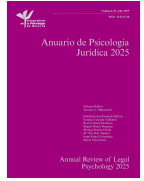




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Scoping Review of the Scientific Production on Parenting Coordination

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A B S T R A C T

The aim of this study is to find out, through a review of the existing literature, the state of development and implementation of the figure of the parenting coordinator in those countries that have opted to seek more efficient methods for families that have been exposed to situations of high conflict after the breakup, as well as to determine the effectiveness of this type of action. The search for articles was carried out through the WOS database between 2008 and 2023 following the PRISMA method. The results focus on conceptual, legal and applied aspects, highlighting the effectiveness of these interventions at a legal level and in the reduction of conflict. It can be concluded that parental coordination is taking its place in family intervention in a judicial context, making it necessary for further empirical research, especially in Spain, in order to advance its implementation as an effective method.

Revisión bibliográfica de la producción científica sobre la coordinación de la parentalidad

R E S U M E N

El objetivo del presente estudio es conocer, a través de la revisión de las publicaciones, el estado del desarrollo e implantación de la figura del coordinador de la parentalidad en los países que han optado por buscar métodos más eficaces para las familias expuestas a situaciones muy conflictivas tras la ruptura, así como determinar la eficacia de este tipo de actuaciones. La búsqueda de los artículos se ha realizado por medio de la base de datos WOS entre los años 2008-2023 siguiendo el método PRISMA. Los resultados se centran en aspectos conceptuales, legales y aplicados, destacando la eficacia de estas intervenciones a nivel jurídico y en la reducción de la conflictividad. Todo ello permite concluir que la coordinación de la parentalidad va ocupando un lugar en la intervención familiar en contextos judicializados, siendo necesaria para aumentar su implantación como método eficaz más investigación empírica, especialmente en España.

There is currently a large body of literature on divorce and its effect on children. Dale (2014) emphasises the importance of considering the interests of children, especially when in these contentious disputes parents may neglect the best interests of children, impacting on their psychological health as well as on the way they relate to each other affectively, involving children through different behaviours that seek to use the child as a confidant (Arch et al. 2024; Saini & Birnbaum 2007) or as responsible for poor relationships between parents that have led to parental divorce, among other behaviours (Arch et al., 2024). Contentious proceedings “do not meet the needs of many reorganising families” (Kourlis et al., p. 362, cited in Dale, 2014), as the needs of these families usually far exceed what courts, mediators, and other professionals can realistically do. The author also questions whether children are listened to in these cases because many are still exposed to the toxic effect of the parental conflict. The

author reflects on what the court should do as a trustee and protector of children living in high-conflict families.

Anderson et al. (2019) and Anderson et al. (2020) note the lack of interest of some parents in resolving these conflict situations when referred to therapy, with somewhat high drop-out rates, although it is not certain that this is solely due to a lack of therapist skills. While the therapeutic alliance is necessary when trying to help couples immersed in high conflict, motivation for change in the parents is also essential.

When there is cooperation between parents after the break up, focusing on the needs of their children, it is the parents themselves who report a more positive sense of shared parenting and perceive it as a protective factor for the family. When there is greater exposure to conflict, it often leads to exhaustion and lack of support, with great difficulties in exercising their parental role, which affects

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the relationship between parents and between parents and their children (Lamela et al., 2013; Lamela et al., 2016). In this regard, it may be of great interest to develop tools to identify those divorces with a high probability of judicialisation, as would be the case of the Questionnaire for Predicting the Judicialisation of Family Relations (C-JUDIFA) by Martín-González et al. (2023) in the Spanish context.

These families often take their conflict to the judicial sphere with the aim of getting the court to agree with them so that these situations lead to a fight, where frequently one of them fails to comply with the measures or court rulings, trapping their children in the conflict. In addition to the psychosocial damage to those involved, all this causes great frustration for the professionals who attend to them, and for this reason various methods have been sought to help them, with parental coordination being described as the most appropriate in these circumstances.

Capdevila et al. (2020) point out the pressure felt by the courts of justice to respond to a large number of cases of families in a situation of high conflict, which is why parental coordination is often of interest and has judicial support. Highlighting the importance of this figure to deal with cases that require a more psycho-emotional than judicial response, protecting the most vulnerable in situations of high conflict after separation or divorce, which are the children.

The most commonly cited definition of Parenting Coordination is the one established by the Association of Families and Conciliation Courts (AFCC Task Force on Parenting Coordination, 2005):

Parenting coordination is a child-centred alternative dispute resolution process whereby a mental health or legal professional with training and experience in mediation assists high-conflict parents to implement their parenting plan, helping them to resolve their disputes in a timely manner, educating them about their rights and responsibilities, and educating them about their rights and responsibilities, helping them to resolve their disputes promptly, educating them about their children's needs and – subject to the consent of the parties and/or the court – making decisions based on the terms and conditions set out in the court decision, or by the agreement appointing the parenting coordinator.

