Conceptualising and Measuring Parentification: A Scoping Review

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Abstract

Parentification can be defined as the collapse of boundaries within the family system where the child assumes the parental role and begins to perform parental tasks. There are several definitions and dimensions of parentification, its operationalisations, and the measurement instruments used. The primary objective of this scoping review is to explore and clarify the multifaceted concept of parentification, encompassing its various definitions, types, dimensions, and implications within family dynamics, as well as its association with related concepts. The second objective is to critically evaluate the existing tools and methods used to measure parentification, focusing on their effectiveness in capturing the diverse aspects of parentification, including the differentiation between its types and dimensions. The Scopus and Web of Science databases were searched, and a total of 112 articles were analysed following PRISMA guidelines. The research analysed in this review conceptualises parentification through different dimensions: relationships and roles, forms of parentification, and predominantly negative consequences that affect a child's mental health. Regarding measurement instruments, we can divide them into two groups. The first group consists of instruments that measure parentification as a separate construct with various aspects. The second group includes instruments that measure parentification as one dimension of the parent-child relationship, measured through the reversal of roles and the emotions connected with it. This review enhances understanding of parentification by offering a comprehensive synthesis of its definitions and dimensions. In addition, this review provides recommendations on which measurement instruments would be beneficial to use in research on parentification.

Keywords: parentification, scoping review, conceptualisation, measurement instruments

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Introduction

Parentification is a relevant dimension when discussing the family system, parent-child relationship, child upbringing, and risks to child development. Stemming from Family Systems Theory, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1973) were the first to define parentification as the collapse of boundaries within the family system, where the child assumes developmentally inappropriate roles and begins to perform the tasks of a parent. The same authors defined two types of parentification: instrumental and emotional. Instrumental parentification refers to taking over concrete functions such as maintaining the household or grocery shopping, while emotional parentification refers to situations in which the child attends to the emotional needs of the parents (Jurkovic et al., 1991). However, in the literature, parentification is also defined through other dimensions, such as perceived fairness, and distinctions are made between constructive and destructive parentification (Borchet et al., 2016a). Due to the impact that parentification has on children, some authors classify it as a form of violence and neglect within the family (Dragan & Hardt, 2016). Additionally, parentification is categorised based on which family member it occurs with, either towards the parents or siblings. In addition to these dimensions, some literature equates parentification with other concepts, such as adultification, triangulation, and general dissolution of boundaries (Dariotis et al., 2023), while other works provide different definitions for these terms (Haxhe, 2016).

Numerous studies have examined this phenomenon within various contexts, such as family poverty (McMahon & Luthar, 2007), parental alcoholism and mental health issues (Hooper et al., 2012), and parental conflict (Peris et al., 2008). Studies have shown that all these circumstances may lead to boundary dissolution in the child-parent relationship, resulting in children taking on developmentally inappropriate responsibilities that affect developmental outcomes, such as internalising problems (Burton et al., 2018), increased sensitivity to rejection (Goldner et al., 2019), poorer psychological adjustment, and the development of insecure attachment (Bagget et al., 2015). Studies used different measurement protocols since the concept of parentification can be conceptualised and operationalised through different dimensions, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the construct. Starting from that standpoint, this paper analyses the conceptualisation of parentification and its operationalisation in different measurement protocols. Therefore, a meticulous scoping review methodology was used to enhance understanding of parentification through integration of diverse research analysing two elements. First is an analysis of the conceptualisation of parentification, through definitions used in studies of parentification, its various dimensions, and its association with other related concepts. Second is the analysis of measurement regarding existing methods, tools and their psychometric properties. With this comprehensive approach we gain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of parentification, its dimensions, and measurement opportunities/possibilities.

Methodology

The scoping literature review, as outlined by Armstrong et al. (2011), is designed to assess the breadth of existing literature on a specific topic, providing a clear indication of the amount of research available and an overview of its main themes or areas of focus. They are particularly valuable for exploring new or evolving evidence when it is not yet clear which specific questions could be more effectively addressed through a detailed systematic review. According to Munn et al. (2018), the purposes of a scoping review may include, but are not limited to, clarifying key concepts and definitions in the literature, examining how research is conducted on a certain topic or identifying and analysing knowledge gaps. This research approach is based on a rigorous, transparent, and reproducible protocol, as emphasised by Pickering and Byrne (2014). Such a protocol is pivotal in minimising selection bias by ensuring a comprehensive search of the existing literature. This review was guided by the PRISMA checklist for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR; Tricco et al., 2018).

### Database, Keywords, Inclusion, and Exclusion Criteria

For the literature review, the Scopus and Web of Science databases were selected. The keywords used for the literature search were: "parentification", "boundary dissolution", and "role reversal" in combination with "parent-child", as boundary dissolution and role reversal are terms used in various scientific areas. There were no exclusion criteria for methodological approaches, participant characteristics or geography. The literature review protocol (Figure 1) was conducted in November and December 2023. The initial search attempts identified 401 documents across databases. First, data was found in the Web of Science, and abstracts and metadata were extracted. Then, the Scopus database was searched, and duplicates were excluded.

