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# The Association Between Marital Satisfaction and Coparenting Quality: A Meta-Analysis

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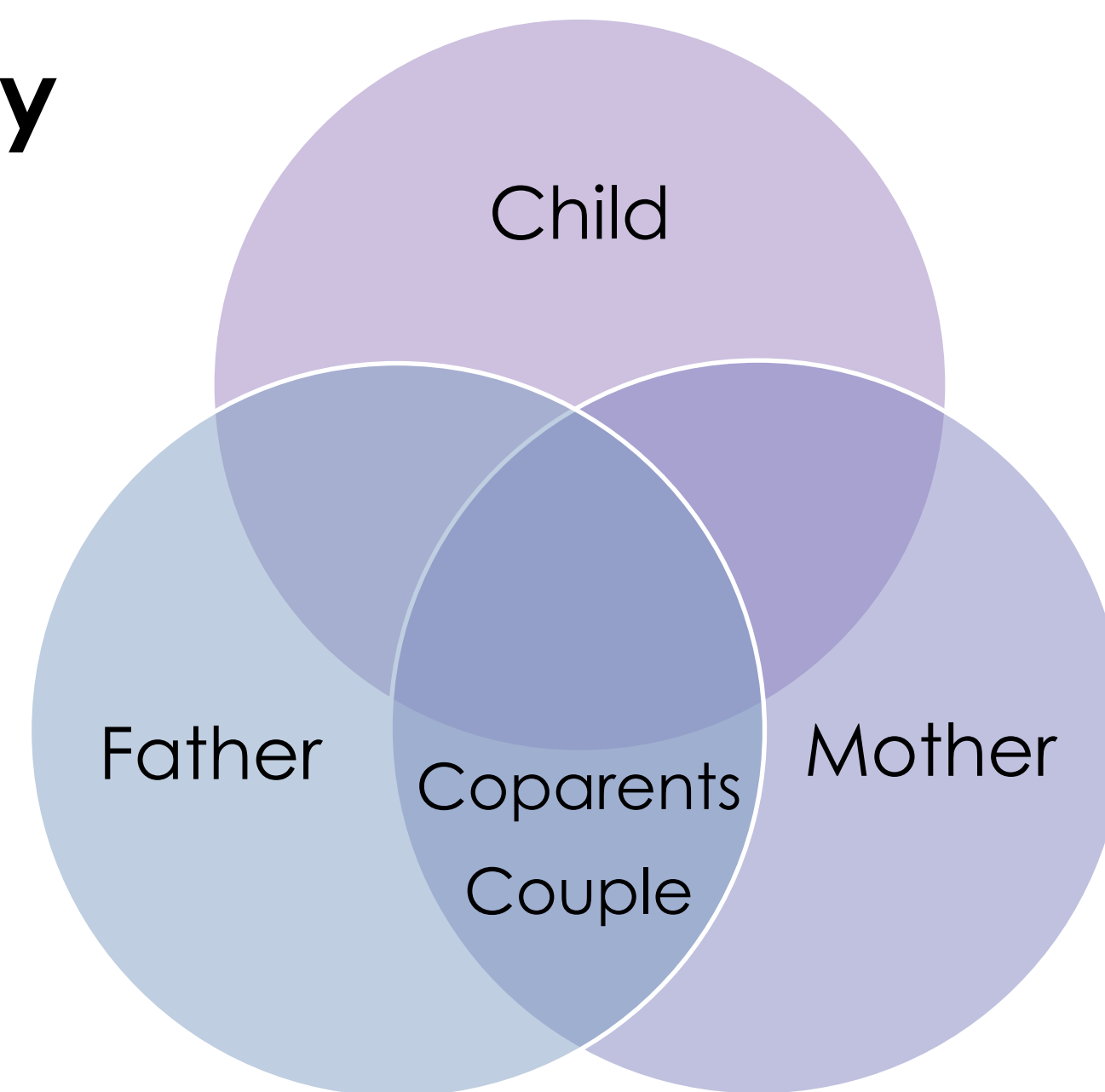


## Coparenting

- Refers to the way parents or caregivers:
  - relate to each other within their roles as parents.<sup>1</sup>
  - demonstrate support and coordination in childrearing.
- Does not include romantic, sexual, compassionate, emotional, financial, or legal aspects of couple relationship.
- High-quality coparenting is linked to fewer child behaviour problems and more secure child attachment.<sup>2-5</sup>

## Family Systems Theory

- The family as a system composed of subsystems.<sup>6</sup>
- Coparenting and couple relationships:
  - Involve the parents
  - Distinct subsystems
  - Intimately connected