According to the authors, it has been considered a new professional role (Rodríguez-Domínguez & Carbonell, 2014), as a function (Amundson & Lux, 2016), or as a tool for conflict pacification, an auxiliary figure of the court to protect the best interests of children and adolescents (Vázquez et al., 2018).

It emerged in the 1990s in the USA, was subsequently introduced in Canada, and then in Spain thanks to the judgments of Judge Pascual Ortuño in the Provincial Court of Barcelona in 2013, after which projects were implemented to promote the implementation of this figure (Capdevila et al., 2020; Vázquez et al., 2018).

As pointed out by (Pérez, 2019), its introduction in Spain is based on the experiences of North American countries, following the guidelines of the AFCC and the APA. For this, an adaptation to the particularities of Spanish law is needed; in the absence of clear regulations, different Spanish regions have taken steps towards the necessary adaptation, firstly by training professionals and subsequently by implementing pilot programmes.

The guidelines that the AFCC established in 2005 and updated in 2019 were translated and adapted to the Spanish reality by the parental coordination working group of the Official Association of Psychology of Catalonia (COPC) in 2020.

For many psychosocial professionals, there is no doubt about the need for parental coordinators, and this is also suggested by legal professionals, who point out the frustration of not having adequate measures to alleviate the effects of high levels of conflict on families that separate, although everything must be done with caution, not to fall into haste (Ortuño, 2013a, 2013b, 2014; Pérez, 2019; Vázquez et al., 2018). An extremely important aspect is the need to seek children's welfare, which is sufficient justification for this type of intervention.

However, even so, it is necessary that this implementation lasts over time, in addition to reaching a consensus and establishing protocols regarding roles, functions, objectives, education and training, referral, intervention, and evaluation of results, aspects that the Forum of Experts for the Development of Parental Coordination (Rosales et al., 2019) has focused on in Spain.

Intervention in parental coordination does not ensure complete success, but any minimal progress and resolution of conflicts between parents serves to promote this type of intervention (Pérez, 2019). Zafra (2019) points out some of the advantages of having a parenting coordinator to help families experiencing conflict situations after the break up, such as the reduction of waiting time, which is usually longer in the courts, the attempt to give them back their own responsibility in the issues that affect them through the work with this coordinator, which only in the case of not being able to opt for this measure consensus is sought. Recommendations are made to the court, justifying each of the contributions they can make. It is also important to take the cases that are suitable for parental coordination into account and the cases that, despite being highly conflictive, are not suitable for this type of intervention. D'Abate (2013) lists the typology of cases that are susceptible to referral to parenting coordination, including inability to make joint decisions, conflictive relationships, lack of trust, poor communication, possible interference in the parent-child relationship, and lack of parenting skills.

Sometimes it is the lawyers themselves and the judge, as well as the expert, school, and health reports, who perceive these problems and how they affect the children, but there are also situations that require more caution when referring due to the possible negative implications for any of the members of the family, such as the existence of signs of abuse, neglect or violence, personality or mental health disorders, as well as substance abuse that makes them unable to exercise their parental functions properly and that would entail the suspension or supervision of the relationship with the children if they are pending assessment or sentence for any of these situations (AFCC Task Force on Parenting Coordination, 2019; Echeburúa & Muñoz, 2016).

In addition to the nuclear family, parental coordination may include other close family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, and new partners, among others), an important and necessary part of current family relationships (Belcher-Timme et al., 2013).

Regarding the issues that are worked on, Fieldstone et al. (2012) identify communication, conflict resolution, adaptation to new family situations, and, above all, understanding and working to focus on the needs of their children and not on their own interests, which are often entangled in the conflict, as well as coordination with other professionals if necessary.

These interventions are often lengthy, with the consequent emotional and economic costs, although when the objectives set are achieved time is the least of the problems; in addition, many of these families are accustomed to using a lot of time and energy on their conflicts, without reaching solutions, especially with regard to the children (Pérez, 2019).

One of the most important aspects of parental coordination is to assess its effectiveness. For the time being, we have at our disposal studies from countries with extensive experience in parental coordination, although we also have results from some pilot programmes, and it is expected that in the near future we will have research on the results in our country.

In view of the above, the aim of this study is to find out, through a review of the existing literature, the state of development and implementation of the figure of the parenting coordinator in those countries that have opted to seek more efficient methods for families that have been exposed to situations of high conflict after the break up, as well as to determine the effectiveness of this type of action.