After excluding duplicates, articles not in English, and works that are book chapters, conference abstracts, or other non-journal publications, 214 articles remained for screening. Of these, 47 articles were not retrieved, and 167 articles were assessed for eligibility. Subsequently, 8 articles were excluded because the full text was not in English, and 12 were excluded because parentification was not the focus of the work and was only mentioned incidentally. Ultimately, 147 articles were included in the review, and 35 studies were excluded because they did not clearly define parentification or provide information on measurements of parentification. In this report, quantitative studies are the most represented (83), followed by qualitative research (19), theoretical and review articles (7), two mixed-methods studies, and one ethnographic research. Eight quantitative studies were excluded from the report on measurements because they used a combination of items from different scales (e.g., Chen & Panebianco, 2020; Kam et al., 2017; Titzmann, 2012) or used vignettes (Nuttal et al., 2021). The use of composite scales and vignettes limits the

comparability of findings across studies, as they do not represent instruments widely used in the research on parentification. Therefore, we present data from 112 studies for conceptualisation and 75 studies for measurement of parentification.

Figure 1

Flowchart of the Literature Review Process
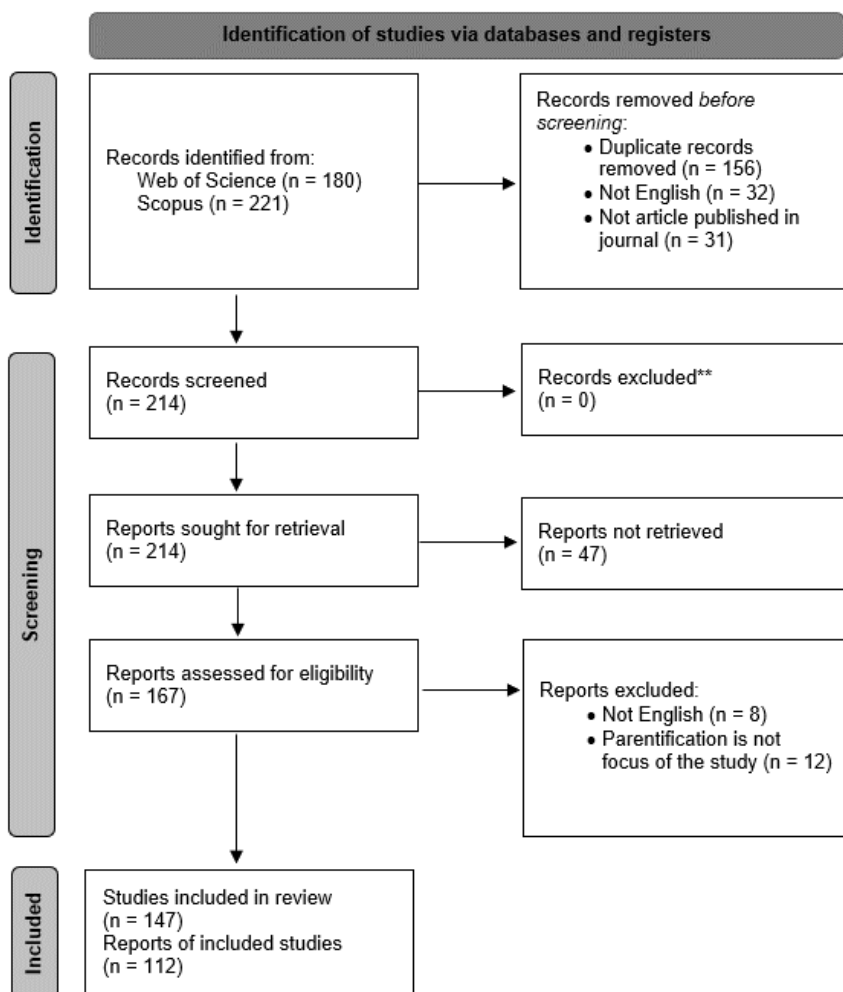
Data Analysis and Synthesis

Due to the diverse study designs and various outcome measures, we opted for a narrative synthesis approach to integrate the data, following the guidelines provided by Popay et al. (2006) for narrative synthesis. Our analysis was inductive, focusing

on systematically classifying various definitions and aspects of parentification, as well as the measurement methods used in the research. We employed methods such as textual description, grouping, and tabulation for the initial synthesis and to identify trends across the studies. The studies were organised in tables, highlighting the different aspects of parentification and the measurement techniques used. We decided to use inductive analysis as there are different definitions of parentification, and it would be hard to find a framework that encompasses all dimensions.

