

Examining the Validity and Reliability of the Child-parent Relationship Scale among Malaysian Preschoolers

Qinghua Liu¹, Connie Shin^{2*}

¹Centre of Postgraduate Studies, Jesselton University College, 88300, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia;
Faculty of Education and Sports Studies, University Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu, 88400, Sabah,
Malaysia

Email: qinghua6015@gmail.com

²Faculty of Education and Sports Studies, University Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu, 88400, Sabah,
Malaysia

Email: connieompok@ums.edu.my

ABSTRACT

CORRESPONDING

AUTHOR (*):

Connie Shin

(connieompok@ums.edu.my)

KEYWORDS:

Child-parent Relationship Scale

CPRS-SF

Validation

Preschooler

Sabah

CITATION:

Liu, Q. & Connie Shin (2025). Examining the Validity and Reliability of the Child-parent Relationship Scale among Malaysian Preschoolers. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, 10(9), e003593.

<https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v10i9.3593>

The quality of child–parent relationships plays a central role in shaping children’s socio-emotional and literacy development. However, the lack of validated instruments in multicultural contexts such as Sabah limits systematic examination of these dynamics. This study examined the construct validity and reliability of the Child–Parent Relationship Scale-Short Form (CPRS-SF) in measuring the dimensions of conflict and closeness among preschoolers. Cronbach’s alpha values indicated high internal consistency for both subscales (conflict $\alpha = 0.899$; closeness $\alpha = 0.941$). Exploratory factor analysis further supported construct validity, with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measures of 0.907 and 0.888 and statistically significant Bartlett’s tests ($p < .001$), demonstrating that the dataset was suitable for factor analysis. These results demonstrate that the CPRS-SF is both reliable and valid for use in the Sabah context. The findings carry important implications for research, practice, and policy. The validated instrument provides researchers with a robust tool to explore the influence of parenting relationships on child outcomes, while offering practitioners and policymakers evidence-based support for designing interventions that strengthen family interactions. By validating the CPRS-SF in a multilingual and multicultural setting, this study contributes to methodological rigor in early childhood research and highlights the need for further validation across diverse populations and longitudinal contexts.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature by examining the validity and reliability of the short-form Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS-SF) with preschoolers in Malaysia context. By extending the validation of this widely utilized instrument from Western populations to the South Asian setting for assessing parent-child relationships in early childhood.

1. Introduction

The concept of the child-parent relationship has long been central to understanding children's social and emotional development. Early definitions emphasized its role in socialization (Sears, 1951), while later scholars described it as a unique bond, often beginning in pregnancy, and characterized by enduring closeness and emotional ties between children and their parents (Flykt, 2014). Research has consistently highlighted closeness and conflict as two core dimensions of this relationship, which shape children's social adjustment, learning, and emotional regulation (Driscoll & Pianta, 2011; Lincoln et al., 2017; Callanan et al., 2020).

A close child-parent relationship fosters warmth, affection, and open communication, serving as a protective factor that enhances social competence, adaptive behavior, and academic readiness in early childhood. Conversely, conflict, often marked by disagreement and negative emotional exchanges, is linked to problem behaviors, peer rejection, and school difficulties (Xu et al., 2018). Nonetheless, some studies argue that conflict can also provide opportunities for children to practice emotional regulation and problem-solving (Laible & Thompson, 2002).

Attachment theory provides a theoretical basis for understanding these dynamics. Parents act as both a haven and a secure base, influencing children's capacity for exploration and autonomy (Bowlby, 1982; Feeney & Woodhouse, 2016). The degree of closeness or conflict reflects parents' internal representations of the relationship and has long-term implications for children's social and emotional outcomes (Chow et al., 2017; Dyer et al., 2017).