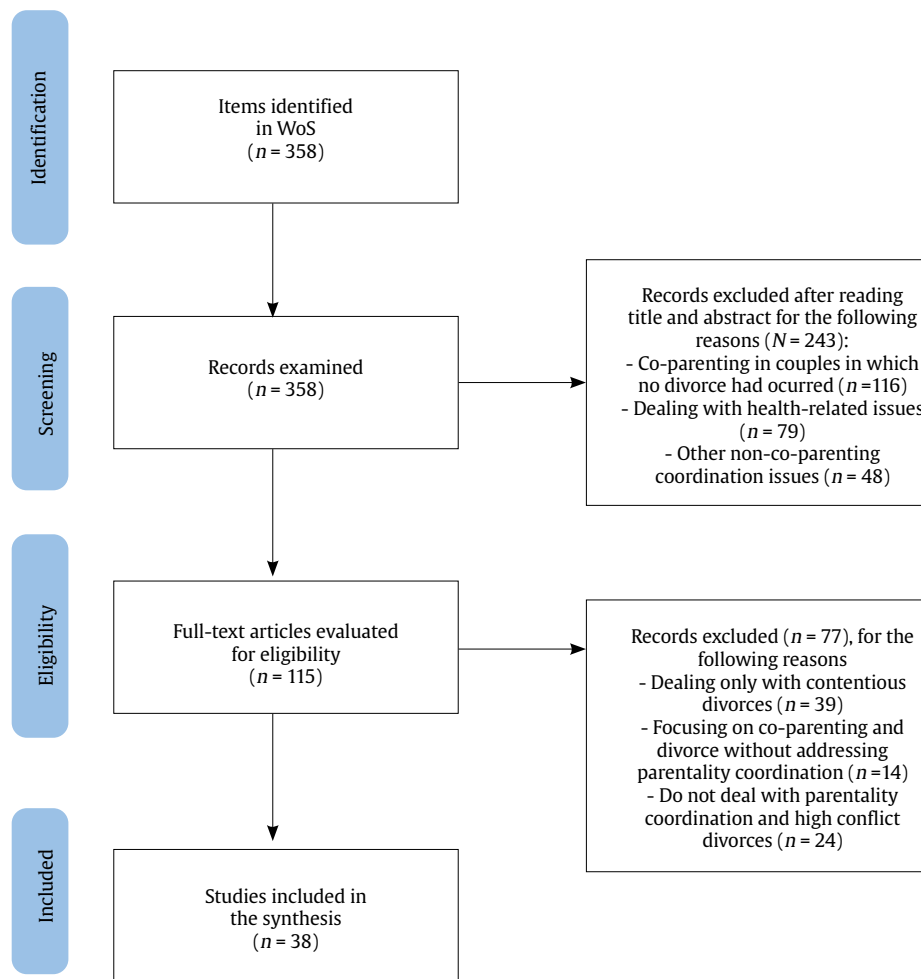


Figure 1. Flow of Information through the Different Phases of a Systematic Review.

Method

Search Strategy

This literature review was carried out in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement (Moher et al., 2015).

For this purpose, the Web of Science (All databases) was searched. The search equation consisted of: Topic: (parent* coordinat* OR coparenting OR co-parenting) AND Topic: (Divor* AND High conflict OR couple post-breaking up conflict OR couple breakdown OR High conflict OR Child-catching OR Best interest of child). The search was carried out in February 2024.

Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion criteria were that they addressed the topic of parenting coordination through theoretical and empirical studies and meta-analyses. In terms of language, English and Spanish were chosen. In addition, a time frame was established from 1993 (when the “parenting coordination” label began to be used in the USA for interventions with families in a situation of high judicial conflict), until December 2023.

Studies were excluded if they focused on co-parenting issues or mental health aspects of the divorcing persons or children, without focusing on the parenting coordinator. Studies in which

there was no highly contentious divorce were also excluded. Other documentary typologies such as books, book chapters, or conference proceedings were also excluded, as well as those studies that could not be located in full text.

Selection of the Studies

The WOS search yielded 358 articles. A total of 243 papers were eliminated for different reasons, as shown in Figure 1. The number of downloaded papers and the full text consulted was 115. Of these, 77 were removed for different reasons: dealing only with contentious divorces ($n = 39$), focusing on co-parenting and divorce without addressing parenting coordination ($n = 14$), not dealing with parenting coordination or highly contentious divorces ($n = 24$). The final number of papers included in the review was 38.

The methodological quality of the articles included in this review was assessed using the indicators included in the QUIRE Guidelines 2.0 scale (Ogrinc et al., 2015). Specifically, the following indicators were analysed: title, abstract, problem description, available knowledge, specific aims, measures, analysis, results, limitations and conclusions. This assessment was carried out by two researchers, classifying the papers into three categories: low – when 3 or less of the analysed indicators were met; medium – when between 4 and 6 of the quality indicators were met; and high – when 7 or more of the quality indicators were met. In all cases, the methodological quality of the included articles was adequate,

and none of the articles were eliminated, being the inter-judge agreement ($\kappa = 1$).

Reliability of Coding

Two independent investigators screened the studies identified in this review by reading the title and abstract. The inter-rater reliability of the title and abstract screening was $\kappa = .89$. Subsequently, the 115 articles read in full text were screened. In this case, the inter-rater agreement level was $\kappa = .90$.

In this process we coded: -1 agreement – when there was agreement in coding between the two researchers, -1 disagreement – when there was a discrepancy in coding agreement. The values of the kappa statistic were excellent, indicating good inter-rater agreement and therefore good coding reliability, as suggested by *Tversky (1977)* when considering consistent those assessments with a score of .80 or higher.