Findings

Conceptualisation of Parentification

Analysis revealed that most studies conceptualise parentification as a developmentally inappropriate role reversal between children and parents or other family members, which may occur in instrumental or emotional dimension. Parentification is a process that occurs in childhood or adolescence. Studies have examined current parentification in children and adolescents, as well as retrospective parentification in adult samples. The results of this review will be reported based on the frequency of definitions (Table 1) found in the literature regarding: a) emotional and instrumental dimensions of parentification; b) relationship and family roles in parentification towards siblings; c) outcomes of parentification; d) perceived benefits of parentification; f) transgenerational aspects; and g) relation to other concepts.

Parentification is mostly conceptualised through two dimensions: instrumental (e.g., performing household chores) and emotional (caring for the emotional needs of parents). Several studies (e.g., Bagget et al., 2015; Laghi et al., 2018) have conceptualised parentification solely in terms of its emotional dimension, while three studies have defined it only in terms of its instrumental aspect (Blaze & Roberts, 2023; Kelley et al., 2007; Melles & Frey, 2014). One specific form of instrumental parentification discussed in the literature is language brokering, in which children from migrant families act as intermediaries between their parents and the new cultural environment (e.g., Kam et al., 2017; Mier-Chairez et al., 2019). In addition, hearing children of deaf parents may also act as language brokers, serving as interpreters for their parents and hearing individuals (Heffernan & Nixon, 2023). In this type of instrumental parentification children assist their parents with various tasks (e.g., paying bills, accessing social and other rights) that may be developmentally inappropriate. Future research should pay attention to this form of parentification, especially given the increasing number of non-European migrants in European countries (Eurostat, 2024a) who may have limited proficiency in the language of the country to which they are immigrating or in other languages that may be useful in those countries (Eurostat, 2024b). Insufficient emphasis has been placed on language brokering by hearing children (Heffernan & Nixon, 2023). Therefore,

future research should consider this form of parentification among hearing children of deaf parents.

Furthermore, the results of the analysis revealed that all studies note that parentification occurs in the parent-child relationship. Additionally, 18 studies define parentification in the context of sibling relationships, where one sibling takes care of the other(s). Regarding parentification towards parents or siblings, Dariotis et al. (2023) argue that it is theoretically unclear how parentification towards parents and siblings may lead to different outcomes. Thus, operationalising parentification through emotional and instrumental dimensions may be more productive. On the other hand, case studies from practice (Callaghan et al., 2016) demonstrate that a child may exhibit parentification only towards siblings and not towards parents. Therefore, in the conceptualisation and operationalisation of parentification in the research, it would be beneficial to specify which dimension is being examined (instrumental vs. emotional) and towards which family member.

Several studies describe parentification through the roles that a child assumes as a result of parentification, such as parent (Hunsley et al., 2021), peacekeeper, protector, or spouse. DiCaccavo (2002) notes that as a result of parentification, the child becomes the „good" child in the family. Borchet and Lewandowska-Walter (2017) mention that the child can take on the role of a scapegoat, who is always blamed for everything. In addition, Borchet and Lewandowska-Walter (2017) and Chee et al. (2014) indicate that, under the guise of parentification, a child can assume the role of a mediator during parental conflicts. Regarding the outcomes of parentification, most studies indicate that it can have both positive and negative consequences, but only a few explicitly distinguish between constructive and destructive forms (e.g., Borchet et al., 2016a, 2016b). Negative aspects of parentification relate to emotional parentification, which has negative consequences and is considered a destructive form (e.g., Thastum et al., 2008; Valls-Vidal et al., 2010). In contrast, instrumental parentification is, in a few articles, associated with the acquisition of competencies and positive outcomes (e.g., Dariotis et al., 2023; Titzmann, 2012). On the other hand, Garber (2011) argues in his work that parentification is always destructive. It should be noted that there is limited evidence highlighting the positive aspects of parentification (Dariotis et al., 2023), and Kuperminc et al. (2009) suggest that the development of competencies resulting from parentification comes at a cost. Therefore, future research should explore the positive outcomes of parentification alongside the negative ones to assess the conditions under which positive or negative outcomes arise or whether they may occur concurrently.

Most research suggests that the consequences of parentification can depend on cultural context and the perception of the child's role in the family. For instance, some cultures cherish filial piety, in which caring for parents and elder family members is considered normative for children (Bedford & Yeh, 2021). Thus, not caring for elder members may induce feelings of shame and guilt in children (Cho et

al., 2024). However, only a few authors mention the child's perception of the unfairness of such a role as a dimension of parentification (e.g., Cho & Lee, 2019; Jankowski et al., 2013; Jankowski & Hooper, 2014). It should be noted that a similar question regarding the perception of unfairness or perceived benefits of parentification was also raised by Dariotis et al. (2023) in their systematic review. The authors state that previously, perceived benefits have been examined as a dimension of parentification, which was linked to various outcomes of parentification across studies. However, this has led to the omission of examining the mediating or moderating role of the perception of parentification on its outcomes. As the perception of parentification may be culturally influenced, it would be useful to consider it as a mediator or moderator between parentification and its outcomes. In addition, cross-cultural studies should be conducted, as outcomes of perceived benefits may vary due to cultural context (Dariotis et al., 2023).

