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## TARANDIĞIMIZ INDEXLER



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# THE PSYCHOMETRIC EVALUATION OF THE MATERNAL EMPLOYMENT GUILT SCALE: A DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION STUDY

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## ÖZET

**M**evcut çalışmanın amacı, Anne İstihdam Suçluluğu Ölçeği'ni geliştirmek ve ölçeğin psikometrik özelliklerini test etmektir. Bu amaçla ilgili alanyazının taranması ve yapılan mülakatları takiben ölçek maddeleri oluşturulmuş ve ölçek Türkiye'de yaşayan 605 çalışan anneye uygulanmıştır. Açımlayıcı faktör analizi sonuçları Anne İstihdam Suçluluğu Ölçeği'nin 15 maddeden oluşan tek faktörlü bir yapıya sahip olduğunu göstermiş, doğrulayıcı faktör analizi sonuçları da bu yapının geçerliliğini doğrulamıştır. Geliştirilen ölçeğin çalışma kapsamında kullanılan diğer ölçekler ile ilişkilerine bakılarak yakınsama ve ayırt edici geçerlikleri değerlendirilmiş ve ölçeğin iyi psikometrik özelliklere sahip olduğu bulunmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Anne suçluluğu, çalışan anne, annelik, ölçek geliştirme.

## THE PSYCHOMETRIC EVALUATION OF THE MATERNAL EMPLOYMENT GUILT SCALE: A DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION STUDY

### ABSTRACT

The aim of the current study is to develop Maternal Employment Guilt Scale (MEGS) and to test its psychometric properties. For this aim, scale items were developed through a rigorous process of extensive literature search and in-depth interviews, and the scale was applied to 605 working mothers living in Turkey. Exploratory factor analysis revealed that the MEGS had one-factor structure with 15 items, and confirmatory factor analysis confirmed this structure. MEGS has good psychometric characteristics with convergent and discriminant validity, regarding its correlations with other relevant scales used in this study.

**Keywords:** Maternal guilt, working mother, motherhood, scale development.

## INTRODUCTION

*“Working makes me feel important and competent in my life, yet it is unbearably difficult to be a mom and a worker in my country. I am already struggling with myself inside, and hardly making my inner voice silent; then others, especially those mothers who don’t work, continuously imply that I am a bad mom. I am more tired because of the criticisms and lack of support from society than I am because of my motherhood responsibilities. Now I feel like I am not successful at all; I am half-sufficient both at home and at work, and I quit my job because of a minor reason that I would otherwise handle easily.”*

*(A Turkish Mother’s public letter, May 6, 2012)*

A business psychologist, Wehler, who works with parents to achieve work/family balance by reducing guilt, says “not having the time and energy to fully commit to either task can lead to feelings of guilt and a lack of confidence in their ability to be both a dedicated mother and a focused employee” (2011, p. 24). Not only in Turkey but also as the above quote in an American human resources magazine indicates today’s working mothers define their stress and guilt as affecting themselves, their families, and workplaces. It is important to understand maternal employment guilt because of its everyday implications for women, families, organizations, and the societies. We think that this is not only important to identify to what extent mothers feel guilty when they are working, but also to address the antecedents and results of such a feeling to direct further research and applications. For this purpose, we need to first define what maternal employment guilt is and how it is similar or different to other related concepts.

Guilt is defined as a negative emotion originating from the violation of one’s internalized standards about the definition of proper behavior (Kubany, 1994). It is described as a painful emotional state triggered when one’s actions or intentions are perceived as being wrong or violating certain rules (Martinez, Carrasco, Aza, Blanco, & Espinar, 2011). Since the early days of civilization, guilt has played an important role in the development of human behavior and the culture (Heimowitz, 2014). Described as social or moral emotions, guilt and its neighbors -shame, embarrassment, and pride - involve social judgments, which guide people about how one should and should not behave (Katchadourian, 2010).

Guilt is known to be one of other-oriented emotions that allows one to repair the fault afterward (I did a *bad thing*), but it may sometimes overlap with other self-oriented emotions (I did a bad thing). Although there are occasions of shame-free guilt which allows empathy and repairs the relationship afterward, sometimes the self is infused in this guilty emotion and the result is "as I did this bad thing, I am also bad" (Tangney & Tracy, 2011). Therefore, when it comes to motherhood, "being employed" can be associated with "bad", which can turn into a generalization that employed mother is the "bad mom". This sheds a light on the difficulty of differentiating the *maternal employment guilt* from other relevant emotions and similar concepts, such as *maternal guilt* and *employment guilt*.

### Maternal employment guilt and its related constructs

*Maternal guilt* is seen as a natural and common element of motherhood (Seagram & Daniluk, 2002; Sutherland, 2010a, 2010b). Although there is only a small number of empirical research about the relationship between motherhood and guilt in literature, the concept of "maternal guilt" (Sutherland, 2010a, 2010b) in the media and in everyday lives of women is inevitable (Seagram & Daniluk, 2002). Although shame is about self ("I" did a bad thing) and guilt is about others (I did a "*bad thing*"), shame-infused guilt may be occurred when it is impossible to change the condition (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). Therefore, when talking about a socially constructed phenomenon such as motherhood, it is needed; we think we need to consider the social context that triggers specific emotions. Tangney et al. (2007) states that the basic distinction between guilt and shame is based on "the public versus private nature of the transgression and the degree to which the person construes the emotion-eliciting event as a failure of self or behavior" (p. 3). Maternal employment guilt seems not similar to "*person A does a horrible thing to person B*". In such a scenario, guilt is private and has the chance to turn the case into something positive, when person A takes action accordingly to undo the harm. Whereas, shame is public and includes others' actual, imagined or implied evaluations as well, therefore has the risk of negative evaluation of self with a sense of shrinking, sinking down, and urging to escape which prevents taking action (Tangney & Tracy, 2011). Therefore, we think that maternal employment guilt can be a shame-prone theme (e.g., "*I am a horrible mom, because I am working*"). In other words, In case of maternal employment guilt, the basic distinctions between guilt and shame may be blurred. Hence, especially when a mother cannot quit her job or indeed wants to pursue a career, the possible positive impact of guilt as a potential trigger to repair that behavior can be endangered. Rather, when persistent, such a "bad mum guilt" (Sullivan, 2014) can end up with shameful guilt which in turn may cause a sense of ineffectiveness affecting physical well-being, mental health and the ability to be productive. However, it is important to understand the nature of maternal guilt and to be able to measure it thoroughly.

Building on these, in the current study we attempted to develop a valid measure of maternal employment guilt in order to understand to what extent mothers feel guilty toward their children about their employment status. Considering such gender-specific burden of parental guilt for women as a potential public mental health (Borelli, Nelson, River, Birken, & Moss-Racusin, 2017), this study also highlights the importance of developing, testing and implementing methods to redefine "good mothering". The Maternal Employment Guilt Scale (MEGS) developed within the scope of this study is believed to pave the way for assessing the individual, organizational and socio-political support need of working mothers where necessary.

## Theoretical underlining of maternal employment guilt

The feeling of guilt about childcare is an aspect of parenting as noted above; however, there are some differences between mothers and fathers. The concept of "guilt gap" (Hays, 1996) refers that the experienced guilt related to child caring is higher for mothers compared to fathers, even if both the mother and the father are equally responsible for childcare. There may be some remarkable factors placing mothers at greater risk for feeling guilt. One of these factors is the mothers' labor force participation (Sutherland, 2006). The combination of the motherhood role and employee role may end up with the feeling of guilt for women (Simon, 1995). A recent study also found that there are gender differences in work-family guilt where mothers outscore fathers due to traditional parent gender-role stereotypes that evoke more guilt among mothers (Borelli et al., 2017). According to the report of Social Issues Research Center (2011), 88% of working women experience guilt to some extent while caring for children and working for pay at the same time.