Results

Characteristics of the Studies Included in this Review: Bibliometric Indicators

The country that has contributed the largest number of publications on parental coordination is the USA (with 22 publications), followed by Spain (11) and Canada (4), with one article on cooperation between Spain, Canada, and Italy. This is understandable as the USA is the country where parental coordination emerged. The first published article appeared in 2008. If we divide the periods taking into account when the first publications on this topic were published in Spain (2014), we find 12 articles between 2008 and 2013 and 27 between 2014 and 2023, showing this increase in the consolidation and growing interest in the figure of the parental coordinator.

With regard to the publication in which the papers appear, *Family Court Review* is the most productive in this area with 15 published papers, followed by the *Journal of Child Custody* with 9 papers, in third and fourth place are the Spanish journals *Anuario de Psicología* and *Revista de Mediación* with 5 and 4 papers respectively, with 2 papers the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* and with only one paper published in the following journals: *Acción Psicológica*, *Negotiation Journal*, *Papeles del Psicólogo*, and *Revista Boliviana de Derecho*.

Table 1. Distribution of Authors by Article and Gender

No. authors	Sex			Total articles
	Woman	Man	Not determined	
1	10	4	1	15
2	13	9	0	11
3	13	5	0	6
4	16	8	0	6
Total	52	26	1	38

In reference to the number of authors signing the articles (see *Table 1*), 15 articles are signed by a single author, 11 by two authors, 6 by three authors, and 6 by four authors, with no article signed by more than four authors. There are twice as many signatures by female authors as by male authors. The author who appears most often in the articles is *Connie Capdevila Brophy* (Spain), belonging to the Co-parenting Coordination Working Group of the Official Association of Psychology of Catalonia (COPC), who signs in 6 articles, followed by *Dominic d'Abate*, from the Consensus Mediation Center in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, *James McHale*, from the University of South Florida St. Petersburg (USA), and *Matthew Sullivan* in private practice in Palo Alto, California (USA) in 3 articles.

Characteristics of the Empirical Studies Included in This Review: Methodological and Content Aspects

From the content analysis (see *Table 2*), it can be seen that the majority are theoretical or conceptual analysis ($n = 28$), while just over a third carry out some form of empirical research ($n = 11$). Of the empirical articles, 5 are based on surveys/interviews (*Brewster et al., 2011; Fieldstone et al., 2012; Hayes et al., 2012; Henry et al., 2009; Quigley & Cyr 2017*), 3 are case studies/case files (*Beck et al., 2008; Hayes, 2010*), with one being longitudinal (*D'Abate et al., 2019*), one describing a programme (*McHale & Carter, 2019*), and finally a review of judgements (*Fariña et al., 2017*).

The 9 that focus on the analysis of the efficacy and effectiveness of interventions have the added limitation of interviewing partial samples, having a small number of cases, without a control group, which makes their generalisability difficult.

With regard to legal aspects, 3 articles focus on the aspect of consent or agreement to initiate parental coordination (*Fieldstone et al., 2012; Hayes, 2010; Quigley & Cyr, 2017*), 2 on the importance of having and adhering to guidelines (*Brewster et al., 2011; D'Abate et al., 2019*), and 2 on the regulation of the role (*Fieldstone et al., 2012; Hayes et al., 2012*).

In terms of the practice aspects of parenting coordination and the issues to be addressed, several articles indicate the importance of face-to-face contact (*Beck et al., 2008; Hayes, 2010; Hayes et al., 2012*), while other authors indicate the importance of following an established protocol, with all the requirements to carry out adequate parenting coordination (*Beck et al., 2008; Brewster et al., 2011; Fieldstone et al., 2012; Hayes et al., 2012; Quigley & Cyr, 2017*) and to be able to have an effective intervention model (*Fieldstone et al., 2012; Hayes et al., 2012*).

Regarding the professional role, there are a variety of proposals on the functions of the PC, coinciding in the importance of working with the whole family unit and all the aspects that have affected the normal functioning of these families that are immersed at that time in a high level of conflict (*Beck et al., 2008; Brewster et al., 2011; D'Abate et al., 2019; Fariña et al., 2017; Fieldstone et al., 2012; Hayes, 2010; Hayes et al., 2012*).

Empirical Studies and Effectiveness of PC Interventions

In the study by *Henry et al. (2009)* 49 couples are assessed one year before and one year after their participation in a parenting coordinator programme. The results show a decrease in the number of complaints, from 491 to 254 complaints, and a reduction in the number of couples ($n = 30, 61.2\%$) making complaints. Other effects of the intervention include a decrease of around 75% in the number of motions related to children's issues such as time-sharing, holidays, and medical and school issues. In addition, there is a decrease (40%) with regard to demands related to other issues.

On the other hand, among the 30 couples whose number of lawsuits decreased after the intervention of the parental coordinator, the number of lawsuits decreased by 73%, being especially important in relation to child-related lawsuits, which decreased by 82%. The results also indicate that the greatest reduction in the number of claims occurs in those cases that have been litigated for between 2 and 6 years for issues related to co-parenting.