## Marital Satisfaction & Coparenting

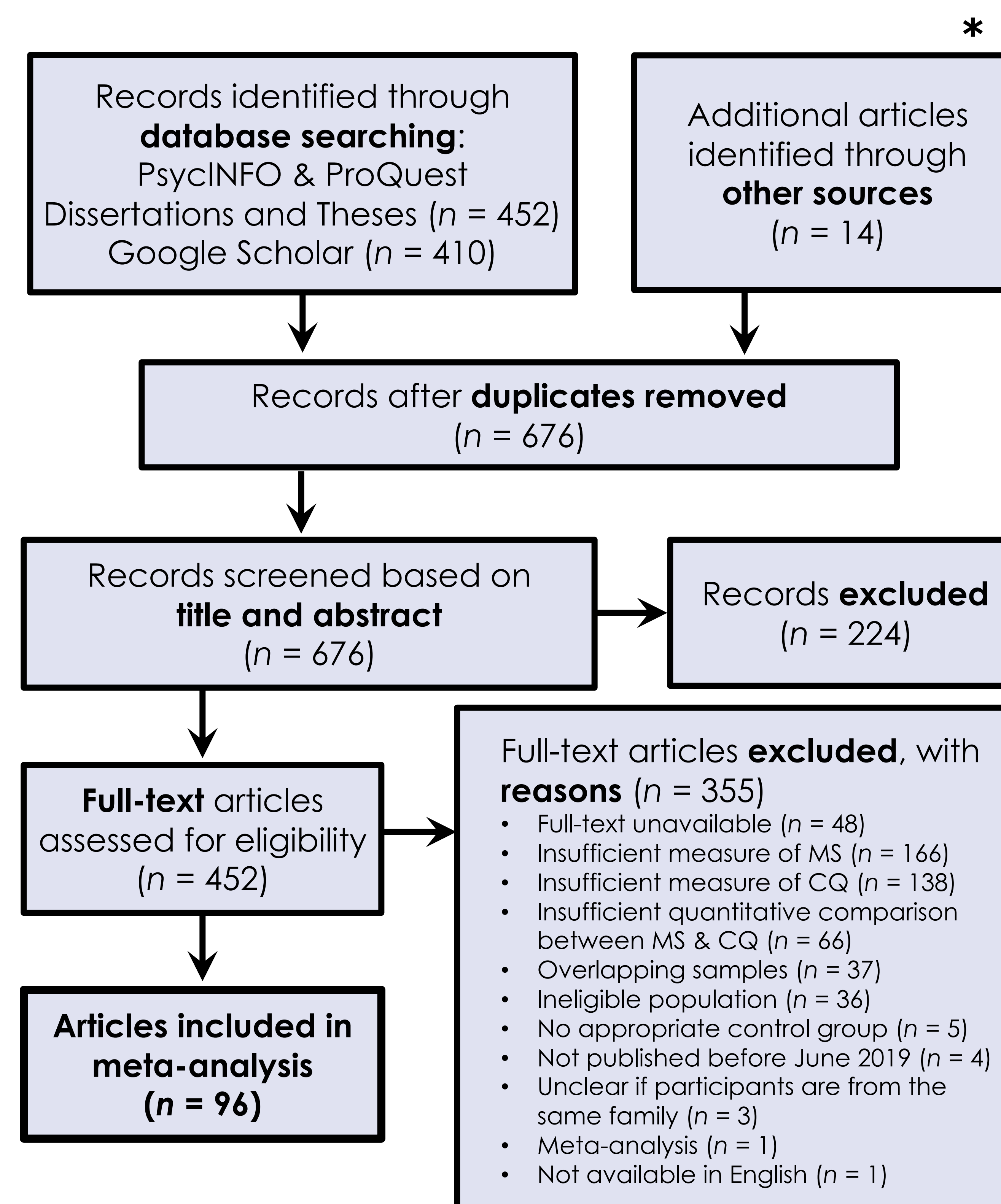
- Marital satisfaction (MS) prior to the birth of a child predicts post-birth coparenting.<sup>7,8</sup>
- After birth, parents with higher MS exhibit more supportive coparenting and less parenting conflict.<sup>7,9</sup>
- Mothers and fathers have different roles within the family system and mothers continue to be the primary caregivers in most families.<sup>10,11</sup>
- Higher MS is associated with more optimal coparenting in families with a challenging infant.<sup>8</sup>

## Objective & Research Questions

To summarize and analyze research on the association between MS and coparenting quality (CQ).

- How large is the association between MS and CQ?
- Does this association differ in strength between mothers and fathers?
- Do parent, child, family, or study factors moderate the association between MS and CQ?

## Methods



- 96 articles (including 99 studies) met eligibility criteria
  - 76 published 23 unpublished records
- 35,712 participants across all studies
  - 12 studies included children from clinical populations
- Studies were coded using a coding manual
  - 100% reliability was ensured by having 2 coders reach consensus for all research articles.
- Data was entered and analyzed through the Comprehensive Meta-Analysis 3.0 program.<sup>12</sup>
- Meta-analysis was conducted on three datasets:
  - Couples, mothers, & fathers
- Moderation analyses: ANOVA & meta-regression
- Data collection for an updated search is ongoing

\*PRISMA Flow Diagram<sup>13</sup>

## Results

- Medium positive association between MS and CQ in samples of couples ( $r = .40$ ; 95% CI [.36, .43],  $p < .001$ ).
- Larger effects were found for:
  - mothers ( $r = .47$ ) than fathers ( $r = .41$ ;  $p = .038$ ,  $k = 143$ ).
  - parents in longer relationships ( $p = .019$ ,  $k = 46$ ).
  - families with more children ( $p = .021$ ,  $k = 38$ ).
- Significant moderators: country, person reporting on CQ, MS measure, CQ measure, and publication type.

## Discussion

- Support for conceptualization of marital and parenting subsystems as distinct, yet intimately connected.
- Differences between mothers and fathers:
  - gendered nature of coparenting and differing roles.<sup>10,11</sup>
- Couples with longer relationships or more children:
  - firmly formed relational patterns influence coparenting.
- Publication type was not significant after one study<sup>14</sup> with a particularly discrepant effect size ( $r = -.40$ ) was removed.
- Directions for future research:
  - measurement of CQ
  - parents from clinical populations
  - same-sex parents.
- Clinical implications: identifying couples who may benefit from increased support around the birth of a child.

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