The self-discrepancy between the actual and ideal selves of mothers is stated as the other reason of guilt experienced by working mothers (Liss, Schiffrin, & Rizzo, 2013). Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) states that the degree of discrepancy between actual and ideal selves is associated with a variety of mental health outcomes involving guilt. Societies put higher standards for being an ideal mother (Hays, 1996) and such normative beliefs of motherhood include varied culturally determined constructs showing how mothers should think, feel, and behave (McDonald, Bradley, & Guthrie, 2005). When working mothers cannot meet these ideal motherhood constructs, they may feel guilty.

To illustrate, some beliefs that create tensions between motherhood and employment were reported by McDonald et al. (2005). These motherhood beliefs are briefly that 1) a good mother is always available to her children; 2) a good mother puts her children's needs before her own; 3) children need their mothers permanently at least for the first 3 to 5 ages; 4) the total responsibility of children belongs to the mother at all times, and lastly 5) although being a low-status job, mothering is worthwhile and intrinsically rewarding. Indeed, such a dominant traditional motherhood ideology and myths are preserved in many areas women face with, such as women's magazines (Johnston & Swanson, 2003). Being a "good mother" in accordance with these normative beliefs is difficult, and probably impossible for working mothers (Sutherland, 2010a, 2010b). Therefore, the feeling of not being a "good mother" may lead to working woman feel guilty, since as indicated by Sutherland's (2006) in-depth interviews with working mothers, "good mothering" is to sacrifice, to be everything for the child, to put the child first, to devote time, and in fact it is all about giving for the child. These are the motherhood myths or beliefs that emerged in narratives of many women as creating a mismatch between employment and motherhood. However, they are not specifically designed maternal employment guilt themes, and these do not assess *how* mothers feel guilty when they are working. Rather, they might be the reasons *why* many women feel guilty when they are working.

Another vein of research considers maternal guilt independent of employment by investigating the meaning and experience of maternal guilt for mothers in general. For instance, the qualitative study of Seagram and Daniluk (2002) introduced six dominant maternal guilt themes. These themes are 1) the sense of complete responsibility and the sense of ownership for the child; 2) the strong desire to have a positive impact on child's life; 3) the sense of having profound connection with the child; 4) the concern that the child will suffer when the mother is not available; 5) the sense of depletion as a result of the struggle to reach unrealistic high motherhood standards; and 6) the sense of inadequacy which come along with self-blaming. As a working mother, it may be difficult to achieve the conditions specified in these themes. Aligning to the position of such a mother may compromise working mothers'

need of expressing their individual identity and their existence in the workplace (Rubin & Wooten, 2007). Consequently, the dialectic dilemma of "*working mother = a failed child*" results in feelings of guilt and inadequacy for these women (Guendouzi, 2006, p. 904).

### The conceptual significance of maternal employment guilt

So far, we have emphasized maternal guilt and employment guilt from some perspectives. At this point, we find it important to distinguish maternal employment guilt from these other forms of guilt, by highlighting the focus of this study. Maternal guilt can cover anything that might induce mothers to have feelings of guilt towards their children and this is not always stemmed from being employed. Hence, maternal guilt can be because of *anything* that a mother thinks she deviates motherhood norm, such as not being able to feed her child as much as she desired. This is not necessarily because she is at work, but this might be because she is shopping at a grocery store, socializing with her friends when her child refuses to be breastfed, while other people around insist that she should insistently continue; or just simply because she does not have enough lactation at all.

On the other hand, employment guilt can cover anything that might induce either partner to have feelings of guilt because of their employment. However, this is not always about their parenthood and towards their children. Hence, employment guilt can be because of anything that a person thinks s/he deviates personal ideal or social norm because of working; like not spending enough time for her/his partner as s/he desired. Such employment guilt is not necessarily specific to women, nor solely associated with motherhood. Indeed, feeling guilty because of not allocating enough time for the child can be just *one* of the several other probabilities of employment guilt.

On the other hand, apart from other studies, the focus of this study is exclusively the guilt experienced by working mothers – a concept referred to as maternal employment guilt. We propose that this is a specific area of research that requires special consideration with a psychological perspective. We think, that conducting studies in this topic is central to many associations in micro level (e.g., well-being of mothers and children), meso level (e.g., work life and family life hassles and uplifts), and macro level (e.g., evaluations of social policy and employment policies), with possible reasons, outcomes and implications. Therefore, we found it valuable to attempt developing an instrument for assessing maternal employment guilt as an important area of research. Here, what we mention as "guilt" corresponded to *maternal employment guilt* that mothers experience towards their child because of their working status. Though we distinguished maternal guilt, employment guilt and maternal employment guilt, we do not think that these are totally distinct from each other. Rather, they have some common roots and branches. This lends us a venue to cite further the relevant literature from sociology, economy, politics, and media studies.

The above-mentioned tension between the dual roles of mother and employee leads some women (even those who achieved professional success) to decide to be a stay-at-home mother (Rubin & Wooten, 2007). Although those stay-at-home mothers mostly report a loss of identity, exiting the workforce relieve them of the guilt of not being able to spend much time with their kids. Further, mass media leaves women vulnerable to the idealized social constructions of motherhood (Douglas & Michaels, 2004). Specifically, the media's myth of motherhood generally frames the difficulties of being a working mother as a problem of personal choice, rather than a result of public policy (The Broad Side, 2013). Ellen Bravo, an activist, author and former director of National Association of Working Women, points that since past 40 years, the media pits women against each other in a "having it all" debate about work

inside and outside the home in order to conquer both domains (Women's Media Center-WMC; 2012). However, the point of working mothers is not to *have it all in both domains*, says Ellen Bravo. Instead, due to the regular conflicting trade-off between being a good employee and a responsible parent, they are worried about *losing it all* (their jobs, their children's health, their families' financial stability).

Considering the issue from the viewpoint of public and social policies, it is criticized that the areas like maternity leave and benefit systems implementation are far from being concrete; hence, they are ineffective to construct gender equality at the workplace and in the labor market (Dedeoğlu, 2009). That is, in addition to that above-noted common social recognition, the legal regulations also endorse women's status on basis of their motherhood and wifehood, but not as a worker. Therefore, failing to develop sufficient socio-legal and economic models would continue to deter women from labor market (Dedeoğlu, 2009). Also, it pushes them to be confined with bottom layers of salary scale, along the conflict between the needs of labor market (for reliable yet flexible workers) and the needs of working mothers (for a legal framework that sustains equality) (Guerrina, 2002). Thus, it causes them to lose their jobs and/or be less productive at work, and force themselves to trade off higher wages for mother-friendly jobs (Budig & England, 2001). Illustrating such a negative impact, it was found that part of the motherhood wage penalty was explained by the variation on reported time spent on childcare and housework on a typical weekday for mothers of very young children (Kuhhirt & Ludwig, 2012). Those socio-economical and socio-political aspects of mothers' employment seem to call for other empirical and correlational studies. For this aim, firstly we need a scale that effectively measures the maternal employment guilt concept. Hereby, we are able to detect the relationship between socio-political-economical aspects and maternal employment guilt.

However, having said those, we should highlight that most of these studies are from sociology, politics, economics, communication field or else. On the other hand, Bianchi and Milkie (2010) suggest that work-family literature would better expand its focus. Thereby, the needs and contexts of family members would be considered by not only policymakers but also other professionals who counsel families and design workplace programs, in order to assist workers with work-family balance (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). Individual experiences of working mothers (in general) and maternal guilt (in specific) have been rarely studied in the field of psychology by using a quantitative approach. According to Working Mother Research Institute (2011), half of the working mothers feel guilty about not spending enough time with their kids; whereas the half stay-at-home mothers feel worried about not contributing to the family finances; and more than a third of all mothers (either working or stay-at-home) say they frequently feel guilty concerning their contribution to the household. Considering such important directions for research in the coming decade, the lack of a psychometrically validated scale leaves most of the maternal guilt topic to be either understudied in psychology or to be studied by other scholars that provide comments, arguments and evaluations detached from any statistical results about causes and effects of the issue, with deficiency in measuring the effectiveness of some possible interventions. Therefore, an assessment of maternal employment guilt will inspire many quantitative studies with statistical inferences about the causes and effects of the guilt experienced by working mothers.