Brewster et al. (2019), after implementing a PC programme in 21 cases, the results indicate that in the two years following the assignment of a PC there is a decrease in the number of lawsuits, which in turn leads to a 56% decrease in the number of court documents, 83% decrease in court hearings, and 52.5% decrease in changes to previously established agreements, 70% decrease in the number of external agencies such as protective services or supervised visits, differences that were found to be statistically significant in all cases ($p < .05$). In 16 of the 21 cases,

Table 2. List of Empirical Articles Included in This Systematic Review

Study	Method	Main Results/Effectiveness	Study Limitations
Beck et al. (2008)	Exploratory study through PC interview USA	Effectiveness is not assessed Greater presence of lawyers than staff with knowledge of mental health. These conditions are how interventions are carried out, more focused on legal aspects than educational ones.	Small sample Specific area Unreliable instrument. No control group. No information from families. No long-term data
Brewster et al. (2011)	Study 21 court files from 2 years before to 2 years after CP.	Decreases: court processing burden, time spent by judge, involvement of other agencies and parents save time.	Small sample, no control group. Different judicial moment at the beginning of PC.
D'Abate et al. (2019)	Longitudinal study 17 parents; 10 children; 10 lawyers; judges and 2 CPs. Excludes: chronic litigants, severe mental disorder, history of violence or child protection file.	Parents complain: CP unable to make decisions on "intractable" problems. CP unavailable at some point. Want more information on process, role and boundaries. Insufficient duration. Detects tendency to project blame on other parent / CP.	Small sample (qualitative analysis only). No control group.
Fieldstone et al. (2012)	Survey of all judges, lawyers, and PCs 11th judicial circuit Florida. 17 judges (52%), 94 lawyers (34%), 23 PCs (92%) responded.	Judges, lawyers, and PCs have a favourable attitude towards the figure of the PC, valuing positively the effectiveness of these actions.	Response biases. Type of interview used. No interview with families.
Hayes (2010)	CP interview through "vignettes" on ethical dilemmas. USA	Effectiveness is not assessed. Stresses the importance of addressing conflict management, parental education and interprofessional coordination.	Not specified
Hayes et al. (2012)	Online survey to CP "snowball effect" 19 US states and 2 Canadian provinces. N = 51 (49 completed)	Reduction in the number of cases coming to court after PC intervention.	Small sample size and difficulty in measuring effectiveness.
Henry et al. (2009)	Case study N = 49: Effects of PC one year before and one year after implementation are assessed.	Decrease in litigation: regarding children: 75%. other matters: 40%. Improves relations, saves time and judicial resources.	Convenience sample Local level
McHale and Carter (2019)	Description of the intervention "Through the child's eyes" (six sessions derived from Focused Coparenting Consultation)	Increases parents' awareness about shared parenting. Helps to build solidarity and improve family climate	No quantitative data
Quigley and Cyr (2017)	Quantitative and qualitative study. Questionnaire to children and parents at the beginning/end of PC; n = 6 older siblings aged 7 to 17 years (67% children). At the end of interviews also other siblings n = 10 (50% children).	Half of the children perceive positive aspects related to PC as a general decrease in parental conflict, intensity, and an improvement in communication.	Small sample (qualitative analysis only). No control group

the PC was maintained over the two years. In these, the reduction in the number of complaints filed by the parents or by the judge and in the number of changes of measure was significantly higher ($p < .01$). With regard to the number of complaints related to finances, those related to the children, those related to the safety of the children, and those related to administrative matters, there is also a decrease after the intervention of the PC.

Fieldstone et al. (2012) after completing a questionnaire on PC, 17 judges, 94 lawyers, and 23 PCs indicate that judges and lawyers view PCs positively and favourably in cases of separation and divorce; 94% of the judges and 93% of the lawyers consider that intervention in PC helps the judicial process, providing necessary and adequate information to the parties and reducing the number of lawsuits. Furthermore, they consider that the level of conflict is partly reduced after PC intervention (71% of judges and 61% of lawyers), while approximately 19% consider this reduction to be very significant, this being one of the main reasons for considering PC as beneficial in the judicial process. Other reasons given were assistance in cases of joint custody, increased communication between parents and improved decision-making by the parties.

These benefits extend to the children involved in the process to varying degrees, as perceived by judges (65%), lawyers (70%), and CPs (87%).

Hayes et al. (2012) analysed interviews of 52 cases that were referred to PC intervention. The results indicate that after PC intervention, 51% of the cases do not go back to court, and if they do

they only do so occasionally. Specifically, 45% of the cases attended did not go to court because of decisions taken in PC and 38% went to court only once or twice. On the other hand, the study points out that the main barriers to intervention in PC are the presence of a serious personality disorder in one of the parents, the inability of one of the parents to pay for the services, disagreements between parents and PC, or the presence of domestic violence, among other causes.

