

Comparison of Parental Attitudes Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The goal of this study was to investigate changes in parental attitudes and family variables during the COVID-19 pandemic. Survey methodology was employed to collect the data; the questionnaires included a family information form prepared by the researchers and the “Parental Attitude Research Instrument” (PARI), used to examine changes in parental attitudes related to the pandemic. The initial data, collected immediately before the outbreak of COVID-19, were compared with data gathered in May 2020, by which time the pandemic had already spread throughout Turkey. The research sample included 119 mothers with preschool children aged 5—6 years enrolled in four public schools. Our findings indicated that changes in family life and parental attitudes occurred during the pandemic. While scores measuring the two PARI subscales of dependency and egalitarianism and democratic attitudes increased, the scores for rejection of the home-making role and strictness and authoritarianism decreased. According to the multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) results, there was a statistically significant difference between the time measurements (taken before and during the pandemic) with respect to the combined dependent variables of egalitarianism and democratic attitudes and strictness and authoritarianism, even after controlling for the demographic variables.

Keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, preschool, 5—6 years old, parenting attitudes, PARI.

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Сравнение родительских установок до и после пандемии COVID-19

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Целью данного исследования было изучение изменения родительских установок по отношению к разным сторонам семейной жизни во время пандемии COVID-19. Для сбора данных использовался метод анкетирования; опросники включали форму сбора информации о семье, подготовленную исследователями, и «Инструмент исследования родительских установок» (PARI), который использовался для изучения изменений в родительских установках, связанных с пандемией. Исходные данные, собранные непосредственно перед вспышкой COVID-19, сравнивали с данными, собранными в мае 2020 года, когда пандемия уже распространилась по всей Турции. В выборку исследования вошли 119 матерей детей дошкольного возраста (5—6 лет), обучающихся в четырех общеобразовательных школах. Наши данные показали, что во время пандемии произошли изменения в семейной жизни и родительских установках. В то время как количество баллов по таким признакам методики PARI, как зависимость и несамостоятельность матери и партнерские отношения увеличилось, количество баллов по признакам неудовлетворенность ролью хозяйки дома, суровость и излишняя строгость — уменьшилось. Согласно результатам многомерного ковариационного анализа (MANCOVA), была выявлена статистически значимая разница между временем проведения замеров (до и во время пандемии) в отношении комбинированных зависимых переменных — партнерские отношения, суровость и излишняя строгость — даже после контроля демографических переменных.

Ключевые слова: COVID-19, пандемия, дошкольный опыт, возраст 5—6 лет, родительские установки, PARI.

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INTRODUCTION

The word “pandemic” refers to an illness of epidemic proportions that spreads to more than one country or continent. Beginning in late 2019, the world faced a novel pandemic, the effects of which are still felt today. By April 2020, more than three billion people around the world were confined to their homes, and more than 130 countries imposed restrictions on the mobility of their citizens in the hope of preventing the transmission of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 [36]. The pandemic has produced enormous sociological and psychological effects, impacting entire societies as well as changing the lives of countless individuals [20].

Parental attitudes influence all developmental domains of the respective children, especially their socio-emotional development [29]. Numerous studies conducted in recent years have reported how parental attitudes affect child development and behavior [3; 14; 21; 27]. In the pre-school period, in which the child identifies with the parent, parental attitudes are of greater importance because their attitudes are adopted by the children [23].

Parental attitudes may be regarded as attitudes that the parents adopt toward various circumstances or situations in which the child finds itself [10]. By observing preschool children’s behaviors, Baumrind identified three types of pa-

rental attitudes: authoritarian parenting, authoritative parenting, and permissive parenting [5]. This classification scheme allowed the full scope of parental attitudes that could serve as a guide for future research to be identified [11]. In the present study, encompassing the scope of parental attitudes and family life, five categories were used: *egalitarianism and democratic attitudes, strictness and authoritarianism, dependency, rejection of the homemaking role, and marital conflict.*

In families where egalitarianism and democratic attitudes prevail, the parents, being problem-oriented and rational, guide the activities undertaken by the child [4]. Children growing up in democratic families are less anxious and have an advantage in terms of their socio-emotional efficacy as well as the ability to regulate their emotions [34]. Democratic parental attitudes may be considered the most beneficial attitudes with regard to the developmental domains of the child [7].