Lending support to our argument about the need of such a scale, in psychology literature, most of the studies dealing with maternal employment guilt are qualitative in nature and there are only a few reliable and valid measurement instruments about employment guilt (McElwain & Korabik, 2004). Moreover, if not qualitative in nature, the available quantitative investigations generally rely on a single item that measure the frequency of guilt, such as "In the past seven days, how many days have you felt guilty?" (McElwain & Korabik, 2004). Besides, the earlier-noted guilt-gap between mothers

and fathers suggests us the necessity of a multi-item comprehensive instrument to assess employment guilt concerning mothers specifically, instead of regarding both parents in general.

### Existing measures

To the best of our knowledge, there are two multi-item measures of employment guilt that have satisfactory psychometric properties. The first one is "Feelings of Guilt about Parenting Scale" (Martinez et al., 2011) developed in Spain, and the other is "Employment Guilt Scale" (Aycan & Eskin, 2005) developed in Turkey. Although both have sufficient internal consistency, their aim and generalizability seem to fall short for diverse samples and purposes. In detail, the first scale asks participants to rate some situations that potentially generate guilt for mothers and fathers in dual-earner Spanish families. The scale includes items of some occasions that may not apply to the other populations (e.g. "Having to send my child to summer camp because I cannot attend to him/her") and asks participants (both mothers and fathers) to assess the degree of guilt that those situations could generate in them. Therefore, it seems to deal with the guilt-inducing probability of some acts/activities which even may not be in the repertoire of many parents. In other words, that scale seems to assess not the *degree of guilt* a woman feels because she is working. Rather it seems to assess the *reasons* of both parents' (not only mothers' but also fathers') feelings of guilt and this is not necessarily always due to their work status. As we made the distinction clear early in this study, in short, their scale measures parental guilt which is neither focused on mothers nor due to employment status. In fact, there are even some items about underemployment, such as "Not earning enough income to satisfy the demands of my child (extra-academic activities, clothes, games...). We see that such items were necessary for their research purpose, as they were trying to compare mothers and fathers by assessing the reasons for guilt due to traditional and non-traditional family role ideologies when both parents are working. However, our purpose is to create a scale which evaluates the degree of guilt a mother feels toward her child(ren) due to her employment status.

Similarly, the second scale (Aycan & Eskin, 2005) assesses the participants' guilt experiences arising from working and not being able to allocate enough time with their family. The items of this scale were developed based on the first author's previous focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with women having managerial positions (Aycan, 2004). Implying its limited external validity for women on positions of a diverse range, also, this scale was developed for a model testing aim, and no prior validation study was conducted before using. Besides, this scale does not exclusively measure guilt about motherhood of a working mother, but about other things that every mother (regardless of her employment status) might experience (i.e., "I feel guilty when I leave my child to attend social activities"); it also measures guilt towards family and partner (i.e., "I feel guilty because I cannot take care of my partner", "I feel guilty because I cannot deal with domestic responsibilities as I desired"); some items capture generic employment guilt without any specific target at all (i.e., "I feel guilty because I am working", "I feel guilty because when my mind is at work"); and among a few items that might specifically measure maternal employment guilt, some of them looks not applicable to some employment forms and schedules (i.e., "I feel guilty because I am leaving my child while s/he is sleeping").

Though not a guilt scale, there is another scale relevant to working mothers: Beliefs about the Consequences of Maternal Employment for Children (Greenberger, Goldberg, Crawford, & Granger, 1988). Although at first it might be assumed that their scale is exactly what we attempted to do, it actually measures both perceived costs and benefits of maternal employment. That is, it is not about *how*

*guilty* a mother feels about working; rather these are the normative beliefs about motherhood and employment, such as "a mother's working can be less harmful when the child grows older". Yet, this is not how a mother *feels*, but what a person *thinks* or *believes* about working mothers. Thus, this measures attitudes toward working mothers that can be endorsed by anyone in society, but does not capture how mothers feel about their own positions. These beliefs imposed by society and internalized by working mothers can be sources of introjections and cause guilt for working mothers but should be distinguished from feelings that mothers have. All in all, despite these scales are all sufficient attempts to investigate the associates of some form of guilt with good psychometric properties and have solid research ground on their own, it can be observed that their items were far from measuring the general guilt level of mothers arising from their employment status of any type.

In the light of these theoretical explanations along with the need of a valid scale, the aim of the present study is to develop Mother's Employment Guilt Scale (MEGS) based on the themes reported in the literature, interviews conducted with and the data collected from working mothers from diverse demographic characteristics.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Working mothers living in Turkey participated in this study ( $N = 605$ ;  $M_{age} = 36.63$ ,  $SD = 7.29$ , age range: 21-60 years). The data collection was conducted on a computer-based Qualtrics program (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>) which is one of the frequently used programs for collecting data in social sciences. The link of the survey battery has been delivered to the participants via social media resources. The criterion to be a participant was being employed and having at least one child. Participants were from notably different occupational sectors including education, health, engineering, management, law, service. The demographic characteristics of the sample can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1.

*Demographic Characteristics of the Sample*

Characteristics	Development sample (N = 415)		Confirmation sample (N = 190)	
	n	%	n	%
<b>Age</b>				
20-29 years	58	13.98	25	13.16
30-39 years	231	55.66	111	58.42
40-49 years	99	23.86	37	19.47
50-60 years	27	6.51	17	8.95
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Single	18	4.3	11	5.8
Married	384	92.5	176	92.6
Divorced	10	2.41	3	1.58
Widowed	3	0.72		
<b>Education</b>				
Literate, but not schooled	1	0.2	0	0
Primary school	8	1.9	5	2.6
Elementary school	8	1.9	5	2.6
High school	48	11.6	25	13.2

2-year college graduate	61	14.7	23	12.1
Undergraduate	225	54.2	95	50
Master's degree	47	11.3	30	15.8
Doctoral degree	17	4.1	7	3.7
Working status				
Full-time	338	81.4	149	78.4
Part-time	52	12.5	27	14.2
Flexible	24	5.8	13	6.8
Upon call	1	0.2	0	0
Seasonal	0	0	1	0.5
Choice for working (The extent to which working is the participant's choice)				
1 (Not my choice at all)	12	2.9	6	3.2
2	22	5.3	8	4.2
3	45	10.8	21	11.1
4	59	14.2	21	11.1
5	76	18.3	41	21.6
6 (Totally my choice)	201	48.4	93	48.9
Number of Children				
1	231	55.66	104	54.74
2	157	37.83	73	38.42
3	14	3.37	10	5.26
4	1	0.24	0	0
5	4	0.96	1	0.53
Caregiver				
A family member (e.gradmother/father, uncle, aunt)	179	43.1	83	43.7
Baby-sitter	87	21	38	20
Kindergarten	84	20.02	37	19.5
Other	65	15.7	31	16.3
Family total income				
1000 TL and -	8	1.9	5	2.6
1001-2000 TL	55	13.3	26	13.7
2001-3000 TL	75	18.1	41	21.6
3001-5000 TL	134	32.3	44	23.2
5001-10000 TL	113	27.2	56	29.5
10000 and +	30	7.2	18	9.5
Family situation				
Married, child lives with parents	375	90.4	175	92.1
Married, child lives with a relative	6	1.4	3	1.6
Divorced, child lives with the mother	23	5.5	6	3.2
Divorced, child lives with the father	0	0	0	0
Divorced, child lives with a relative	0	0	1	0.5
Other	11	2.7	5	2.6

Note. "n" refers to number, "%" refers to percent, "TL" refers to Turkish Liras.