Furthermore, some authors mention that parentification, due to its negative outcomes, is a form of child maltreatment, specifically emotional neglect (e.g., Hooper et al., 2008; Nuttall et al., 2021). Although other authors do not state that parentification is a form of maltreatment, their definitions often mention that the child's needs are neglected in favour of the parent's needs. Along with forms of abuse and neglect, the concept of parentification as a trauma is discussed in two studies (Rogers & Lowrie, 2016; Schier et al., 2015). In both studies, it is noted that parentification includes three of the four characteristics of trauma defined by Tadeschi and Calhoum (1995): traumatic events leave a feeling of powerlessness and lack of control; the trauma is often a result of an unexpected event where the person does not know how to cope, and the trauma leaves long-lasting effects on the individual's functioning. Rogers and Lowrie (2016) state that parentification is not always an unexpected event, but it can occur following unexpected events, such as the sudden death of a parent. It should be noted that both studies link emotional parentification with trauma. According to the aforementioned, a characteristic of emotional parentification, beyond the emotional care provided to parents, is the neglect of the child's emotional needs, which should be taken into account when examining parentification.

Parentification is also conceptualised through the relation with other concepts. The majority of studies conceptualise parentification as a developmentally inappropriate role reversal between children and parents or other family members which may occur in instrumental or emotional dimension, or as a form of boundary dissolution within a family system. Parentification is associated with the concept of triangulation, with no clear distinction between the two. Based on the analysis, we can say that triangulation refers to a form of stabilisation in a dyadic relationship between partners when tension or conflict occurs, by involving a third aspect or person in the system. In the family system, the child may be involved in parental conflict to stabilise the dyadic relationship between partners. In this situation, the child could act as a go-between and mediator between the parents, take sides with

one parent against the other to create a cross-generation coalition, or assume the role of identified patient or scapegoat, where attention is redirected to the child's problem to resolve or avoid couple conflict (Wang et al., 2017). When children are drawn into a parental relationship, especially during disputes, there is a high risk of parentification, especially in its emotional dimension, with the child providing advice, reassurance and comfort, crossing the boundaries of the parent-child relationship and performing developmentally inappropriate tasks (Mayseless & Scharf, 2009).

Besides triangulation, parentification is connected with the concept of adultification. In adultification, the child becomes their parent's ally and friend because the parents perceive the child as older and more mature than their actual age, and the child provides care only for themselves (Garber, 2011; Haxhe, 2016). That can lead to spousification, where a child assumes a role similar to that of a spouse (Burton, 2007). On the other hand, in parentification, the child takes on the parents' role towards his or her parent and is obliged to fulfil the parent's needs and provide full-time parental care to parents or siblings (Garber, 2011; Haxhe, 2016). Therefore, parentification, adultification and spousification may be regarded as different concepts.

Among other definitions found in the literature, the transgenerational aspect of parentification is mentioned. Due to parents' unresolved relationships and past experiences with their own parents, they seek and expect their children to take care of them (Athamneh & Benjamin, 2019; Hooper, Decoster, et al., 2011). Gandino et al. (2018) define narcissistic parentification. In this type of parentification, the child focuses on becoming the ideal projection of the parent, embodying what the parent wanted to be or the child the parent wanted to have. Furthermore, parentification is defined as a form of problem-solving (Kam et al., 2017) and as a way of coping with stress (Hyysalo et al., 2023; Thastum et al., 2008). Defining parentification as a coping strategy helps explain why children assume parental roles in various stressful situations, such as economic difficulties, marital conflicts, and other challenges. A study by Borchet and Lewandowska-Walter (2017) shows that perceived benefits of parentification are associated with avoidant coping strategies and greater emotional reactivity, suggesting that parentification may be a destructive way of coping with stress. However, further research is needed to assess if and under which conditions parentification is a constructive or destructive coping strategy.

In conclusion, analysis in this review shows that parentification is understood as role reversal in parent-child and sibling relationships, with emotional and instrumental dimensions. However, it is unclear how the predictors and outcomes of these dimensions differ. Future research on parentification could benefit from employing a person-centred approach, such as latent class analysis, rather than relying solely on the traditional variable-centred approach. Unlike variable-centred methods, person-centred techniques identify distinct subgroups of individuals based on shared characteristics. This approach allows researchers to explore how different

patterns of parentification emerge and how these patterns interact with various predictors, correlates, and outcomes (Howard & Hoffman, 2017). By utilising a person-centred approach, researchers can better understand how parentification coexists with other role-reversal experiences, such as adultification and triangulation, within specific subgroups. It may also clarify the circumstances under which individuals exhibit different levels of parentification, in which dimensions (instrumental, emotional, perceived benefits), and towards whom (e.g., parents or siblings). Furthermore, this approach can help identify variations in risk factors and psychological outcomes among different subgroups, clarifying why some individuals experience more adverse effects than others. Additionally, it is unclear how the outcomes of parentification may differ depending on the developmental phase in which it occurred, and future research should explore this.

