

Meryem Şeyda Özcan

Presidential Postdoctoral Fellow

Department of Human Development and Family Science, Virginia Tech
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EDUCATION

- 2019 – 2025 **Integrated Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology**
Koç University, Istanbul, Türkiye
(100% English Instruction – QS 2026 Ranking: 323)
Ph.D. dissertation topic: The role of technology in the cognitive development of children
(Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yasemin Kisbu)
- 2012 – 2017 **B.A. in Psychology**
Bilkent University, Ankara, Türkiye
(100% English Instruction – QS 2026 Ranking: 415)
Undergraduate thesis: Do educational apps enhance learning in cardinality and number magnitude comparison abilities?
(Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Hande Ilgaz)

POSITIONS AND AFFILIATIONS

Current Employment

- 2025 – Present **Presidential Postdoctoral Fellow at Virginia Tech**
Department of Human Development and Family Science
(PI: Assoc. Prof. Koeun Choi)

Previous Work Experience

- 2024 – 2025 **Visiting Scholar at Virginia Tech**
Department of Human Development and Family Science
(Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Koeun Choi)
- 2022 **Visiting Scholar at Georgia Southern University**
Project GAME: Developing and piloting a game design-based computer science curriculum
(NSF #2027948)
(Advisor: Prof. Mete Akcaoglu)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Spring 2026 **Invited Guest Lecture at Virginia Tech**
HD3024: Community Analytics
Lecture on pivot tables (March, 2026)
- Spring 2023 **Part-time Lecturer at Koç University**
PSYC 206: Life Span Development (Taught entirely in English – Hybrid)
- Summer 2022 **Part-time Lecturer at Koç University**
PSYC 206: Life Span Development (Taught entirely in English – Online)
- Fall 2022 **Statistical Workshop Instructor at Koç University**
Structural Equation Modelling (Conducted a four half-day workshop in English at the graduate level, focusing on SEM using MPlus)
- Fall 2021 **Teaching Assistant at Koç University**
PSYC 301: Research Methods in Psychology (Taught the lab component entirely in English; supervised multiple student research groups through the entire research process, from study design to final report, including data collection and analysis)
- Spring 2019 **Teaching Assistant at Koç University**
PSYC 201: Scientific Methods in Behavioral and Social Sciences (Taught entirely in English; guided students in using SPSS to conduct statistical analyses)
- Spring 2018 **Teaching Assistant at Koç University**
PSYC 301: Research Methods in Psychology (Taught the lab component entirely in English; supervised multiple student research groups through the entire research process)
- 2017 – 2024 **Other Teaching Assistantships at Koç University**
(Responsibilities included engaging with 50–100 undergraduate students each semester through course organization, exam grading, and teaching select components of the course.)

- PSYC 206: Life Span Development
- PSYC 302: Psychological Testing and Measurement
- PSYC 501: Research Methods I (Graduate level)
- PSYC 502: Research Methods II (Graduate level)

RESEARCH AFFILIATIONS

- 2024 – Present **Lab Member at Cognitive Developmental Science (CoDeS) Lab, Virginia Tech**
<http://kchoi.org/>
- 2017 – Present **Lab Member at Independent Evaluation Laboratory (IEL), Koç University**
www.evalresearchlab.com
- 2015 – 2017 **Lab Member at Bilkent Development (Bil-Ge), Bilkent University**
<http://web2.bilkent.edu.tr/bilge/>
- 2015 – 2016 **Child Development Lab, Middle East Technical University**
<http://cdlab2.psy.metu.edu.tr>

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Media and child development
- Designing and using technology to support development and education
- Cognitive development
- Executive functions
- Programming education / Computational thinking