Strict and authoritarian families attempt to evaluate, control, and shape the child's behaviors and attitudes from the perspective of an authority figure with absolute power [4]. Studies have shown that authoritarian parental attitudes result in the child developing negative personality traits and anxiety [13]. Authoritarian parental attitudes are reported to promote the use by children of negative behaviors in problem-solving [30]. Children in families where dependency dominates, that is, raised in an over-protective environment, tend to become over-dependent on others, lack confidence, and suffer from emotional breakdowns [37]. In the present study, a parent's rejection of the homemaking role and marital conflict were also taken into consideration as they relate to family life. These dimensions can be explained by families adapting to changing social and economic conditions, accompanied by changes in the relationships, roles, and responsibilities within the family [1].

Theoretical Framework

Ecological systems theory represents an important framework for understanding how family processes are affected by the different environmental settings within which family members function. External factors are important and influential on the family. As such, they require careful exami-

nation in order to be fully understood [1; 15; 19]. The first level of this model is the microsystem, constituting the individual's immediate environment, in which individual personality traits and family interactions act as major influences. The next level is the mesosystem, which consists of connections between microsystems. Microsystems and mesosystems are embedded within exosystems, environments that have indirect effects on family interactions. In the present study, we hypothesized that demographic variables such as the age of the child, parental employment and educational status would be reflected in family attitudes at the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem levels. The COVID-19 pandemic may be assumed to impact critical global systems, such as the economy, health, economy, education, etc., at the macro level of the ecological framework. Ecological systems theory has formed the basis of a number of empirical studies exploring how multiple psychosocial factors affect child development and parenting [18; 38]. Since the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the health, working lives, and overall lifestyles of families, it is expected that in adapting to this novel situation, attitudes within families will change, just as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem all undergo changes as they affect each other.

Research questions (Hypothesis)

Although several studies in the literature have examined the effects of demographic variables on family attitudes and characteristics [24; 27; 35], as of yet, no longitudinal study investigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on family attitudes has been published. Our research question and hypothesis are as follows:

RQ1. *How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the differences in parental attitudes associated with demographic variables?* Studies have shown that parental attitudes and styles of child-rearing may vary depending on any number of factors, including cultural and socio-demographic characteristics [22; 24; 27; 34; 35]. When examined within the framework of ecological systems theory, the COVID-19 pandemic may impact family dynamics and lifestyles at the macro level. Thus, changes in family attitudes during the pandemic are to be expected.

METHOD

Research Model

In this study, a survey methodology was employed to evaluate changes in parental attitudes caused by the pandemic. To this end, the initial data collected prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (December 2019) were compared with the data collected after the pandemic had spread throughout Turkey (May 2020). The demographic variables of relevance to this study were determined. The children, 39.5% of whom were five years old and 60.5% of whom were six, were split almost evenly in terms of gender, 49.6% being female and 50.4% male. The mothers' ages ranged from 23 to 50 with an average age of 33.5 years, while the fathers averaged 38 years, with ages ranging between 26 and 53.

Sample

The research sample was comprised of 119 mothers with preschool children aged 5—6 years from four state schools in the city of Van, Turkey. All the mothers were selected on a random basis, representing different socioeconomic classes. The same research sample was used both in the first and second stages of data collection.

Data Collection Tools

A family information form, prepared by the researchers, and the "Parental Attitude Research Instrument" (PARI) were used for data collection. The family information form consisted of questions pertaining to such demographic variables as the child's age, parental educational level and profession, and the number of siblings in the family.

The PARI scale, developed by Schaefer and Bell [28] to examine the effects of parental attitudes on child development, was adapted into Turkish in 1978 [16]. As a result of the adaptation study conducted in Turkey, Le Compte, Le Compte, and Özer decreased the total number of items in the scale to 60 for all five subscales combined. The Turkish version incorporates a four-point Likert-type scale for scoring and includes five subscales: *dependency* (D) (16 items), *egalitarianism and democratic attitudes* (EDA) (9 items), *rejection of the homemaking role* (RHR) (13 items), *marital conflict* (MC) (6 items), and

strictness and authoritarianism (SA) (16 items). The items numbered 2, 29, and 44 are coded reversely. With the exception of the egalitarianism and democratic attitudes subscale, high scores indicate negative attitudes on the part of the mothers. Employing the test-retest method within a period of three weeks, values of .58 and .88 were calculated for the reliability coefficients, while Cronbach's alpha coefficient was determined to be .64 [16].

In the current study, the scores for each of the five subscales were evaluated separately. The four possible responses range from "I find it completely inappropriate" to "I find it completely appropriate". High subscale scores indicate agreement with the attitude being measured.