**Item Pool Generation.** The methods of item generation are deductive and inductive (Hinkin, 1995). In the deductive method, the relevant domain is defined, and the items are identified based on extensive literature review and pre-existing scales (Hinkin, 1995). In the inductive method, item development is conducted based on qualitative information taken from target population with the ways of

direct observations and/or exploratory methodologies such as focus groups and individual interviews (Kapuscinski & Masters, 2010). Combining these two methods is evaluated as the best practice to define the domain and identify the items to measure that domain (Boateng, Neilands, Frongillo, Melgar-Quiñonez, & Young, 2018). Accordingly, in this study, we used both the deductive and inductive methods to develop initial item pool building on a) literature exploration, b) in-depth interviews with working mothers and c) focus group discussions with people who work in the field of psychology and experienced in scale development. Kline (1993) and Schinka, Velicer, & Weiner (2012) stated that the initial item pool should be at least two times greater than the desired ultimate scale. Others recommend that the initial item pool should be five times as large as the final scale to be able to create the most robust final scale item combination (see Schinka et al. 2012; Boateng et al., 2018). By considering these suggestions, we developed a large item pool composing of 68 items. We aimed to provide good content validity by writing items that are "(i) *relevant* to the constructs to be measured and (ii) *representative* of all potentially important aspects of the target construct" (Simms, 2008, p. 418).

To start with the literature review stage of item generation, we used the specified themes from McDonald et al., (2005) and Seagram and Daniluk (2002) study that were noted in the introduction part. Items were generated to cover those themes (e.g., seeking profound connection, sense of complete responsibility, concerns for possible harms, trying to be permanently available to the child). After listing down potential items that were derived from existing literature, we did interviews with 12 employed mothers in order to collect more information. While four of them were telephone interviews, eight were survey interviews collected via email. Participants' ages ranged from 27 to 53 ( $M = 38.08$ ). All of them were married. While five of the mothers had two children, seven had one child. Ages of children ranged from 14 months to 26 years old. The participants were from different professions such as social worker, banker, auditor, teacher, psychologist, and textile worker.

In the interview forms, demographic questions (i.e., age, number of children, age of child, job and marital status) were asked and followed by questions related to motherhood experiences of working mothers. Interview questions were (1) "How should a qualified mother-child relationship be? Please explain"; (2) "As a working mother, how do you evaluate your responsibilities regarding your child? Are you satisfied with yourself about your responsibilities about childcare? Please explain"; (3) "How do you feel towards your child about being a working mom? Please tell us about your positive and negative emotions"; (4) "If you are feeling guilt because of working, what may the causes of this be? Please tell in detail"; and (5) "Do you think that you may be a better mom if you were not working? Please elaborate the causes".

As seen in the open-ended questions, to refrain from inducing guilt to mothers, we did not ask merely about their guilty feelings. Rather, we would like to capture as widely as possible by asking some relevant other questions. Our aim was to be less directive and let them freely associate among their experiences while trying to detect their guilty feelings from their expressions. Mothers mentioned guilt towards their children because of working, by highlighting mostly that they feel themselves as insufficient mothers because not showing enough affection to their children and not caring about their children due to job stress, fatigue, and lack of time. Some mothers stated that they think working is not fair towards their children. Nevertheless, nearly all of the mothers referred that the money earned at work is useful for their children and this money seems to be comforting them, when compared to their perceived incompetence as a mother. In line with this, some of them time to time indicated that if only they had had more flexible jobs. Still, mothers reported guilt because of working in general, due to not showing enough patience, and sufficient interest to their children, not being able to allocate

enough time and not being able to convert their thoughts, plans and dreams about children into action because of limited time, entrusting the child to someone else and not being able to accompany in their children's important moments. Some mothers said that they do not feel guilty because they give all their free time for childcare, in expense of not doing something for their personnel development.

These interviews showed that working mothers experience guilt towards their children due to their employment to some extent, and the scope of this employment guilt varies according to some personal and situational factors. As we observed that at some main points these factors and their guilt-related emotional outlooks coincide, we decided to capture those possibilities, thoughts and statements in item pool as well.

Therefore, we turned the mothers' experiences and statements into scale items adding on those items that we generated from the themes throughout the literature. We saw that what mothers had notified also corresponded to previously determined themes as well. In addition, we were able to write down reverse items as well, regarding the positive experiences working mothers had mentioned (e.g., "I am proud of myself for being a role model by being able to earn a living").

After that phase, we conducted focus group discussions with ten psychologist colleagues who are experienced in scale development and work in the field of social psychology, family psychology, and industrial psychology. We showed our item pool to them, discussed each item, and revised if necessary. That was because the items that we would test should be appropriate, accurate, and interpretable (Boateng et al., 2018). As highlighted by Devellis (2012), we needed to check for content adequacy to be sure that the items in the pool are to measure what they are supposed to measure. As a result of these processes, we developed an item pool of 68 items.

The questionnaire package including demographic questions, initial pool of 68 items, satisfaction with parenthood scale (Aycan & Eskin 2005), parent's employment guilt scale (Aycan & Eskin 2005), positive-negative affect scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen 1988) and guilt subscale of the trait shame and guilt scale (Rohleder, Chen, Wolf, & Miller, 2008) was applied to participants by means of an internet survey via snowball sampling procedure. The informed consent form including detailed information about the study was presented before the questionnaire form. Participation was totally voluntary. Participants were instructed to answer the questions considering their children's age period between 0-12. After the questionnaire was completed, participants were debriefed about the aim of the study.

## Measures

**Maternal Employment Guilt Scale (MEGS).** Participants rated 68-items initial item pool written to assess maternal employment guilt by using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*certainly does not reflect me*) to 6 (*certainly reflects me*). Higher points indicated higher maternal employment guilt. Cronbach's alpha value of the scale was found as .94.

**Satisfaction with Parenthood Scale.** Participants rated 14-items satisfaction with parenthood scale (Aycan & Eskin, 2005) assessing to what extent both mothers and fathers are satisfied in their parenthood experiences (e.g., "I believe that I meet all the needs of my child(ren)" and "Overall, I am very satisfied with my parenthood" ) by using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). One item, "I believe that I am a better father than most mothers I know", was removed from the scale, as it was an item for fathers. Higher scores indicated higher satisfaction with parenthood. Cronbach's alpha value of the scale was found as .89.

**Parents' Employment Guilt Scale.** 9-item parents' employment guilt scale (Aycan & Eskin, 2005) assessing the parents' guilt experiences due to working (e.g., "I feel guilty for going to work and leaving my children every day" and "I feel guilty for not being able to spend as much time as I wish with my children" ) was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores reflected higher employment guilt for both parents (both mothers and fathers). Cronbach's alpha value of the scale was found as .92.

**Positive-Negative Affect Scale (PANAS).** The PANAS (Watson, et al., 1988; adapted to Turkish by Gençöz, 2000) is a 20-item scale comprised of two subscales that are positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA). PA subscale measures the feelings of enthusiasm, activeness, and alertness; on the other side, NA subscale measures the feelings of anger, disgust, guilt, and fear. Participants rated the words describing different feelings using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*little or no*) to 5 (*too much*). Higher points received from PA subscale reflect a higher level of positive affect, and higher points taken from NA subscale indicate higher negative affect. Cronbach's alpha values of PA and NA subscales were both .87.