Table 1

Dimensions of Parentification Defined in the Literature (k = 112)

Dimensions	Number of articles (%)
Instrumental and emotional	74 (68.75%)
Only instrumental	3 (2.68%)
Child language brokering	4 (3.57%)
Only emotional	15 (13.39%)
Constructive and destructive	9 (8.04%)
Only destructive	1 (0.89%)
Sense of injustice or perceived benefits	10 (8.93%)
Towards siblings	20 (17.86%)
Category of maltreatment	9 (8.04%)
Transgenerational	6 (5.36%)
Trauma	2 (1.79%)
Family roles:	
Parent	1 (0.89%)
Invisible	1 (0.89%)
Good child	1 (0.89%)
Scapegoat	1 (0.89%)
Mediator, confidant, peacekeeper, protector	5 (4.46%)
Spouse, mate	5 (4.46%)
Distinction between parentification and triangulation	3 (2.88%)
Form of triangulation	1 (0.89%)
Form of adultification	2 (1.79%)
Distinctive of adultification	1 (0.89%)
Spousification is equal to parentification	1 (0.89%)
Coping with stress	2 (1.79%)
Problem-solving	1 (0.89%)
Adult parentification	1 (0.89%)
Taking care of one's own needs and extending to parents	1 (0.89%)
Narcissistic parentification	1 (0.89%)

Measurements of Parentification

A review of the literature identifies 16 different instruments used for measuring parentification. The most commonly used instruments are the *Parentification Inventory* (Hooper, Doehler, et al., 2011), the *Filial Responsibilities Scale—Adult* (FRS-A; Jurkovic & Thirkield, 1999), its modified versions *FRS-Y* (Jurkovic et al., 2005) and Korean Version *FRS-A*, the *Parentification Questionnaire* (PQ; Sessions & Jurkovic, 1986), and modifications such as the *Parentification Questionnaire–Youth* (PQ-Y; Godsall & Jurkovic, 1995) and the *Parentification Questionnaire* (PQ; Jurkovic & Thirkield, 1998). Additional measurement instruments identified are the *Parentification Scale* (Mika et al., 1987), the *Parentification Questionnaire for Youth* (PQY; Borchet et al., 2020) and the *Maastricht Parentification Scale* (Boumans & Dorant, 2018). Few instruments measure parentification and other parent-child roles, such as the *Inadequate Boundaries Questionnaire* (IBQ; Mayseless & Scharf, 2000), the *Child Caretaking Scale* (Baker & Tebes, 1994), the *Parent–Child Boundaries Scale* (PBS; Kerig & Brown, 1996), the *Parent–Child Boundaries Scale III* (PBS-III; Kerig, 2006), and *EPQ* (Martin, 1996). The detailed description of measurements is presented in Table 2.

These instruments will be analysed and presented with respect to the operationalisation of the construct, specifically whether parentification is understood as a unidimensional or multidimensional concept, and with respect to their psychometric characteristics. Several instruments, such as the PQ (Sessions & Jurkovic, 1986), PQ (Jurkovic & Thirkield, 1998), PQ-Y (Godsall & Jurkovic, 1995), *Inadequate Boundaries Questionnaire* (IBQ; Mayseless & Scharf, 2000) and the *Parent–Child Boundaries Scale III* (PBS-III; Kerig & Brown, 1996; Kerig, 2006) measure parentification as unidimensional concept, without distinguishing between emotional and instrumental parentification. However, items in these instruments represent both emotional and instrumental parentification. Furthermore, the *Emotional Parentification Questionnaire* (Martin, 1996) measures only the emotional dimension of parentification. In addition, three unidimensional instruments assess parentification using yes – no statements, which limits the variability in responses and experiences of parentification (Allen, 2017).

Further, multidimensional instruments such as the *Parentification Inventory* (Hooper, Doehler, et al., 2011), the *Parentification Scale* (Mika et al., 1987) and the *Child Caretaking Scale* (Baker & Tebes, 1994) assess parentification in relation to the specific family member to whom it is directed. A limitation of these instruments, as well as unidimensional instruments, is that they do not consider the different parentification dimensions (emotional and instrumental parentification). As stated, previous studies have found that instrumental and emotional parentification may lead to different outcomes (Dariotis et al., 2023). In addition, these dimensions are mentioned in the definition of parentification as two aspects of the concept. Therefore, distinguishing between these dimensions is crucial for the research.