Given its developmental importance, researchers have relied on standardized instruments such as the Child-Parent Relationship Scale—Short Form (CPRS-SF) to assess relationship quality. The scale has demonstrated validity in different cultural settings, including the United States and Turkey, but its applicability in Southeast Asian contexts remains underexplored. Cultural norms and parenting practices may influence how parents perceive and report closeness and conflict, raising the question of whether the CPRS-SF functions equivalently across diverse populations. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the validity and reliability of the CPRS-SF among preschoolers in Sabah, Malaysia. Establishing its psychometric soundness in this context will not only strengthen the measurement of child-parent relationships in Malaysia but also contribute to cross-cultural comparisons and deepen understanding of how parenting dynamics are shaped by cultural contexts.

2. Literature review

The Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS), originally created by Pianta (1992), serves as a widely adopted tool for assessing parents' views of their relationships with their children. It is available in two versions: a 30-item full form and a shortened 15-item version (CPRS-SF). The present study employs the short form, which is designed for children aged 3 to 12 years and utilizes a five-point Likert scale. The CPRS-SF comprises two subscales: Conflict (8 items) and Closeness (7 items). Higher scores on each subscale reflect higher levels of the respective construct, with conflict indicating greater relational tension and closeness reflecting more positive emotional ties between parents and children.

The CPRS-SF has been extensively validated in prior research. For instance, [Driscoll and Pianta \(2011\)](#), using data from the NICHD Study of Early Child Care, reported strong reliability coefficients. At first grade, Cronbach's alpha values were 0.84 (maternal conflict), 0.78 (paternal conflict), 0.64 (maternal closeness), and 0.74 (paternal closeness). At 54 months, conflict reliability remained high (0.84 for mothers and 0.80 for fathers), while closeness values were moderately strong (0.69 for mothers and 0.72 for fathers). Similarly, [Bate, Pham, and Borelli \(2021\)](#) reported Cronbach's alphas of 0.90 for conflict and 0.76 for closeness, reinforcing the scale's reliability.

Further evidence comes from [Dyer, Kaufman, and Fagan \(2017\)](#), who tested the CPRS-SF with a sample of 420 fathers across three child developmental stages: preschool, middle childhood, and adolescence. Moreover, the study of [Liu and Ompok \(2022a, 2022b\)](#) and [Liu and Ompok \(2025\)](#) adopted this instrument and showed strong reliability as well. Their findings confirmed the instrument's reliability, convergent validity, and predictive validity. Both subscales demonstrated consistent performance, with the CPRS-SF proving particularly suitable for assessing preschool-aged children.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design to assess the validity and reliability of the Child-Parent Relationship Scale-Short Form (CPRS-SF). The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for objective measurement and statistical analysis of the variables, enabling the identification of significant patterns and relationships within a large sample.

3.2. Population

The target population comprised mothers of Chinese preschool children aged 4 to 6 years in Kota Kinabalu. Tadika Chung Hwa Likas, the largest Chinese preschool in the area, was selected as the research site. This population was selected because the Chinese community represents a significant cultural group within the city and offers valuable insights into child-parent relationship among preschoolers in multilingual Malaysian contexts.

3.3. Sample Size

A cluster sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across various Chinese preschools in Kota Kinabalu. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed online via Google Forms. From these, 385 valid responses were returned, yielding a response rate of 77%, which formed the dataset for subsequent analysis.

3.4. Procedure

The study was conducted at Tadika Chung Hwa Penampang, Sabah, involving parents of preschoolers aged 4 to 6 years. A total of 385 mothers participated by completing an online questionnaire. Before participation, parents were informed about the purpose and objectives of the research, as well as the intended use of the findings. They were assured that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage without penalty. To reduce school disruption, the principal distributed a letter

containing the questionnaire link to class teachers, who then shared it with parents. Participants were asked to complete the survey within one week. As an incentive, each received a small gift (a watercolor pen set).

The research instrument was translated into *Bahasa Melayu* using [Brislin's \(1970\)](#) back-translation procedure to ensure linguistic accuracy and cultural appropriateness. Two bilingual researchers independently translated the questionnaire, and an experienced educator reviewed and harmonized the versions. The draft was then back-translated into English by another bilingual translator and compared with the original to verify semantic equivalence, with revisions made as needed. The finalized questionnaire was provided in both English and *Bahasa Melayu*. Data collection procedures were planned in consultation with the preschool principal to minimize classroom disruption. The survey was administered via Google Forms, which required participants to respond to each item before proceeding, thereby reducing missing data.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, and mean, were applied to summarize respondent characteristics. The construct validity of CPRS-SF was examined through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity, followed by factor analysis. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the instrument.