Quigley and Cyr (2017) conducted a pilot study with 10 high-conflict families who participated in a CP intervention. The results, although non significant, indicate a decrease in total scores in relation to children's perception of conflict with a moderate effect size ($r = .35$), although in three cases this effect is much larger. In only one case the perception of conflict remained the same after the intervention, and in two cases it was higher. With regard to the perception of conflict intensity, this is lower with large to moderate effect sizes ($r = .47$), although these differences were not statistically significant ($p = .10$). Finally, in relation to symptoms of loss after separation, there is a decrease in relation to this variable after the intervention, although this difference is not statistically significant ($p = .12$, $r = .45$). This decrease occurs in six children, while in two children there is an increase, although the decrease scores are much higher than the increase scores for feelings of loss. No changes were obtained in the psychological symptomatology of the children, as there were no differences in the presence of internalising and externalising problems, nor in the psychological well-being of the children.

Table 3. List of Theoretical Articles Included in This Review

Author	Aim of article	Aspects of Practice
Alba Ferré (2019)	Reviews high conflict legal tools: parenting plan and CP	Not specified
Amundson and Lux (2016)	PC is service, not profession Law-science-behavioural differences (alliance). Review authority, decision making, ethics and practical implications.	Dispute resolution model
Arias and Bermejo (2019)	PC practice and decision-making	Describes techniques to encourage joint parental decision-making, increase consensus and improve communication. Phases of the process: appropriate presentation of PC, analysis of the conflict and family situation, preparation of the context, interventions that favour emotional management and active and effective reflection by parents. Strategies, specialised interventions, and specific techniques.
Barsky (2011)	Reflection on the risks/benefits of mixing roles. Exemplifies use of case mediation and facilitative vs. directive methods.	Reasons for completion Analyse negative experiences: positioning of parties against PC, fear of PC decision capacity - use of mediation techniques, cases of gender-based violence.
Behrman (2016)	Clarification of roles and constraints. Collaborative practice PC.	Collaborative work. Need for PC self-care
Brown et al. (2017)	Dual-PC model interdisciplinary approach	Benefits: interdisciplinary practice Challenges: good relationship necessary, possible ethical difference according to profession, pressures on PC from families.
Capdevila (2016)	Clarify PC role and practice	Describes Phases: Designation and initial preparation, Implementation, Maintenance, Final. Lists tools and strategies.
Capdevila and Pérez (2019)	Challenges to implementing PC	Not specified
Capdevila and Wilhelm (2019)	US and Canada review legal requirements for future Spanish regulation.	Not specified
Capdevila et al. (2020)	Review of the development of the PC in Catalonia and implementation in Spain. Justification of the figure: unsolvable cases, which require more emotional than judicial solutions.	Not specified
Capdevila et al. (2020)	Reviews Canada, Italy, and Spain. When to refer and how to implement. Need for intervention in high-conflict families. Formal recognition: regulation and guidelines.	Not specified
Carter and Frenkel (2020)	Comparison of professional and ethical standards. Different models, lack of consensus.	Not specified
Coates (2015)	How to work with families in highly conflictive situations for child protection. Need for longitudinal research.	Teamwork. Educating parents, Mindfulness Working on empathy
D'Abate (2016)	Redefine techniques aimed at PC intervention.	Action protocol: first contact, children's interviews
Demby (2016)	Practical aspects of PC intervention	How best to address the specific needs of families? Thinking clinically can improve effectiveness.
Drozdt et al. (2020)	PC functions in cases of violence (active or past violence), flag cases not appropriate for PC (if substance abuse, untreated or Uncontrolled personality disorders).	Previous study: evaluations, sentences Adapt process to cases of violence
Fidler and McHale (2020)	Current trends in PC practice	Review phase and structure of the PC process
Fidnick et al. (2011)	Review AFCC guidelines for updating.	Not specified
Greenberg and Sullivan (2012)	How to refer to therapy and carry out PC-therapist coordination (team).	Describes collaborative teamwork: clear boundaries, communication and responsibilities. Referral and coordination/team meetings (input without compromising therapist work).
Kelly (2008)	Understand models and process in PC. Review literature: divorce, high conflict, protective/risk factors. Little on practice and effectiveness.	Describe process. Working with both parents Telephone contacts. Various tools (law, therapy, mediation and assessment). Use of educational materials. Addressing specific disputes. Focus parents on children's needs and keep them out of conflict. Limits: High conflict and PC exhaustion for many cases.
Molina and Capdevila (2019)	To know the causes of child-parental rejection. Differentiate between abuse, alienation and/or alienation.	Assessment of previous family situation in cases of rejection or estrangement. Working with preferred and rejected parents
Montiel (2015)	PC function to implement judicial measures	Not specified
Pérez (2019)	Eligible cases for PC Clarify referral and inclusion/exclusion criteria.	Not specified
Rodríguez-Domínguez and Carbonell (2014)	New professional figure: role of the PC.	Review Canadian and Argentinean model, for introduction in Spain. Limitation: Economic cost and gender-based violence situations.
Shaw (2017)	Deepening "high-conflict" and "abusive" relationships	Not specified
Shear (2008)	Reflections first experiences PC	Not specified
Sullivan (2008)	Dissemination of the PC figure to alleviate the effect of poor adaptation to divorce as a cause of conflict. Parentality: compromise and conflict.	Phases and tools. Telephone contacts. Working with extended families. Addressing specific disputes. Focus on parents' needs and children's needs and keep them out of conflict.
Zafra (2019)	Search for effective conflict resolution methods to protect the best interests of the child: PC and difference with Mediation	Not specified