**Trait Shame and Guilt Scale (TSGS).** Participants rated 5-items trait guilt subscale of TSGS (Rohleder, et al., 2008; adapted to Turkish by Bugay & Demir, 2011) by using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not feeling this way at all*) to 5 (*feeling this way very strongly*). Higher scores indicate higher levels of guilt. Cronbach's alpha value of the subscale was found as .76.

## Result

Before the analyses, the total sample was randomly divided into two in order to form the development and a confirmation samples, with a ratio of 66-34%. Development sample ( $N = 415$ ,  $M_{age} = 36.65$ ,  $SD = 7.19$ , age range: 21-60 years) was used to develop a measurement model for the MEGS; and the confirmation sample ( $N = 190$ ,  $M_{age} = 36.59$ ,  $SD = 7.54$ , age range: 21-57 years) was utilized to confirm the cross-validity of the model (see Table 2, for descriptive statistics of the continuous variables).

Table 2

*Descriptive statistics of the continuous variables*

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Age	605	36.63	7.30
2. MEGS*	596	3.34	1.19
3. Parenthood Satisfaction	548	2.05	0.62
4. Employment Guilt	538	2.70	0.98
5. Positive Affect	532	3.42	0.73
6. Negative Affect	531	2	0.73
7. Guilt	502	2.21	0.82

*Note.* \*MEGS: Maternal employment guilt scale.

## Exploratory Factor Analysis

In this study, the minimum sample size in factor analysis was determined based on "rule of five" criterion suggesting that the subjects-to-items ratio should be no lower than five (Gorsuch, 1983; Hatcher, 1994). Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (.94) and the significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $\chi^2(105) = 3568.57$ ,  $p = .00$ ) endorsed the factorability of the initial item pool. Item

elimination was conducted in order to include only the "parsimonious, functional, and internally consistent items" into the ultimate scale and delete the ones that are not or are the least related to maternal employment guilt (Boateng et al., 2018). We conducted item elimination based on the criteria of kurtosis and skewness values of items, the Cronbach's alpha value, item-total correlations, inter-item correlations, and standardized factor loadings.

While conducting item elimination, we first checked the skewness and kurtosis of the items. Many researchers specify the acceptable limits of skewness and kurtosis for normal distribution of data are  $\pm 2$  (e.g., Field, 2000; 2009; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014; Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). We identified the items that are outside this criterion (2 items for kurtosis). Also, we took into consideration the Cronbach's alpha value rule of thumb in which scores of more than .7 is accepted; scores between .80 and .90 are stated as good, and the scores higher than .90 is evaluated as excellent. We also checked item-total correlations. Literature indicates that the corrected item-total correlation should be higher than .30 (Büyüköztürk, 2009; Pallant, 2007). We defined the items that have item-total correlation value below the value of .30 (12 items). Next, we checked the inter-item correlations. The mean inter-item correlation (MIC) is recommended as within the range of .15 to .35 for scales that measure broad constructs like extraversion and between .30 to .50 for those assessing narrower ones like test anxiety since the content of narrower domains contains items of greater similarity (see Clark & Watson, 1995; Widaman, Little, Preacher, & Sawalani, 2011, p. 469). Since maternal employment guilt can be considered as a narrower construct, we expected greater similarity among scale items and so a high MIC. Accordingly, we defined the inter-item correlation elimination criterion as .20 and .80, so we specified the items with a correlation of less than 0.20 and/or greater than 0.80 with other items. The other step for item elimination was checking for standardized factor loadings. Widaman et al. (2011) point that the MIC is directly related to the standardized factor loadings (it can be calculated by factor analyzing the item correlations). Based on Clark and Watson's (1995) guideline, Widaman et al. (2011) emphasize that "the MIC should fall between .15 and .50 means that standardized item factor loadings should vary between about .40 and .70" (p. 46). In this direction, in the factor analysis, we suppressed the items with factor loadings lower than .40.

In addition to these statistical item elimination methods, we also checked the items in terms of repetition, emotion-cognition-behavior distinction, pride-guilt distinction, and generalizability of the items for children of different ages, in order to be sure that the expressions may apply to every woman. When preparing an initial item pool, it is recommended to prepare a broader and more comprehensive list of items than one's own theoretical view of the target (Clark & Watson, 1995). Boateng et al. (2018) state that initial item pool should include the items that ultimately will be demonstrated to be "tangential or unrelated" to the construct intended to be measured. They mention that the items not fully suiting with the measured construct will already be eliminated in successive evaluations. Moving from this point, we developed a large initial item pool that includes items with the same meaning but written in different ways (e.g., "I feel guilty that I cannot meet the needs of my child when I am at work" is substitute for "I feel guilty when my child cannot reach me whenever s/he needs to, while I am at work"), items that assess cognition and behavior but not feeling (e.g., "If I didn't work, I could have helped my child's homework more"; "I think the time I spent working stole from the time I could spend with my child"; "I think I could have a stronger emotional connection with my child if I didn't work"), items that measure pride but not guilt feeling (e.g., "I am proud of myself for creating a good standard of living for my children by working"; "To be appreciated by my surroundings because I am a working mother makes me proud"), and items that are not generalizable for different ages of children

(e.g., "I feel guilty about not being able to meet my child at home when s/he comes home"). Since redundancy and incompatibility of these items have been seen in the analysis results, they were eliminated.

After the item elimination that was carried out in accordance with the above-mentioned criteria, there were 15 items left in the final scale. The MIC of these items was found as 49.7 ( $SD = 17.69$ ) that fall within the range of MIC values (between .40 to .50) suggested by Clark and Watson (1995, p. 15) for scales that measure narrower characteristics. The decrease in the item number from 68 to 15 is consistent with the literature. Boateng et al. (2018) states that "a significant amount of items can get lost during the development of a new scale", so "the initial set of items should be three or four times more numerous than the number of items desired, as a good way to ensure the internal consistency of the scale" (p. 12). To exemplify, Flight et al.'s (2011) 122-items initial item pool decreased to 43 and Pommer et al.'s (2013) 391-items initial item pool decreased 18 after item elimination process (see Boateng et al., 2018).

After this stage, to determine the number of factors underlying the 15 MEGS items, we used parallel analysis, a recommended procedure which "typically yield(s) optimal solutions to the number of components (factors) problem" (O'Connor, 2000, p. 396, those in parentheses were added). We compared the eigenvalues in our raw data to those in the randomly generated data constituted by the parallel analysis. Only the first factor from the PAF (principal axis factoring) analysis of the development sample had an eigenvalue ( $\lambda = 8.28$ ) which exceeded the upper limit of the 95% confidence interval of its random counterpart ( $\lambda = 1.34$ ). Therefore, we concluded that only a single factor underlies the 15 MEGS items.

In the light of the information received from the first PAF and parallel analyses, we conducted second PAF analysis by specifying a 1-factor solution and suppressing the items which loaded below .40 on the underlying factor (Field, 2000). Because none of the items fell behind the .40 suppression criterion, we retained all of the 15 MEGS items to construct a measurement model for the MEGS. This 1-factor solution explained 52.27% of the total variance and factor loadings ranged between .51 and .83.

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) via structural equation model (SEM) in EQS 6.1. to confirm the 1-factor structure of the 15 MEGS items observed in EFA, with the data of the confirmation sample ( $N = 190$ ). The measurement model of SEM is the CFA where the pattern of observed variables for those latent constructs in the hypothesized model is depicted (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006).