Table 1 displays the bilingual (English and *Bahasa Melayu*) version of the Child-Parent Relationship Scale-Short Form (CPRS-SF). This 15-item instrument employs a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (definitely does not apply) to 5 (definitely applies) to evaluate two aspects of the child-parent relationship: Closeness (7 items) and Conflict (8 items). This bilingual presentation ensures accessibility for both English and Malay speaking participants while maintaining conceptual and semantic equivalence across languages.

Table 1: Child-Parent Relationship Scale- Short Form

No	Items	Scale
1.	I share an affectionate, warm relationship with my child. <i>Saya berkongsi hubungan yang penuh kasih sayang dan erat dengan anak saya.</i>	1 2 3 4 5
2.	My child and I always seem to be struggling with each other. <i>Anak saya dan saya selalu telagah antara satu sama lain.</i>	1 2 3 4 5
3.	If upset, my child will seek comfort from me. <i>Jika kecewa, anak saya akan mencari ketenangan dari saya.</i>	1 2 3 4 5
4.	My child is uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me. <i>Anak saya tidak selesa dengan kasih sayang fizikal atau sentuhan saya.</i>	1 2 3 4 5
5.	My child values his/her relationship with me. <i>Anak saya menghargai hubungannya dengan saya.</i>	1 2 3 4 5
6.	When I praise my child, he/she beams with pride. <i>Apabila saya memuji anak saya, dia berasa bangga.</i>	1 2 3 4 5
7.	My child spontaneously shares information about himself/herself. <i>Anak saya secara spontan berkongsi maklumat tentang dirinya sendiri.</i>	1 2 3 4 5
8.	My child easily becomes angry at me. <i>Anak saya mudah menjadi marah terhadap saya.</i>	1 2 3 4 5

9.	It is easy to be in tune with what my child is feeling. <i>Saya berasa sangat mudah untuk merasai perasaan anak saya.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
10.	My child remains angry or is resistant after being disciplined. <i>Anak saya marah atau menentang selepas didisiplinkan.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Dealing with my child drains my energy. <i>Berurusan dengan anak saya menghabiskan tenaga saya.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
12.	When my child is in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day. <i>Apabila anak saya berada dalam mood yang tidak baik, saya tahu kami berada dalam hari yang panjang dan sukar.</i> My child's feelings toward me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	<i>Perasaan anak saya terhadap saya tidak dapat diramalkan atau boleh berubah secara tiba-tiba.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
14.	My child is sneaky or manipulative with me. <i>Anak saya licik atau berputar belit dengan saya.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
15.	My child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me. <i>Anak saya secara terbuka berkongsi perasaan dan pengalamannya dengan saya.</i>	1	2	3	4	5

Note: 1= Definitely does not apply; 2= Not really; 3 = Neutral, not sure; 4 = Applies somewhat; 5 = Definitely applies

Table 2 outlines the allocation of items within the Child–Parent Relationship Scale–Short Form (CPRS-SF), distinguishing between the closeness and conflict subscales. This distribution reflects the theoretical structure of the instrument, ensuring that both positive and negative dimensions of the parent–child relationship are systematically captured for empirical analysis.

Table 2: Distribution of items

Scale	No. of items	Amount
Closeness	1,3,5,6,7,9,15	7
Conflict	2,4,8,10,11,12,13,14	8
Total items		15

4. Results

4.1. Reliability test

The internal consistency of the child–parent relationship scale was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Table 3 shows the results of the Cronbach's Alpha for child-parent relationship scales of the questionnaire.