In the same study, the children's experience of PC was assessed qualitatively. The results revealed that 40% (4 children) reported the intervention by the PC as positive, while 30% (3 children) rated it as negative. These benefits are specified as a decrease in conflict and an increase in communication between parents. As negative aspects, the children pointed out that there was no decrease in conflict, that they did not feel listened to by the PC, that they remembered knowing the PC as stressful or negative, and that they perceived the PC as not neutral; 60% of the children rate the communication with the PC regarding family matters as safe.

D'Abate et al. (2019) conducted a pilot study on the benefits of implementing a PC programme in Canada. The programme lasted 18 months and a total of 10 families participated. The qualitative results indicate dissatisfaction with the intervention, which the authors explain by the high expectations parents placed on this type of intervention. Despite this dissatisfaction, some parents do speak of improvements in communication, not having to return to court or being able to reach agreements on less serious issues or disputes. Children report more positive aspects of the PC intervention, such as a decrease in conflict between parents and greater communication between them. In addition, their comments indicate the need for them to be part of the PC process; 90% of the lawyers have a positive conception of PC; mainly these benefits are related to a decrease in conflict between parents and a reduced need to go to court. This perception of PC by judges was also favourable, pointing to the important role of this type of intervention for parents with a high level of conflict. The PCs reported significant benefits in terms of the number of agreements reached between parents, which, in many cases, meant that they did not have to go to court again.

On a quantitative level, D'Abate et al. (2019) find statistically significant differences between the group that received CP and a group that did not participate in this type of intervention, with the CP group having a lower number of complaints and a lower number of requests for changes of custody.

Characteristics of the Theoretical Studies Included in this Review: Themes and Guidelines

In terms of the priority themes of the theoretical articles (see Table 3), the role and functions of parental coordination and its objectives are mainly addressed (20 articles). Content is also developed with regard to guidelines for action and good practice (16 articles), with special emphasis on training and capacity building, avoiding double roles, and the detection of possible violence (differentiating it from conflictual relationships). A similar number focus on practical aspects such as the structure and evolution of interventions, including the methods or techniques used (16 articles). To a lesser extent, more legal aspects are developed (laws, jurisprudence and types and forms of referral, payment of the service, and whether or not to grant decision-making powers (9 articles).

With regard to the legal aspects, there is a notable difference depending on the geographical area, coinciding in the importance of the referral of this figure being judicial, as well as focusing on the necessary regulations for better action (Alba Ferré, 2019; Amundson & Lux, 2016; Barsky, 2011; Capdevila et al., 2020; Carter & Frenkel, 2020; Kelly, 2008; Montiel, 2015; Pérez, 2019; Shear, 2008; Zafra, 2019), and on the importance of having and complying with guidelines for action, fundamentally those published by the AFCC (Capdevila, 2016; Kelly, 2008; Pérez, 2019; Sullivan, 2008), emphasising the importance of comprehensive training to be able to work with this type of families (Brown et al., 2017; Capdevila et al., 2020; Capdevila & Wilhelm, 2019; Fidler & McHale, 2020; Pérez, 2019; Rodríguez-Domínguez & Carbonell, 2014), also mentioning the problems that arise in this type of intervention, both ethical and guidance (Amundson & Lux, 2016; Barsky, 2011; Behrman, 2016;

Brown et al., 2017; Capdevila, 2016; D'Abate, 2016; Fidnick et al., 2011).

Regarding the aspects of the role and functions of parental coordination, there is also a great deal of agreement on the educational and managerial aspects of the process, with special attention to the protection of children (Arias & Bermejo, 2019; Capdevila & Pérez, 2019; Fidler & McHale, 2020); others reinforce the function of a hybrid role (legal-therapeutic) (Behrman, 2016; Brown et al., 2017; Capdevila, 2016; Drozd et al., 2020) and other authors highlight the functions of parental conflict resolution and parent-child reconnection (Arias & Bermejo, 2019; Capdevila & Pérez, 2019; Drozd et al., 2020; Fidler & McHale, 2020; Molina & Capdevila, 2019; Pérez, 2019; Zafra, 2019).

In terms of guidelines, again, there is a large consensus regarding the importance of having clear rules that include the ethical and legal aspects of these situations for better performance (Amundson & Lux, 2016; Behrman, 2016; Brown et al., 2017; Capdevila, 2016; Fidnick et al., 2011; Kelly, 2008; Montiel, 2015; Sullivan, 2008), in addition to the broad agreement on the importance of comprehensive specialised training (Amundson & Lux, 2016; Barsky, 2011; Behrman, 2016; Brown et al., 2017; Capdevila et al., 2020; Capdevila & Wilhelm, 2019; Fidler & McHale, 2020; Kelly, 2008; Pérez, 2019; Rodríguez-Domínguez & Carbonell, 2014; Shaw, 2017).