Data Collection and Analysis

Official permission to undertake this study was granted by the Provincial Directory of National Education. The questionnaires were distributed to four randomly-selected schools, and the school administrators were asked to send the questionnaires to mothers volunteering to participate in the study. Although the PARI scale evaluates parental attitudes, since the contents of the subscales were considered more relevant to mothers, it was the latter who were therefore requested to complete the surveys. The first set of data was collected in December 2019, using hard copies of the questionnaires.

The period in which the pandemic and related precautions (such as the curfew) were most prevalent in Turkey was May of 2020. Thus, the second data set was collected in May 2020 from the participating mothers, who also provided the first data set. However, for the second round of data collection, online forms were used due to the restrictions imposed during that stage of the pandemic.

For statistical analysis, all of the data was input into the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software suite. The total scores were calculated for each of the five PARI subscales. The normality of the subscale data for each demographic variable was examined, and all were found to exhibit a normal distribution. Therefore, the parametric tests analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test could be used to analyze the

data. For ANOVA, the Tukey post hoc test was conducted to determine the source of the difference. A *p*-value of less than .05 was considered statistically significant.

Lastly, we used one-way multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) to incorporate multiple dependent variables while controlling for certain demographic variables. Specifically, MANCOVA was used in the present study to determine whether any statistically significant differences existed between the time measurements (before and during the pandemic) for the combined dependent variables (dependency, egalitarianism and democratic attitudes, rejection of the homemaking role, marital conflict, and strictness and authoritarianism) while controlling for the demographic variables (child’s age, parental education level, parents’ professions, and the number of siblings in the family).

FINDINGS

In order to answer our research question, the data pertaining to the periods before and during the pandemic were compared. Next, the parental attitude scores before the pandemic (the scores for the five subscales) and the parental attitude scores during the pandemic (the scores for the five subscales) were examined to determine whether the scores differed significantly in terms of each demographic variable. The tables below present the findings obtained via the analyses, showing only the subscale data with a significant difference.

First, the scores obtained before and during the pandemic for the five PARI subscales were compared; the results are given in Table 1.

According to Table 1, no significant difference was observed between the data obtained before and during the pandemic for the MC subscales, whereas the other subscales all showed significant differences between the first and second data sets. According to the mean values in Table 1, the D and EDA subscale scores were significantly higher during the pandemic, while those of the RHR and SA subscales were significantly higher prior to the pandemic.

The results of the analyses revealed no significant difference in parental attitudes with regard to the child’s gender for any of the subscales, either before or during the pandemic. The ages of the mothers and fathers were grouped as “20—30”, “31—35”, and “36 or older”; with respect to parental age, the data showed no significant differences in parental attitudes for any of the subscales.

The subscale scores of the mothers with children aged 5 or 6 years were compared next, with the results of the analyses shown in Table 2.

According to the results presented in Table 2, the pre-pandemic EDA subscale score and the D subscale score obtained during the pandemic both differed significantly depending on the age of the child. Mothers with 6-year-old children had higher EDA subscale scores when compared to those with 5-year-old children both before and during the pandemic.

Table 1

PARI independent t-test results before and during the pandemic

PARI Subscale	Age	N	Mean	Sd	t	Df	p
D subscale	Before the pandemic	119	39.378	8.549	-5.671	118	.000
	During the pandemic	119	46.689	9.905			
EDA subscale	Before the pandemic	119	17.521	4.012	-20.707	118	.000
	During the pandemic	119	29.059	4.205			
RHR subscale	Before the pandemic	119	37.387	6.299	6.315	118	.000
	During the pandemic	119	32.042	7.441			
MC subscale	Before the pandemic	119	16.210	3.949	0.913	118	.363
	During the pandemic	119	15.689	4.472			
SA subscale	Before the pandemic	119	42.555	7.661	6.765	118	.000
	During the pandemic	119	35.017	8.633			

Table 2

PARI with respect to the child's age

Before the pandemic	Age	n	Mean	Sd	t	Df	p
EDA subscale	5	71	16.690	3.963	-2.835	118	.005
	6	49	18.735	3.763			
During the pandemic							
D subscale	5	47	43.447	10.519	-2.807	115	.006
	6	70	48.514	8.887			

Regarding the educational levels of the fathers, the results of the comparisons of the subscale scores obtained before and during the pandemic are given in Table 3.

As Table 3 shows, in terms of the father's educational background, significant differences were observed in the pre-pandemic SA subscale scores as well as in the D and SA subscale scores obtained during the pandemic. The results of the post hoc test conducted to determine the source of the difference revealed that the pre-pandemic SA subscale scores of the fathers who were college graduates were higher than those with only elementary school education ($m.d.=8.235, p<.05$) and higher than fathers with a high school diploma ($m.d.=3.921, p<.05$).

