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Background

- Parents of children with developmental disabilities (DD) may receive social support from various sources (e.g. extended family, friends, neighbours, religious groups, child's grandparents)
- Social support is an important factor in mental health and well-being in caregivers of children with DD
 - It has been shown to be related to lower parental stress (e.g., Trute et al., 2008)
- However, parents sometimes view their social networks as a burden and source of stress (Hastings, 1997)
- The Family Support Scale (Dunst, Jenkins, & Trivette, 2007), a commonly used measure of social support, does not allow participants to indicate that their social network made parenting more difficult

Purpose and Research Questions

- For the GO4KIDDS Survey, we developed a Brief Measure of Social Support which attempts to bridge this gap but the scoring of such a measure is not straightforward
- Purpose: to explore three different coding schemes for the GO4KIDDS Brief Measure of Social Support

Method

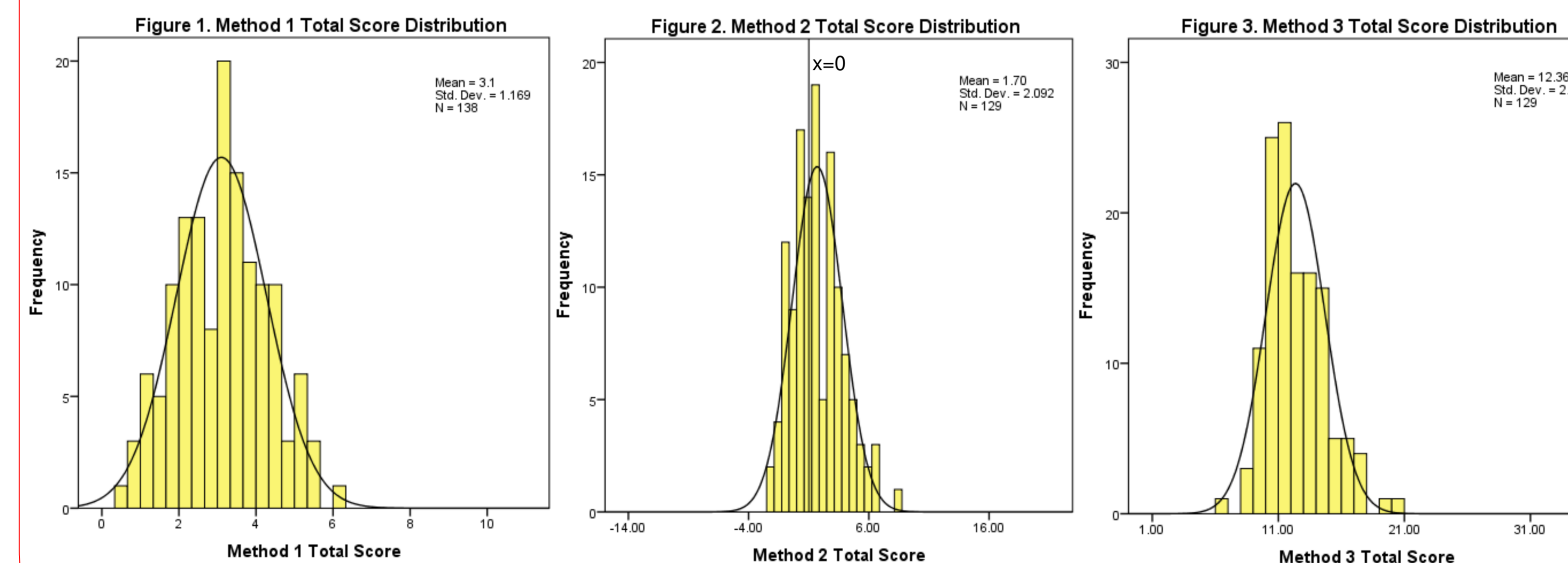
- GO4KIDDS is an ongoing research project examining the health, wellbeing and social inclusion of children with severe DD
- The **GO4KIDDS Brief Measure of Social Support**, found in the Extended Survey, includes questions on 7 sources of social support (parents, in-laws, extended family, work friends, neighbours, religious/cultural groups, other friends):
 - Availability: *Are they nearby?* (Yes or No)
 - Frequency of support: *How often do you see them?* (from 1 "Almost never" to 5 "Every day")
 - Helpfulness of support: *How helpful are they?* (1="Make it more difficult", 2="Not helpful", 3="Somewhat or sometimes helpful", 4="Very helpful", 5="Extremely helpful, I depend on them")
- Participants
 - $n=212$ caregivers of children with DD
 - Age: 27 to 61 ($m=43.80$, $SD=6.94$)
 - The majority of children ($n=126$, 59%) had an Autism Spectrum Disorder

Scoring Methods

- **Method 1: Sum** (Range: 0 to 11.2)
 - The frequency and helpfulness ratings are summed for each support source
- **Method 2: Product** (Range: -14 to +21)
 - Helpfulness ratings are recoded to range from -2 ("Make it more difficult") to +3 ("Extremely helpful, I depend on them")
 - Recoded helpfulness scores are multiplied by the frequency scores for each support source
- **Method 3: Ordinal Scale** (Range: 1 to 35)
 - All possible combinations of frequency and helpfulness ratings were combined into an ordinal scale ranging from 1 ("Lowest Social Support") to 25 ("Highest Social Support")
- Total scores were calculated by taking the mean of the scores for all 7 social support sources
- Excluded participants with less than 5 sources of social support

