the Area of Health, with an Emphasis on Care Practices and Healthy Living Habits", which was financed by the National Royalties Fund, Colombia (SIGP: 74912).

Database: The data that support the findings of this study are openly available on the Open Science Framework (OSF) at https://osf.io/gsq5n/. The data include raw and processed files, as well as the code and scripts used for the analysis.

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Vol. 43 (1): 50-65, 2026
ISSN 2011-7485
(*on line*)