Discussion

The first scientific publications on parenting coordination were found in the United States, as was to be expected, given that this type of intervention has its origins there and, in general, already has a certain degree of regulation. Subsequently, it spread to other countries such as Canada, and since 2013 it has been introduced in Spain, which has increased the contribution of articles to journals indexed in databases such as WOS in recent years. Most of the publications are in English; the first two journals with the highest number of publications are published in the USA, and the third and fourth in Spain.

This analysis shows the interest in parental coordination in Spain, where the first steps towards its regulation are being taken since it began to be discussed in 2012. The first rulings and pilot projects took place in Catalonia in 2013 and were subsequently extended to other regions, promoting training and fostering the emergence of parental coordination services to alleviate the harmful effects of highly conflictive divorces and separations. Therefore, it is not surprising that in this analysis, the most prolific author is Connie Capdevila Brophy (COPC-Spain), a leading professional who introduced the figure in Spain, with links to Canadian and US authors.

Most of the articles found are of a theoretical-conceptual type based on the compilation of information on methods of help for families immersed in situations of high conflict, pointing to the coordination of parenting as a specific intervention aimed at helping these families and especially at protecting their children.

Articles have been found that describe the steps and challenges in the implementation and exercise of parental coordination in different countries, sharing casuistry and experiences based on the particularities that each country presents at a legal, social, and professional level. In this regard, there is consensus in establishing the guidelines of the Association of Family and Conciliation Court (AFCC Task Force on Parenting Coordination, 2005, 2019), translated and adapted to Spanish by the COPC in 2020, as a guide for the introduction and implementation of parental coordination.

In terms of content, on the one hand, contextual aspects are developed, such as the legal procedures for its implementation, the importance of having a court order or resolution that supports the intervention, and regulating the processes of referral and judicial follow-up of cases. On the other hand, technical aspects related to

ethics, guidelines, and good practice guides are reviewed (basic and specific training, as well as the experience that the practitioner must have, not falling into a double role, maintaining impartiality, etc.). Another relevant topic is about the objectives assigned to him/her (mainly implementing the parenting plan, monitoring compliance with the court decision regarding the children), his/her role usually described as a "hybrid role", and the more specific functions s/he will assume (reducing conflict, improving communication, facilitating joint decision-making, focusing the parents on the needs of their children). The discussion on decision-making power and other aspects related to confidentiality and voluntariness is of particular interest.

We agree with Capdevila et al. (2020) on the importance of clear regulation, especially on the issues of parental consent, confidentiality, decision-making authority, and, above all, a legal framework that allows them to act without leaving aside cases in which there may have been allegations of gender violence, in order to protect children when they must maintain contact with their parents.

Finally, it should be noted that the number of empirical articles is limited and that the majority of the works indicate the need for more and longer-term studies, as most of them correspond to conceptual contributions. Few provide quantitative information on sufficiently large samples, and when it comes to assessing effectiveness and scope none of them have a control group. Thus, empirical research on parental coordination, especially its effectiveness, is one of the most relevant challenges for the scientific validation of this figure. Along these lines, the studies included in the present review point to a decrease in the number of lawsuits filed by parents as the main benefit of PC intervention (Brewster et al., 2011; D'Abate et al., 2019; Fieldstone et al., 2012; Hayes et al., 2012; Henry et al., 2009). Other positive aspects are a decrease in the number of hearings, court documents, or the involvement of other external resources such as protective services (Brewster et al., 2011) or fewer changes in measures (Brewster et al., 2011; D'Abate et al., 2019). With regard to the benefits these interventions have on children, while there is a trend toward improvements related to perceptions of conflict (Quigley & Cyr, 2017) the results were not significant.

This literature review has limitations derived from the database used and the methodology applied for the search, so there may be articles of interest that were not located. Despite this, different practical implications emerge, such as the need to evaluate the impact of parental coordination programmes, taking into account aspects such as the level of conflict, the time of litigation between parents, individual characteristics of the parents in terms of health and parental competence, as well as the real motivations that accompany the demands. Another aspect is the need to form a working commission which, in the Spanish context, defines the central aspects of this type of action, with judicial support due to the characteristics of this type of highly conflictive family intervention, where non-compliance and rejection of the intervention often occur, as well as the necessary pacification of these families to achieve lasting effectiveness.

Conclusion

The growing number of theoretical and empirical studies in recent years related to the implementation of the figure of the parental co-parenting coach in Spain shows the relevance of this type of intervention in the reduction of conflict in highly conflictive divorces, which is mainly reflected in the reduction of lawsuits. It can be concluded that parental coordination is taking its place in family intervention in a judicial context, making it necessary for further empirical research, especially in Spain, in order to advance its implementation as an effective method.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of this article declare no conflict of interest.

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- Articles marked with an asterisk are those used in the review.
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