Table 2

Instruments of Parentification (k = 75)

Measure	Subscales	Scale	Total Score	Reliability	Factor Analysis	Number of studies (%)
1. Parentification Inventory (Hooper et al., 2011b)	- Parent-Focused Parentification (12) - Sibling-Focused Parentification (7) - Perceived Benefits of Parentification (3)	5-point scale: 1 (*never true*) to 5 (*always true*)	Mean for each subscale	.75 - .82 .58 - .79 .81 - .85	EFA	16 (20.00%)
2. Polish Adaption of PI (Borchet et al. 2022)	- Parent-Focused Parentification (5) - Sibling-Focused Parentification (4) - Perceived Benefits of Parentification (3)	5-point scale: 1 (*never true*) to 5 (*always true*)	Mean	.67 - .83	EFA and CFA	3 (4.00%)
3. Parentification Questionnaire (PQ, Sessions & Jurkovic, 1986)	42 items - unidimensional	*True - False*	Sum	.84 - .86	Not reported	13 (17.33%)
4. Parentification Questionnaire–Youth (PQ-Y; Godsall & Jurkovic, 1995)	20 items - unidimensional	*True - False*	Sum	.69 - .80	Not reported	5 (6.66%)
5. Parentification Questionnaire (PQ; Jurkovic & Thirkield, 1998)	44 items - unidimensional	*True - False*	Sum	.83	Not reported	7 (9.33%)
6. Filial Responsibilities Scale—Adult (FRS-A; Jurkovic & Thirkield, 1999)	60 items (10 items/scale) - Past Instrumental Caregiving - Past Emotional Caregiving - Past Unfairness - Current Instrumental Caregiving - Current Emotional Caregiving - Current Unfairness	5 or 6-point scale: 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (6) (*strongly agree*)	Mean or sum for each subscale	.73 - .92	Not reported	13 (17.33%)

Measure	Subscales	Scale	Total Score	Reliability	Factor Analysis	Number of studies (%)
7. FRS-Y (Jurkovic et al., 2005)	- Instrumental Caregiving (9) - Emotional Caregiving (10) - Unfairness (13)	4-point scale: 1 (*not at all true*) to 4 (*very true*)	Mean for each subscale	.69 .74 .88	Not reported	1 (1.33%)
8. Korean Version FRS-A (Cho & Lee, 2019)	- Past Instrumental Caregiving (12) - Past Emotional caregiving (5) - Past Unfairness (6)	4-point scale: *never* (1), *sometimes* (2), *often* (3), and *always* (4)	Total sum	.90	Not reported	1 (1.33%)
9. Parentification Scale (Mika et al., 1987)	- Parent to her parent(s) (8) - Spouse to one of his/her parents; (6) - Parent to her sibling(s) (12)	5-point scale: 1 (*very often*) to 5 (*never*)	Items were weighted according to content and age and summed within each subscale.	.76 .78 .86	Not reported	5 (6.66%)
10. Parentification Questionnaire for Youth (PQY; Borchet et al., 2020)	26 items - Emotional parentification towards parents - Instrumental parentification towards parents - Sense of injustice - Satisfaction with the role - Instrumental parentification towards siblings - Emotional parentification towards siblings	5-point scale: 1 (*never true*) to 5 (*always true*)	Mean for each subscale	.70 - .80	CFA	2 (2.67%)
11. Maastricht Parentification Scale (Boumans & Dorant, 2018)	- Emotional care for parents (5) - Buffer between parents (3) - Household care family (4) - Financial care family (3) - Instrumental care siblings (3) - Emotional care siblings (4)	4-point scale: (*completely agree* to *completely disagree*)	Sum for each subscale	.78 .71 .76 .68 .76 .71	Not reported	1 (1.33%)

Measure	Subscales	Scale	Total Score	Reliability	Factor Analysis	Number of studies (%)
12. Emotional Parentification Questionnaire (M. T. Martin, 1996)	18-item - unidimensional	5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*)	Sum	.89 - .90	Not reported	1 (1.33%)
13. Inadequate Boundaries Questionnaire (IBQ; Mayseless & Scharf, 2000)	- Parentification (8) - Triangulation (5)	5-point scale: 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*)	Mean for each subscale	.76 - .80 .67 - .73	Not reported	3 (4.00%)
14. Child Caretaking Scale (Baker & Tebes, 1994)	25 items - Responsibility to care for mother - Responsibility for household chores - Responsibility to care for siblings	5-point scale: 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*)	Mean for each subscale	.63 .61 .75	Not reported	2 (2.67%)
15. Parent–Child Boundaries Scale III (PBS-III; Kerig & Brown, 1996; Kerig, 2006)	6 items on the Parentification scale	5-point scale: ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*almost always*)	Sum	.89	Not reported	2 (2.67%)
16. Childhood Questionnaire (Hardt, et al., 2011)	5 items each scale - Perceived Love - Control - Ambition - Role Reversal	4-point scale with the categories "*not true at all*", "*hardly true*", "*rather true*", and "*absolutely true*; variables recoded to range between 0 and 1	The sum for each subscale	.69 - .84	Not reported	2 (2.67%)