Results

- Total scores for all 3 scoring methods are approximately normally distributed (see Figures 1, 2, and 3)



- Internal consistency for Methods 1, 2, and 3 was $\alpha=.53$, $.35$, and $.38$, respectively

Discussion

- All item-total correlations for all three methods are significant (see Table 1)
- Method 1 had the best distribution and the highest internal consistency (but still not high enough)
- The three scoring methods were significantly correlated with one another; Methods 2 and 3 had the greatest correlation
- The results of this study suggest a need for an operational definition of social support for caregivers of children with DD; future research could explore each support source separately to address the low alphas
- We invite your feedback on other methods of scoring this measure

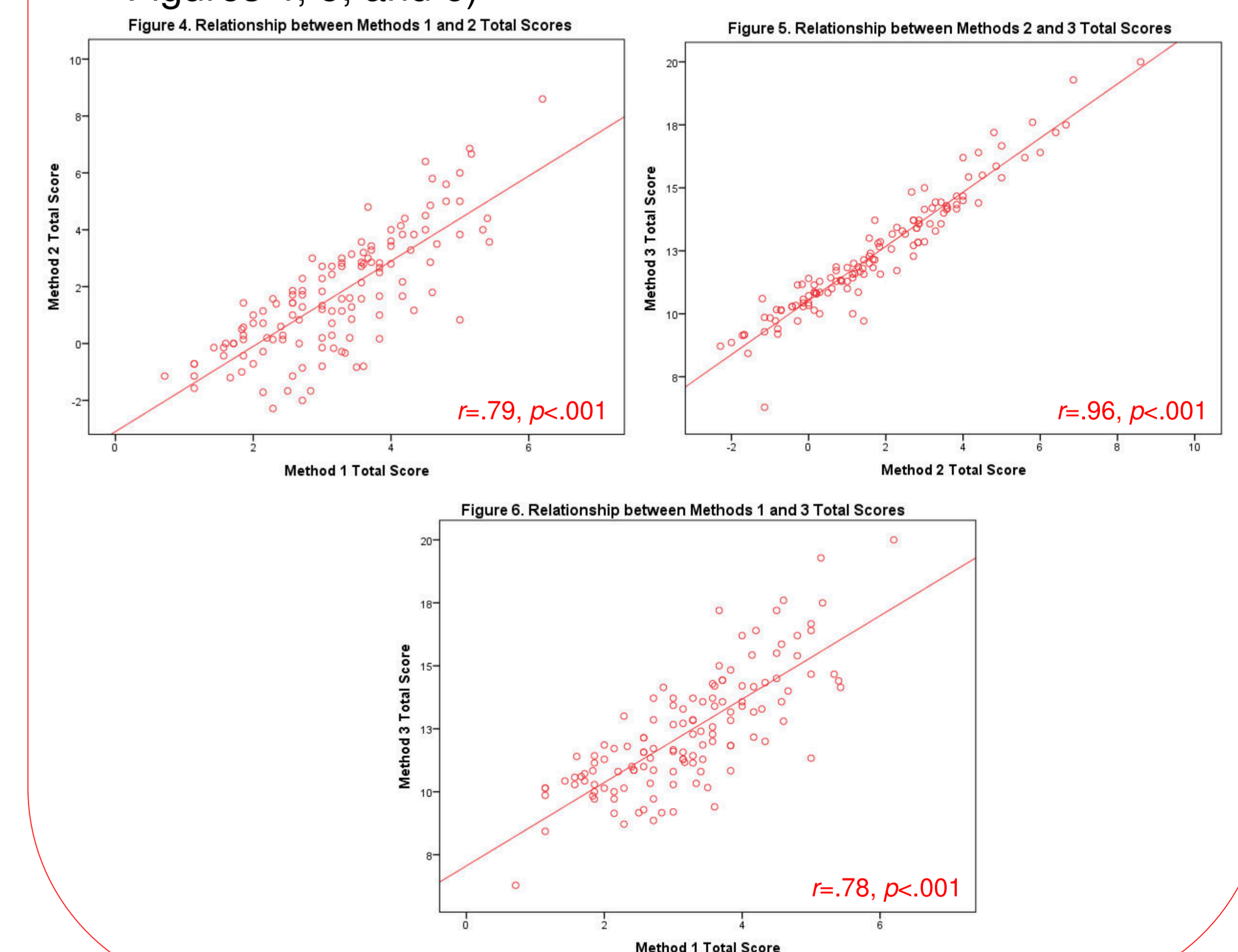
Results, Cont.

Table 1. Item-Total Correlations for All 3 Methods

	Parents	In-Laws	Extended Family	Work Friends	Neigh- bours	Religious/ Cultural Groups	Other Friends
Method 1 Total Score	.46*	.55*	.64*	.61*	.61*	.63*	.54*
Method 2 Total Score	.48*	.43*	.54*	.42*	.67*	.43*	.47*
Method 3 Total Score	.49*	.44*	.56*	.43*	.68*	.38*	.49*

Note: * $p < .001$

- Correlations between the three scoring methods (see Figures 4, 5, and 6)



Acknowledgments

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(www.go4kidds.ca)