Initially, a full saturated model of SEM was employed. In this full saturated model, Mardia's normalized coefficient estimate was higher than 5 (Mardia's  $z = 15.6148$ ) indicating that there was multivariate non-normality; therefore, robust statistics should be interpreted. No special problems were encountered during optimization, enabling to interpret further. The average off-diagonal absolute standardized residual was found to be .05 which could indicate the fit between the specified model and the data. The distribution of standardized residuals indicated that 89.17% of residuals fell between the  $z$  scores of -.1 and .1, 2.50% fell between -.1 and -.2, and 8.34% fell between .1 and .3. Goodness of fit summary for robust statistics was observed and it was found that the model did not fit the data very well; Satorra-Bentler Scaled  $\chi^2(90) = 294.0149$ ,  $p = .00$ , CFI = .89, RMSEA = .11, 90% CI [0.095, 0.123]. The scale was found to be reliable ( $Rho = .940$ ). When the measurement model was considered, all of the items were loaded significantly to the latent factor of maternal employment guilt.

Our CFI value was .89, and Bentler and Bonett (1980) recommended a cutoff of CFI as .90 for some incremental fit indices. Accordingly, based on the post-hoc modification suggestion of Lagrange multiplier (LM) test, we correlated the errors of item 3 and 8.<sup>1</sup> After this modification was employed, the model gave a better fit whereby the new model fit the data enough to exceed this cutoff; Satorra-Bentler Scaled  $\chi^2$  (89) = 251.5172,  $p = .00$ , CFI = .909, RMSEA = .098, 90% CI [0.084, 0.112],  $Rho = .935$ . Regarding the distribution of standardized residuals, 88.33% of standardized residuals fell between the z scores of -.1 and .1, 2.5% between -.1 and -.2, and 9.17% between .1 and .3. When the measurement model of this first modified model was considered, all the items were loaded significantly to the latent factor of maternal employment guilt. Table 3 indicates the standardized factor loadings and squared multiple correlations for the 1-factor CFA model of the 15 MEGS items for the development and confirmation samples, as well as the modified model.

Although further modifications were suggested by the Lagrange Multiplier test in our data; we decided to conclude the modifications at this step based on the suggestions to stop employing further modifications just based on fit indices if the modifications are not theoretically and practically plausible (see e.g., Bentler, 2007; MacCallum, 1995).

Table 3

*Completely Standardized CFA Factor Loadings and Squared Multiple Correlations of MEGS Items*

Scale Item <sup>2</sup>	$\lambda$			$R^2$		
	Dev.	Conf.	Mod.	Dev.	Conf.	Mod.
1. I feel guilty of leaving my child at home without me while I am at work.	.83	.81	.82	.69	.46	.68
2. Sharing my child's responsibility with others (e.g., grandmother, babysitter, kindergarten, etc.) because I work makes me feel guilty.	.82	.87	.88	.67	.76	.78
3. It makes me guilty that I only have time to meet just the basic care needs of my child.	.80	.82	.80	.65	.68	.64
4. I feel guilty about working in the face of the negativities that have happened to my child.	.80	.84	.85	.64	.71	.72
5. I feel guilty when I see mothers who spend more time with their children than I do with my child.	.79	.78	.78	.63	.60	.61

1 This means that the unexplained variances of these variables are correlated. It is suggested that researchers should not do this to increase the fit index unless there is a theoretical explanation for doing this for these variables in structural equation models (Brown, 2015). When we looked at these two items ("It makes me guilty that I only have time to meet just the basic care needs of my child" and "Having to plan my time for my child according to my work's allowance makes me feel guilty"), here it seems that there is an external time pressure component which might have an impact on these items. Therefore, we think that the availability of flexible times might be a possible variable that should be considered in future studies about maternal employment guilt.

2 The data was collected in Turkish. Yet, for the ease of future researchers, the items are translated to English though they were not tested in any sample. The English translation of items were done by the authors of MEGS and another social psychologist; then backtranslation was done by an independent bilingual person. In cases of discrepancies, the intended meaning of items were discussed and consensus was made accordingly.

6. Considering not being able to balance motherhood and employee roles makes me feel guilty.	.78	.74	.74	.61	.55	.55
7. I feel guilty for not finding enough time to play with my child.	.78	.78	.74	.60	.60	.55
8. Having to plan my time for my child according to my work's allowance makes me feel guilty.	.77	.77	.77	.59	.59	.60
9. Being at work makes me feel guilty when my child is need and I cannot be there for him/her.	.77	.82	.82	.59	.68	.68
10. I feel guilty towards my child for complaining about my maternal responsibilities when I am busy.	.70	.63	.63	.48	.39	.39
11. I feel guilty when my child cannot reach me whenever s/he needs to, while I am at work.	.68	.68	.68	.46	.46	.46
12. The fact that sometimes after work I cannot even tolerate my child's voice makes me feel guilty.	.61	.47	.46	.37	.22	.21
13. At times that I cannot even show the patience to my child as I can show to people at work makes me feel guilty.	.57	.59	.58	.32	.35	.33
14. It makes me feel guilty when my mind is full of work-related things while I am spending time with my child.	.54	.63	.56	.29	.39	.31
15. Hearing things from people around me regarding me not being a good mother because I am working makes me feel guilty.	.51	.49	.48	.26	.24	.23

Note. Dev. = Development sample ( $N = 405$ ); Conf. = Confirmation sample ( $N = 190$ ); Mod. = Modified model for confirmation sample;  $\lambda$  = completely standardized factor loading;  $R^2$  = squared multiple correlation coefficient or the proportion of variance that the CFA model explains in each MEGS item ( $R^2$  for development sample corresponds to communalities in EFA).

### Validity studies of the MEGS

The content validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the MEGS were examined for the pooled sample of participants ( $N = 605$ ).

According to Büyüköztürk (2004), *content validity* refers to the extent that items of a scale is enough qualitatively and quantitatively to capture the theme in interest. In this study, concerning the multi-facetedness of our topic, the content validity was assured by the subject matter experts who are experienced in scale development and from different sub-areas of psychology (i.e., social, developmental, industrial, cognitive, and clinical psychology). We showed our results to the same expert judges that we worked with during the item pool development phase. Eliminating the items from 68 into 15 was also discussed with these expert judges to assure content validity. This approach is called Delphi Method suggested by Linstone and Turoff (1975) to come to a consensus on the items about whether they

reflect the construct we want to measure. That is, it is a technique "for structuring group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem" (as cited in Boateng, et al., 2018, p. 7). Indeed, we realized that the items we deleted were *related* to guilt but not *itself per se*. For instance, some of were items capturing pride, regret, and embarrassment (e.g., "I can spare enough time for my child(ren) although I am working", "I have pangs of conscience that if I had the opportunity I wouldn't be working", "I feel embarrassed when I need to ask for help from my husband because I am working" which are the other self-conscious neighbor emotions to guilt (Tangney et al., 2007; Tangney & Tracy, 2011), whereas some of the items were statements of hardship that induce guilt (e.g., "The hours I spend at work prevent me from having a close relationship with my child"), or competencies that prevent guilt (e.g., "As a working mother I look stronger in the eyes of my child") and incompetencies that provoke guilt (e.g., "I am exhausted with the feelings of inadequacy while striving for being successful in both motherhood and working life"). As a result, removing these items from the scale would make the scale more content valid.

Besides, the 15 items seem to correspond the maternal guilt themes of Seagram & Daniluk (2002) and McDonald et al. (2005). Specifically, items 1 and 2 tap into complete responsibility, 7 and 15 tap into inadequacy, 8, 13 and 14 tap into putting the child first, 3 and 4 tap into concern about harm and desire for positive impact, and 10 and 12 tap into depletion. This is not to mean that these are the subscales of MEGS, as it is obvious that these items can overlap more than one theme. Rather, this is to show that the content of MEGS items covered the themes specified in the literature under one single factor structure; implying its content validity.

In addition to content validity, the correlations with MEGS and parents' employment guilt scale, satisfaction from parenthood scale, PANAS, and trait guilt scale-guilt subscale were investigated to examine the convergent validity and discriminant validity of the MEGS (see Table 3, for correlations between MEGS and other scales).