On the other hand, instruments such as the FRS (Jurkovic & Thirkield, 1999), PQ-Y (Borchet et al., 2020) and *Maastricht Parentification Scale* (Boumans & Dorant, 2018) measure parentification as a multidimensional concept, distinguishing between emotional and instrumental parentification. In addition, the PQ-Y (Borchet et al., 2020) and the *Maastricht Parentification Scale* assess parentification in terms of whether the caregiving role is directed towards parents or siblings. The PQ-Y (Borchet et al., 2020) and the FRS (Jurkovic & Thirkield, 1999) also assess perceived unfairness as a dimension of parentification and the PQ-Y (Borchet et al., 2020) assesses satisfaction with the role as well. It should be noted that the FRS-A (Jurkovic & Thirkield, 1999) measures past caregiving experiences (parentification) and caregiving experiences in adulthood (filial responsibility). Although both may have similar indicators, parentification is developmentally inappropriate and may hinder child development (Nuttal et al., 2019). Thus, it should be distinguished from filial responsibility in adulthood.

Regarding the psychometric properties of measurements, the internal validity of the instruments is mostly adequate across samples. However, most described instruments do not provide data regarding their factor structures, which limits assessment. Furthermore, there is no data on measurement invariance conducted across different groups (i.e., gender, age groups, and national samples), although instruments were used in various samples. This is important, as evidence suggests that girls and boys may experience parentification differently, in line with gender norms (Cho et al., 2024). Similar differences may occur across age groups or socio-economic groups. For instance, younger children may not be able to contribute financially to the family, while adolescents may (Kletečki Radović et al., 2017). In addition, in families with higher socio-economic status, children may not feel the need to contribute financially, unlike those in families at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Among all instruments, only the *Parentification Inventory* (Borchet et al., 2022; Hooper, Doehler, et al., 2011; Hooper et al., 2020) and the *Parentification Questionnaire for Youth* (Borchet et al., 2020) had their multifactor structure confirmed by factor analysis. Furthermore, a limitation of existing instruments may be cultural bias in item phrasing, which can lead to misinterpretation in diverse samples and affect the validity of the findings. However, the studies examined do not report cultural bias in item phrasing. Further studies should be culturally sensitive and take measures such as cognitive interviewing to ensure conceptual equivalence of survey items in diverse populations (Nápoles-Springer et al., 2006) and conduct measurement invariance to explore whether parentification manifests itself in diverse populations.

This review highlights two core criteria that should guide instrument selection in parentification research. Firstly, the theoretical basis. Stemming from family systems theory and conceptual dimensions of parentification, we suggest that researchers use instruments that include emotional and instrumental parentification scales, subscales for parentification towards parents or siblings, and a subscale for

perceived benefits/unfairness. This is important because these dimensions can lead to various outcomes (Dariotis et al., 2023). Secondly, the psychometric properties of instruments should be considered. Based on these two aspects, we recommend two instruments for measuring parentification. For young adults the *Maastricht Parentification Scale* (Boumans & Dorant, 2018) appears to be the most comprehensive tool for measuring retrospective parentification. It encompasses different dimensions of past experiences (emotional, instrumental, towards parents or siblings). To measure current parentification in adolescents, the *Parentification Questionnaire for Youth* (Borchet et al., 2020) could be the instrument of choice. Both the *Maastricht Parentification Scale* and the *Parentification Questionnaire for Youth* could address research gaps regarding the outcomes of different parentification dimensions. For instance, which dimensions (emotional and instrumental, and to which family member) are related to positive or negative outcomes? However, one limitation of the *Parentification Questionnaire for Youth* is that it measures a sense of injustice and satisfaction with the role as dimensions of parentification, which may hinder the examination of their potential mediation or moderation of the outcomes of parentification. Further research may explore perceived unfairness as a separate construct and examine the potential mediation or moderation of perceived unfairness on the outcomes of parentification. In addition, as parentification outcomes may be related to cultural context, more research is needed to assess parentification and its outcomes in the Croatian context, as well as to conduct more cross-cultural validations.

Conclusion

Parentification is a multifaceted concept described in family system theory regarding family roles and boundaries. The research analysed in this review conceptualises parentification through several dimensions: a) relationships and roles – as a reversal of the parent-child relationship and dissolution of boundaries (e.g., The child taking over role of the parent, peacekeeper, protector, or mediator during parental conflicts); b) forms – emotional and instrumental, performing different roles in conflict situations; c) consequences – positive, (e.g., increasing competences through the instrumental aspect of parentification) and mostly negative (such as emotional neglect) that affect the child's mental health. While cultural context and the child's perception of the role's fairness are recognised as influential factors, few studies have examined the differences in outcomes of parentification with respect to cultural background. No research has investigated the mediating or moderating effect of the child's perception of their role within the family on the outcomes of parentification. Furthermore, there is a significant gap in literature regarding the examination and evaluation of both positive and negative outcomes of parentification, which should be addressed in future studies.