RESEARCH SUPPORT

Current

- 2025–2026 **Supporting playful parent–child joint reading experiences through AI digital technology**, Caplan Foundation for Early Childhood
– *Hired as a graduate research assistant*
– Awarded: \$58,320
– Koeun Choi (PI); Caroline Hornburg, Sang Won Lee (Co-PIs)
- 2025–2026 **Reimagining early learning through AI-enhanced parent–child playful joint reading**, Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT) SEAD Mini-Grant
– *Hired as a graduate research assistant*
– Awarded: \$6,000
– Koeun Choi (PI); Caroline Hornburg, Sang Won Lee (Co-PIs)
- 2025–2027 **A behavioral and neural investigation of young children’s attention and comprehension on interactive video viewing platforms**, National Institutes of Health (R03)
– *Hired as a postdoctoral fellow*
– Awarded: \$150,803
– Koeun Choi (PI); Martha Ann Bell, Sang Won Lee (Co-PIs)

Pending

- 2026–2028 **Short-Form, Short Focus?: Neural and Behavioral Understanding of Young Children’s Attention and Comprehension in the Context of Short-Form Video**, Children and Screens Institute
– *Listed as the designated trainee*
– Requested \$150,000
– Koeun Choi (PI); Martha Ann Bell, Sang Won Lee, Alex Bonus (Co-PIs)
- 2025–2027 **Children’s Engagement with YouTube in Real-World Contexts**, Spencer Foundation
– *Listed as the designated trainee*
– Requested \$50,000
– Koeun Choi (PI); Sang Won Lee (Co-PI)

AWARDS, FUNDING, AND OTHER SUPPORTS

- 2024 Cognitive Development Society 2024 Diversity Travel Award (\$750)
2024 TUBITAK 2214 – International PhD Research Scholarship (\$22,800)
2023 TUBITAK 2250 – Performance-Based Scholarship for PhD Students (\$2,400/yr; 2023–2024)
2023 TUBITAK 2247 – National Outstanding Researchers Program Doctoral Bursary
2023 Best Poster Award at the II. International Adolescence and Youth Research Congress
2020 TUBITAK 1003 – Priority Areas R&D Projects Support Program Doctoral Bursary
2017 Koç University Graduate School Scholarship
2017 TUBITAK 2211 – National Ph.D. Student Scholarship
2016 TUBITAK 2209 – Scholarship for Undergraduate Senior Thesis (\$300)
2012 Bilkent University Comprehensive Scholarship: based on entrance exam score (\$14,500)

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

- Ad hoc reviewer, *Journal of Children and Media* (Taylor & Francis)
- Ad hoc reviewer, *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* (Springer Nature)
- Ad hoc reviewer, *BMC Pediatrics* (Springer Nature)
- Ad hoc reviewer, *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* (Taylor & Francis)
- Student reviewer (with Dr. Koeun Choi), *Journal of Children and Media* (Taylor & Francis)

PUBLICATIONS

1. **Özcan, M. Ş.**, Hong, Y., & Choi, K. (2026). Early media use predicts later executive function difficulties through problematic media use: a cross-lagged panel model in middle childhood with an early childhood media use predictor. *Media Psychology*, 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2026.2618675>
2. **Özcan, M. Ş.**, & Kisbu, Y. (2025). Exposure to interactive media, but at low levels, is associated with better executive functioning in children: A meta-analysis. *Media Psychology*, 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2025.2025.2025>
3. Oksuz, I., **Özcan, M. Ş.**, Dost-Gözkan, A., & Kisbu, Y. (2024). Health risk behaviors of adolescents in Europe: A latent profile analysis of HBSC data from 43 countries. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 76, 115–121. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2024.08.001>
4. **Özcan, M. Ş.**, Goksun, T., & Kisbu Sakarya, Y. (2024). The impact of learning to code on higher-order executive functions: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15391523.2024.2381231>
5. Kisbu, Y., **Özcan, M. Ş.**, Kuşcul, G. H., Bozok, M., Kaya, M., & Fişek, G. (2023). Fathering styles in a traditional culture and its association with marital relationship: A latent profile analysis with a nationally representative sample. *Family Process*, 00, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12948>
6. Akcaoglu, M., **Özcan, M. Ş.**, & Hodges, C. B. (2023). Exploring the relationship among motivational constructs and preservice teachers' use of computational thinking in classrooms. *Computers in the Schools*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07380569.2023.2172987>
7. Akcaoglu, M., **Ozcan, M. Ş.**, & Dogan, S. (2023). What keeps teachers engaged during professional development? The role of interest development. *Education Sciences*, 13, 188. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13020188>
8. **Özcan, M. Ş.**, Çetinkaya, E., Goksun, T., & Kisbu Sakarya, Y. (2021). Does learning to code influence cognitive skills of elementary school children? Findings from a randomized experiment. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 91, 1434–1455. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12429>
9. **Özcan, M. Ş.**, & Akcaoglu, M. (2026). Development and validation of the multidimensional interest development survey (MIS): An interest survey measuring phases and components. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07342829261440809>

MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVIEW

1. Gürdal, M. S., **Özcan, M. Ş. (co-first author)**, Smith, C., & Choi, K. (under review). Media use and effortful control in young children: a meta-analytic review. *Media Psychology*.

MANUSCRIPTS IN PREPARATION

1. Sabuncuoglu, A., **Özcan, M. Ş.**, Kisbu, Y., & Sezgin, M. (in preparation). Developing an open-source middle school programming environment and its curriculum for an affordable education.
2. Rajadhyaksha, U., Aycan, Z., Rantanen, J., Feldt, T., Cinli, D., **Özcan, M. Ş.**, & Baskurt, A. B. (in preparation). Work-family interface during COVID-19: Gender and gender role ideology perspectives. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*.
3. Beers, C., Yu, S., **Özcan, M. Ş.**, Smith, C. L., & Choi, K. (in preparation). Understanding media guilt among mothers of young children.
4. **Özcan, M. Ş.**, & Choi, K. (in preparation). The role of digital media on young children's executive functions: Testing potential moderating and mediating effects.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

1. **Özcan, M. Ş.** (2026, April 9, co-organizer). *Children and Technology: Emerging Scholars, Emerging Methods, Emerging Directions* [Preconference workshop]. The biennial meeting of the Cognitive Development Society (CDS), Montréal, Canada. <https://sites.google.com/view/2026-cds-dmcd/general-info>
2. **Özcan, M. Ş.** (2026, April 9–11). *Using EEG to Study Development During Digital Media Use* [Flash talk & Roundtable leading]. The biennial meeting of the Cognitive Development Society (CDS), Montréal, Canada.
3. **Özcan, M. Ş.**, & Choi, K. (2026, April 9–11). *Family Media Practices Linked to Problematic Media Use in Early Childhood* [Poster presentation]. The biennial meeting of the Cognitive Development Society (CDS), Montréal, Canada.
4. Chen, J., **Özcan, M. Ş.**, Wang, Z., & Choi, K. (2026, April 9–11). *Examining Interrelations Among Temperament, Media Use, and Behavioral Problems in Early Childhood* [Poster presentation]. The biennial meeting of the Cognitive Development Society (CDS), Montréal, Canada.
5. Yu, S., **Özcan, M. Ş.**, & Choi, K. (2026, April 9–11). *Predictors of media use and problematic media use in autistic children: The roles of child and parental factors* [Poster presentation]. The biennial meeting of the Cognitive Development Society (CDS), Montréal, Canada.
6. Gurdal, M. S., **Özcan, M. Ş.**, Chen, J., Colbert, M., Lee, S. W., Hornburg, C., & Choi, K. (2026, April 9–11). *Who reads the story matters: The impact of AI on preschoolers' learning during parent-child shared e-book reading* [Poster presentation]. The biennial meeting of the Cognitive Development Society (CDS), Montréal, Canada.
7. **Özcan, M. Ş.**, & Choi, K. (2025, May 1–3). *Exploring the role of child temperament, parenting stress, and parental disruptive phone use in preschoolers' problematic media use* [Poster presentation]. The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) Biennial Meeting, Minneapolis, MN.
8. Smith, C. L., **Ozcan, M. S.**, Gurdal, M. S., Shin, E., & Choi, K. (2025, May 1–3). *Children's regulation starts with the parents: A latent profile analysis of parent emotion regulation strategies* [Poster presentation]. The Society for Research in Child Development 2025 Biennial Meeting, Minneapolis, MN, USA.