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha for the Test Scale

Scale	Total Number of Items	Cronbah's Alpha	Degree of Reliability
Conflict	7	0.899	High
Closeness	8	0.941	High

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of closeness and conflict relationship were determined to be 0.899 and 0.941, respectively. Both coefficients exceed the

recommended threshold of 0.70, signifying high internal reliability and indicating that the items within each subscale consistently measure their intended construct.

4.2. Validity Test

Construct validity was evaluated through exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) statistic (Kaiser, 1974) was employed to assess sampling adequacy, as it reflects the proportion of variance attributable to common factors across variables. KMO values range from 0 to 1, with values above 0.70 generally considered satisfactory (Lloret et al., 2017), whereas values below 0.50 suggest poor factorability (Child, 2006). Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was further used to determine whether correlations among items were sufficient for factor analysis.

In Table 4, the KMO for the conflict and closeness relationship was 0.907 and 0.888, respectively. Overall KMO value of more than 0.6 is considered adequate (Kaiser, 1974). Bartlett’s test of sphericity yielded a significant result ($p < .05$), confirming strong correlations among variables and justifying the use of factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). These findings support the construct validity of the instrument.

Table 4: Validity Test for Tested Variables

Subscale	KMO	Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Sig.)	Interpretation
Conflict	0.907	<0.001	Acceptable
Closeness	0.888	<0.001	Acceptable

5. Discussion

The Child–Parent Relationship Scale–Short Form (CPRS-SF) utilized in this study was reviewed and endorsed by experts, confirming its appropriateness for research following statistical evaluation. The instrument demonstrated strong psychometric properties across a large sample, reflecting high reliability and validity. Results from reliability and validity analyses indicated that the CPRS-SF consistently measured the intended constructs, with Cronbach’s alpha values of 0.899 for the Conflict subscale and 0.941 for the Closeness subscale, both surpassing the standard reliability criterion of 0.70. These outcomes verify the scale’s robustness and its suitability for assessing parent–child relationship dimensions (Child, 2006). These findings are consistent with previous recommendations that Cronbach’s alpha values closer to 1.0 reflect higher reliability in psychological and educational instruments (Hoelzle & Meyer, 2013).

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) yielded strong evidence of construct validity. Both subscales achieved Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) values above 0.88, well exceeding the recommended minimum of 0.60, while Bartlett’s test of sphericity was highly significant ($p < .001$). These results indicate that the correlation matrices were appropriate for factor extraction and that the dataset met the requirements for conducting factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974; Child, 2006; Lloret et al., 2017). This aligns with established psychometric literature, which emphasizes that high KMO values combined with significant Bartlett’s tests provide robust support for the structural validity of measurement instruments (Hair et al., 2010).

These findings reinforce the methodological soundness of the present study. By demonstrating both high reliability and strong construct validity, the results suggest that

the child–parent relationship scale is a dependable tool for examining relational dynamics within the family context. This contributes to the growing body of research that highlights the importance of rigorous measurement validation in studies of parenting and child development (Lloret et al., 2017).

6. Conclusion

This study confirms that the Child–Parent Relationship Scale short form (CPRS-SF) demonstrates strong reliability and construct validity, with robust internal consistency and factor structure (Kaiser, 1974; Hair et al., 2010; Lloret et al., 2017). These findings establish the CPRS-SF as a rigorous and reliable instrument for examining family dynamics in early childhood, particularly within the Sabah context. The validated scale carries important implications for research, practice, and policy. For researchers, it offers a sound methodological tool to explore links between parenting relationships and children’s socio-emotional and literacy outcomes. For educators and practitioners, the instrument supports evidence-based interventions aimed at enhancing child–parent interactions and fostering supportive home environments. Policymakers can also benefit from applying empirically validated measures to design early intervention strategies that address family relationships in multicultural and multilingual settings. Future studies should expand validation efforts to larger and more diverse populations and adopt longitudinal approaches to capture developmental changes over time (Hoelzle & Meyer, 2013; Child, 2006).

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Jesselton University College (JUC2024021601). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants according to the Declaration of Helsinki.

Acknowledgement

Part of this article was extracted from a doctoral thesis submitted to University Malaysia Sabah.

Funding

This study received no funding.

Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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