Table 4

*Correlations between MEGS and other measures*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Parenthood Satisfaction	–					
2. Employment Guilt	-.56**	–				
3. Positive Affect	.53**	-.29**	–			
4. Negative Affect	-.48**	.50**	-.31**	–		
5. Guilt	-.47**	.45**	-.32**	.62**	–	
6. MEGS	-.59**	.85**	-.33**	.49**	.47**	–

Note.\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Missing values were excluded pairwise.

Convergent validity is the extent that multiple attempts to measure the same concept are in agreement; denoting the idea that if two or more measures of the same thing are valid measures of that concept, they should covary highly (Bagozzi, Yi, & Phillips, 1991). MEGS's significant positive correlations with parents' employment guilt ( $r = .85$ ) and significant negative correlation with satisfaction from parenthood ( $r = -.59$ ) provide support that MEGS has convergent validity.

Discriminant validity was to some extent salient for correlations of MEGS with negative affect ( $r = .49$ ) and positive affect ( $r = -.33$ ). Although these correlations were not quite low or insignificant as desired, they were relatively lower than those associations given for convergent. However, another

conceptualization of discriminant validity requires that the measure should be able to discriminate between different groups of participants. In accordance, for testing discriminant validity of the MEGS, we conducted extreme group comparisons. For this, participants were ordered based on the scores they obtained from the MEGS. The top and bottom 27% groups were taken and their scores on study variables were compared with t-test analysis. Wiersma and Jurs (1990) stated that "27% is used because it has shown that this value will maximize differences in normal distributions while providing enough cases for analysis" (p. 145). The comparisons between the top and bottom groups including 326 participants demonstrated that people in these extreme groups scored significantly different in positive affect [ $t(274) = 7.08, p < .05$ , Cohen's  $d = .84$ ], negative affect [ $t(274) = -10.47, p < .05$ , Cohen's  $d = 1.26$ ] and trait guilt affect [ $t(262) = -10.60, p < .05$ , Cohen's  $d = 1.30$ ]. Specifically, participants at the top 27% of the MEGS scale reported significantly lower positive affect ( $M = 3.13, SD = .78$ ), higher negative affect ( $M = 2.46, SD = .79$ ) and trait guilt ( $M = 2.67, SD = .84$ ) compared to those at the bottom 27% of the MEGS scale ( $M = 3.73, SD = .64$ ;  $M = 1.58, SD = .59$ ;  $M = 1.70, SD = .64$ , respectively). These results supported the discriminating impact of maternal employment guilt in terms of positive and negative affect and trait guilt.

## Discussion

Maternal guilt is seen as a natural and common element of motherhood (Seagram & Daniluk, 2002; Sutherland, 2010a, 2010b). Women feel guilty when they do not abide by the intensive maternity mandate that "a good mother puts housework and parenting before her personal and professional aspirations" because of their work (Martínez, et al., 2011, p. 819). The ideal or perfect motherhood concept is a contradiction with the reality of employed mothers (Sutherland, 2010a, 2010b). Despite considerable media attention and asserted links to negative effects, mothers' employment guilt and its effects on mothers and children remained understudied by empirical research. The lack of a psychometrically strong multi-item instrument measuring mothers' employment guilt may be considered as a reason for this deficiency in the literature. Accordingly, in this study, we aimed to develop a reliable and valid instrument to measure mothers' employment guilt. In order to serve this purpose, MEGS was developed based on the data collected from 605 employed mothers from diverse backgrounds in Turkey. The exploratory factor analysis suggested a one-factor structure for the MEGS, and this structure was confirmed by the confirmatory factor analysis.

The MEGS was found as internally consistent and had adequate psychometric characteristics with content, convergent, and discriminant validity. The MEGS items were in the same direction with the maternal guilt themes emphasized by Seagram and Daniluk (2002). Specifically, the MEGS was considered as content valid since it includes items focusing on the sense of complete responsibility and sense of ownership for children (e.g., item 5, item 2); strong desire to have a positive impact on the children's lives (e.g., item 7); sense of profound connection to the children (e.g., 11); the concern about the children might come to harm (e.g., item 4); sense of depletion (e.g., item 13); and sense of inadequacy (e.g., item 6). Moreover, the MEGS's positive and high correlation with the employment guilt scale (Aycaan & Eskin, 2005); and negative correlation with the satisfaction with parenthood scale (Aycaan & Eskin, 2005) supported the convergent and discriminant validity of the MEGS, respectively. MEGS was also shown to have discriminant validity as it was able to discriminate between mothers who are high or low in employment guilt on the measures of positive and negative affect and trait guilt. To conclude, in the current study, one-factor MEGS was shown to be a psychometrically valid measure to assess mothers' employment guilt among Turkish mothers from various sectors and positions.

### Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

The findings of the study should be interpreted by considering the following limitations. First, the MEGS was developed and confirmed in a sample of employed mothers from Turkey, so limiting the cross-cultural generalizability of results. Specifically, the results supported by the data collected from the collectivist Turkish culture with powerful social ties (Hofstede, 2001; İmamoğlu, & Küller, 1993) may be different from the results of those from more individualistic cultures. Indeed, there are studies that some of the emotions and their expressions might differ according to cultures due to the categorization of emotions (i.e., Russel, 1991). However, there are other findings showing that normative beliefs regarding motherhood in individualistic cultures (e.g., Australia, Hofstede, 2001) resemble those in more collectivist cultures (e.g., Turkey) (see McDonald, et al., 2005); still, future studies are needed to confirm the cross-cultural generalizability of MEGS and its validity in other cultures. For instance, it might evoke interest to see whether there is a difference between mothers from different countries in terms of to what extent they experience maternal employment guilt. There might be contextual differences considering the countries where parental leave is provided to fathers as well (e.g., Canada), or social welfare policies cover childcare aid facilities (e.g., US), and where women are traditionally responsible from both their child's care and elderly care for their parents-in-laws in addition to their contemporary work life responsibility (e.g., India).

Further, within culture variation also needs to be considered. For instance, İmamoğlu and Karakitapoğlu-Aygün (2006) showed that it is the ideal and expected relatedness that differs across Turkish and American samples, but that these two groups were similar in terms of their actual relatedness with their parents, and that they showed considerable in-group variation in terms of self-types and value orientations; indicating a cross-cultural similarity and within-culture diversity. MEGS is believed to be sensitive to within cultural differences, because the sample of this study was composed of employed mothers from notably different occupations (e.g., cleaner, professor, engineer, manager, insurance consultant, lawyer, and babysitter); varied income levels, ages, marital status; and having different numbers of child(ren)<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, the sample in this study offers generalizable results for various populations within Turkey; that is, the items for scale developments were tested on a heterogeneous sample, so that the range of the target population is reflected and captured (Clark & Watson, 1995). MEGS can be considered as able to assess mothers' employment guilt in a reliable and valid manner among mothers from different demographic characteristics living in Turkey and presumably mothers from different countries or cultures.