The second objective was to critically evaluate the existing tools and methods used for measuring parentification. The analysis revealed the usage of 16 different instruments. Through analysis, we conclude that the operationalisation of parentification is largely similar, but the differences arise in measuring parentification as either a unidimensional or multidimensional concept. Factor analyses have been conducted for some instruments, confirming their multifactorial structures. The Maastricht Parentification Scale (Boumans & Dorant, 2018) and the Parentification Questionnaire for Youth (Borchet et al., 2020) could be the instruments of choice for our national context, as they measure emotional and instrumental parentification, as well as parentification towards specific individuals (parent, sibling). Future research should continue to refine the conceptualisation and measurement of parentification, taking into account cultural nuances and the diverse contexts in which parentification occurs. Factor analysis and measurement invariance between groups and cultural contexts should therefore be conducted to clarify possible differences in the indicators of parentification.

There are several limitations to our scoping review that should be acknowledged. Firstly, scoping reviews inherently aim to cover a broad range of information rather than provide depth on a particular topic. Nonetheless, this approach was suitable for our purpose of mapping the definitions of parentification and the measurement instruments used in the literature. Additionally, we restricted our selection to studies published in English, therefore, our findings apply only to articles written in English. One limitation is that the definitions of parentification derived from qualitative research and participants' responses were not compared with those used in quantitative studies. Qualitative research, through the lived experiences of participants, may reveal characteristics of parentification that have not been examined in quantitative studies or may deepen the understanding of aspects such as perceptions of fairness and cultural influences. In addition, studies not written in English were omitted from this review. This limits the possibility of integrating findings from regions such as Latin America or East Asia, where parentification may be considered as culturally acceptable and may have different outcomes.

Despite its limitations, this review contributes to the understanding of parentification as a multidimensional concept, which can be seen as role reversal mostly, defined in terms of the emotional-instrumental dimension and relating to parents or siblings. Further, this scoping review shows that perceived unfairness may be an important concept for the outcomes of parentification and should be studied as a mediator or moderator in future research. Further research may benefit from a person-centred approach and an examination of individual differences in parentification. In addition, a review of various definitions may assist practitioners working with at-risk families in recognising the different roles that children may assume in response to adverse circumstances, while the analysis of measurement approaches offers a foundation for developing practical tools to help identify and address parentification in practice.

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Konceptualizacija i mjerenje *parentifikacije*: pregled literature

Sažetak

Parentifikacija se može definirati kao urušavanje granica unutar obiteljskog sustava u kojem dijete preuzima roditeljsku ulogu i počinje obavljati zadatke roditelja. Postoji više definicija i dimenzija *parentifikacije*, načina operacionalizacije te mjernih instrumenata koji se koriste. Prvi cilj ovog pregleda literature jest istražiti i pojasniti višedimenzionalni konstrukt *parentifikacije*, uključujući njezine različite definicije, tipove, dimenzije i implikacije unutar obiteljske dinamike, kao i povezanost s drugim srodnim konstruktima. Drugi je cilj kritički sagledati postojeće instrumente i metode mjerenja *parentifikacije*, s naglaskom na njihovu učinkovitost u obuhvaćanju različitih aspekata *parentifikacije*, uključujući razlikovanje pojedinih tipova i dimenzija. Pretražene su baze podataka *Scopus* i *Web of Science*, a ukupno je analizirano 112 članaka prema PRISMA smjernicama. Istraživanja analizirana u ovom pregledu konceptualiziraju *parentifikaciju* kroz različite dimenzije: odnose i uloge, oblike *parentifikacije* te većinom negativne posljedice koje utječu na mentalno zdravlje djeteta. Kada je riječ o mjernim instrumentima, možemo ih podijeliti u dvije skupine. Prvu čine instrumenti koji mjere *parentifikaciju* kao zaseban konstrukt s različitim aspektima, dok drugu čine instrumenti koji mjere *parentifikaciju* kao jednu dimenziju odnosa roditelj–dijete, pri čemu se naglasak stavlja na zamjenu uloga i emocije povezane s time. Ovaj pregled pridonosi boljem razumijevanju *parentifikacije* nudeći sveobuhvatnu sintezu njezinih definicija i dimenzija. Usto, pruža preporuke o tome koji bi mjerni instrumenti bili korisni u istraživanju *parentifikacije*.

Ključne riječi: parentifikacija, pregled literature, konceptualizacija, mjerni instrumenti