9. **Özcan, M. Ş.**, & Akcaoglu, M. (2025, April 23–27). *Development and validation of the multidimensional interest survey (MIS)* [Paper presentation accepted]. American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.
10. **Özcan, M. Ş.**, & Kisbu, Y. (2024, March 21–23). *Exposure to interactive media, but at low levels, is associated with better executive functioning in children: A meta-analysis* [Poster presentation]. Cognitive Developmental Society (CDS) Biennial Conference, Pasadena, CA.
11. Oksuz, I., **Özcan, M. Ş.**, Sunmaz, N., & Kisbu, Y. (2023, September 6–8). *Health risk behaviors among European adolescents: A latent profile analysis* [Conference presentation abstract]. II. International Adolescence and Youth Research Congress, Kapadokya, Türkiye.
12. Turunç, G., & **Özcan, M. Ş.** (2023, September 6–8). *Bullying and adolescent well-being: Insights from Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory* [Paper presentation abstract]. II. International Adolescence and Youth Research Congress, Kapadokya, Türkiye.
13. **Özcan, M. Ş.**, Turunç, G., Çetinkaya, E., & Kisbu, Y. (2022, September 8–9). *Cognitive functions and academic skills in children living under conflict: Investigation of mediation mechanisms using UNICEF MICS Palestine data* [Poster presentation]. Third Development Symposium in Türkiye, Istanbul, Türkiye.
14. **Özcan, M. Ş.**, Çetinkaya, E., Goksun, T., & Kisbu Sakarya, Y. (2021, April 7–9). *Does learning to code improve cognitive skills of elementary school children?* [Poster presentation]. The Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting (SRCD), virtual.

15. **Zayim, M. Ş.**, & Kisbu-Sakarya, Y. (2019, March 21–23). *Fathering styles in Turkey: A latent profile analysis based on a representative sample* [Poster presentation]. The Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting (SRCD), Baltimore, MD.

RESEARCH REPORTS, POLICY BRIEFS, & NGO COLLABORATIONS

1. Kisbu, Y., **Özcan, M. Ş.**, & Sunmaz, N. (2024). *Findings from the Baseline Survey of the Suna'nın Kızları Program*. Research report prepared for Suna'nın Kızları in collaboration with Koç University Independent Impact Evaluation Laboratory.
2. Kisbu, Y., Dost-Gözkan, A., Çelik, Ç., **Özcan, M. Ş.**, Şahinoğlu, A., & Zülfiyar, A. Z. (2024). *Evidence on behavioural drivers and social norms shaping adolescent and youth participation: A formative study to inform SBC and ADAP programming in Türkiye*. Research report prepared for UNICEF Türkiye Country Office in collaboration with Koç University Independent Impact Evaluation Laboratory.
3. Kisbu-Sakarya, Y., & **Özcan, M. Ş.** (2024). *Ethical standards, norms, and practices for research involving adults and children in Turkey: Desk review and roadmap*. Research report prepared for UNICEF Türkiye Country Office in collaboration with Koç University Independent Impact Evaluation Laboratory.

SKILLS

Statistical Analysis Programs	SPSS (advanced), MPLUS (advanced), R (intermediate)
Analysis Methods	Structural Equation Modelling, Latent Profile Analysis, Meta-analysis, Experimental data analysis, Qualitative data analysis (content analysis, focus group)