Another point of consideration is that the data was collected by means of an internet survey. This may limit the representativeness of the findings, as the findings might not be representative of employed mothers not using the internet. At the expense of this drawback, we preferred the internet to collect

3 To illustrate within culture differences in our sample, we compared maternal employment guilt levels of mothers from different socioeconomic status (SES). For this, the participants (605) were divided into three in terms of income (not individual salary but income as a household) according to the percentile cut off level. The SES was set as low for those earning less than 3.000 TL, as medium for those earning between 3.001-5.000 TL, and as high for those earning more than 5.001 TL. This cutoffs were also consistent with the poverty threshold determined by the Minimum Wage Assessment Commission of employee-employer-government representatives in Turkey. This consistency between the official threshold and our sample's SES distribution can also be considered as another external validity point, as our sample well represented/resembled the *de facto* SES indication in Turkey. One-way ANOVA results indicated that lower SES women ( $M = 3.59$ ) experience more MEG than high SES women ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and slightly more MEG than medium SES women ( $M = 3.31$ ,  $p = .058$ ). However, there was no significant difference between medium and high SES women in terms of their maternal guilt specific to being employed. This highlights how being able to afford, for instance, a full-time nanny or private day care intuition, might have an impact on maternal employment guilt.

data because it provides greater sample diversity, easier access and convenience, lower costs, and time investment (Benfield & Szlemko, 2006). To better inform policy interventions, paper-pencil forms or other-medium versions of this scale can be employed for low educated working mothers as well. Additionally, participants of this study have a high level of education (69.6% have at least undergraduate degree). Although in literature parent's educational attainment was not found as significantly associated with work-family or work-interfering with family guilt (see Borelli et al., 2017), future studies may investigate in detail whether there are differences in guilt perception among women from different educational backgrounds.

Another point to be considered is participants' preference for working. In this study, among half of the participants (48.4% in the development sample and 48.9% in the confirmation sample) reported that working is totally their own choice. The feelings of women who have to work (for example, being the sole income provider of the family) or who work without a financial obligation may differ. Future studies may focus on this issue and may ask if the mother is the only income provider of the family.

Other possible limitation may be the large age range limitation. Before mothers started to answer the survey questions, they were asked to answer questions by considering their child(ren)'s age range of 0-12. Considering children have different needs in each age, and responsibilities of parents change based on these differences in needs, the age range of 0-12 might be evaluated as a large range. Indeed, we found that as the age of first child increased, maternal employment guilt decreased ( $r = -.14, p < .01$ ). Though a small correlation, we think that future studies can focus on certain age periods of children and collect data from mothers to assess whether those with children in a specific age periods with different childcare support systems as well (e.g., when with full-time nannies, or when grandparents are actively involved) feel less guilt than others. Another important point to consider is maternal employment guilt may vary according to the age of children. In this study, the ages of one-child mothers were as follows: 53% of the children were between 0-3 ages; 26% were between 4-6 ages; 11% were between 7-12 ages; and 10% were more than 13 years. ANOVA analysis results showed no difference in maternal employment guilt based on children's age in this study ( $p = .31$ ). Current studies in the literature have examined the maternal employment issue for only the specific ages of children (see for example, Desai, Chase-Lansdale & Michael, 1989; Rotkirch & Janhunen, 2010, Ruhm, 2004). However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no research on the mother's employment guilt based on children of different age groups. Results of future studies focusing on this topic will make a significant contribution to the literature.

The last limitation may be the nature of the data. As we collected data cross-sectionally and only from mothers, the predictive validity of the MEGS could not be determined. Hence, future research may investigate the effects of mothers' employment guilt on mothers, children, fathers, and employers by using cross-sequential and/or longitudinal data. Besides, dyadic or multi-source assessment can give further elaborations of the construct; these might be the attachment quality of mother-child relationship, retrospective evaluations of grown-up children of working mothers about their childhood experiences, whether the fathers push mothers to work or to quit the job, to what extent paternal involvement exist in childcare, how performance evaluations (positively or negatively) can be influenced by or biased before and after motherhood status of an employee, and how the daily fear of success or job performance anxiety might be associated with maternal employment guilt.

With these limitations, this study has contributed to the current literature by developing the psychometrically strong MEGS. By taking into the limitations of this study, future researchers can use MEGS in order to examine this phenomenon in depth and to see its relation with other variables.

## Conclusions and Implications

In the current study, we developed the MEGS as a measure of mother's employment guilt. Empirical evidence supported the strong psychometric characteristics of MEGS, suggesting that it can be used to assess employment guilt of mothers. Considering the potential negative effects of shame-infused guilt on people (e.g., Tangney et al., 2007), measuring guilty feelings among employed women with an adequate instrument can help researchers to explore its nature and relation with other phenomena. That is, the further associates of maternal employment guilt should be assessed to investigate to see whether it is purely other-oriented moral emotion. As mentioned earlier, "I *did* a very bad thing to my child by working" can easily convert into "I *am* a very bad mother, because I am working". We believe that developing this scale can be the necessary step to start tracking such an overwhelming situation for mothers who are working or who are afraid of working. Moreover, the research findings may alert policymakers about the possible negative effects of the guilty feelings on mothers and children and encourage them to take some precautions to deal with this reality. To say, contrary to many past deficit models of interventions which assume that mothers' decreased physical and psychological health are rooted in their changing biological/hormonal modes or which relate their emotional hassles to alleged inherent vulnerabilities and weaknesses of women. This study proposes a shift in focus (Walls, 2007). For example, the link between lower SES mothers to greater maternal employment guilt is a critical one because it suggests the role of social and economic aspects (childcare facilities, financial aids, equal pay for equal job, etc.) associated with being an employed mother.

Therefore, by maintaining a balanced perspective between supporting women as individuals in addition to supporting their roles as mothers, future research can explore the antecedents and consequences of maternal employment guilt using the scale we validated in this research. Future research can also evaluate the effectiveness of any related intervention in terms of its impact on the well-being of the employed mother. To illustrate one example for future studies, we found that women who did not feel sense of choice in their life and who reported less awareness about themselves were experiencing more maternal employment guilt, and less job satisfaction. On the other hand, the more women report that working is their *own decision* (not because they *have to* work), the more life satisfaction they have (Kantas, Yuce-Selvi, & Adachi, manuscript in progress). Such studies using MEGS might help to identify creative reparative paths in overcoming problematic guilt (Tangney et al., 2007), instead of the one-way path for women towards quitting their career or continue working with painful guilt.

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## APPENDIX A

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1. Ben isteyken, çocuğumun evde bensiz olmasından dolayı suçlu hissediyorum.
  2. Çalıştığım için çocuğumun sorumluluğunu başkalarıyla (örn., nine, bakıcı, kreş vb.) paylaşmak beni suçlu hissettiriyor.
  3. Çocuğumun, ancak temel bakım ihtiyaçlarını karşılayacak kadar vakit bulabilmek beni suçlu hissettiriyor.
  4. Çocuğumun başına gelen olumsuzluklar karşısında keşke çalışmasaydım diye suçluluk yaşıyorum.
  5. Çocuğunun yanında benden daha çok bulunabilen anneleri gördükçe suçluluk duyuyorum.
  6. Çalışan rolü ile annelik rolünü dengeleyemediğimi düşündüğüm için suçluluk hissediyorum.
  7. Çocuğumla oyun oynayacak vakit bulamamaktan dolayı suçluluk duyuyorum.
  8. Çocuğuma ayırdığım zamanı, işimin verdiği saatlere göre planlamak beni suçlu hissettiriyor.
  9. Çocuğumun bir şeye ihtiyacı olduğunda, işte olduğum için onun yakınında olamamak bana suçluluk veriyor.
  10. Yoğun olduğum zamanlarda annelik sorumluluklarımla ilgili şikâyet ettiğim için kendimi çocuğuma karşı suçlu hissediyorum.
  11. Ben çalışırken, çocuğum istediği her an bana ulaşamadığı için kendimi suçlu hissediyorum.
  12. Bazen, iş dönüşü çocuğumun sesine bile tahammül edemeyecek halde olmanın suçluluğunu duyuyorum.
  13. İş yerinde başkalarına gösterdiğim sabrı, çocuğuma gösteremediğimi düşündüğüm zamanlarda suçluluk duyuyorum.
  14. Çocuğumla birlikte zaman geçirirken, aklımın işle ilgili şeylerle dolu olması, bana kendimi suçlu hissettiriyor.
  15. Etrafımdan, çalıştığım için iyi bir anne olmadığımı dair şeyler duymak beni çocuğuma karşı suçlu hissettiriyor.
-