Regarding data obtained during the pandemic, the D and SA subscale scores of the fathers with only a secondary/high school education were higher than those of the fathers with a university degree ($m.d.=6.129, p<.05$; $m.d.=6.489, p<.05$, respectively).

The mothers' scores in the five subscales before and during the pandemic were compared with respect to their educational levels; the results of the analyses are presented in Table 4.

Concerning the mother's educational background, significant differences were found in the pre-pandemic D and SA subscale scores and the D, EDA, and SA subscale scores obtained during the pandemic. The results of the post hoc test to determine the source of the difference showed that before the pandemic, the D subscale scores of the mothers with a university degree were higher than those of the mothers with only an elementary school education ($m.d.=5.131, p<.05$); the same phenomenon was observed with regard to the SA subscale scores ($m.d.=7.277, p<.05$). The SA subscale scores of the mothers with a high school diploma were also higher than those of the mothers with who had only received an elementary school education ($m.d.=4.241, p<.05$).

During the pandemic, the D subscale scores of the mothers with a high school diploma were

Table 3

PARI with respect to the father's level of education

Before the pandemic	The father's level of education	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p
SA subscale	Between Groups	970.692	2	485.346	9.533	.000
	Within Groups	5956.775	117	50.913		
	Total	6927.467	119			
During the pandemic						
D subscale	Between Groups	1028.378	2	514.189	5.600	.005
	Within Groups	10374.682	113	91.811		
	Total	11403.060	115			
SA subscale	Between Groups	1187.364	2	593.682	8.859	.000
	Within Groups	7572.602	113	67.014		
	Total	8759.966	115			

Table 4

PARI with respect to the mother’s level of education

Before the pandemic	The mother’s level of education	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
D subscale	Between Groups	481.328	2	240.664	3.421	.036
	Within Groups	8229.872	117	70.341		
	Total	8711.200	119			
SA subscale	Between Groups	969.497	2	484.748	9.519	.000
	Within Groups	5957.970	117	50.923		
	Total	6927.467	119			
During the pandemic						
D subscale	Between Groups	2497.692	2	1248.846	16.220	.000
	Within Groups	8777.299	114	76.994		
	Total	11274.991	116			
EDA subscale	Between Groups	201.172	2	100.586	6.113	.003
	Within Groups	1875.751	114	16.454		
	Total	2076.923	116			
SA subscale	Between Groups	1815.841	2	907.920	15.027	.000
	Within Groups	6888.022	114	60.421		
	Total	8703.863	116			

higher than those of the university-educated mothers (m.d.=9.583, $p<.05$), as were the D subscale scores of the mothers with only an elementary school education (m.d.=10.191, $p<.05$). The EDA subscale scores of the mothers with college degrees were higher than both those with only a high school diploma (m.d.=2.554, $p<.05$) and those with an elementary school education (m.d.=3.038, $p<.05$).

Mothers with high school diplomas scored higher on the SA subscale during the pandemic than those with a university degree (m.d.=7.283, $p<.05$), as did mothers with only an elementary school education (m.d.=9.379, $p<.05$).

Regarding the number of children in the family, the five subscale scores obtained before and during the pandemic were also compared, and the results are shown in Table 5.

According to Table 5, in relation to the number of siblings, there was a significant difference between groups in pre-pandemic D subscale scores, while no significant difference was observed in any of the subscale scores obtained during the pandemic. The results of the post hoc test conducted to determine the source of the difference revealed that the mothers of children with no siblings and only one sibling both had higher D subscale scores than those whose children had 4

Table 5

PARI with respect to the number of siblings in the family

Before the pandemic	The number of children	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p
D subscale	Between Groups	968.071	4	242.018	3.594	.008
	Within Groups	7743.129	115	67.332		
	Total	8711.200	119			
During the pandemic						
No significant difference					$p>.05$	

or more siblings (m.d.=9.967, $p<.05$; m.d.=9.587, $p<.05$, respectively).

The scores for the five subscales obtained before and during the pandemic were also compared with regard to the mother's profession; the results are presented in Table 6.

As shown in Table 6, concerning the mother's profession, significant differences were observed in the pre-pandemic SA subscale scores and in the D, EDA, and SA subscale scores obtained during the pandemic. The post hoc test to determine the source of the difference indicated that the pre-pandemic SA subscale scores of the mothers who were teachers were higher

than those of the mothers who were housewives (m.d.=5.085, $p<.05$).

During the pandemic, the D and SA subscale scores of the mothers who were housewives were higher than those of the mothers employed as teachers (m.d.=10.168, $p<.05$; m.d.=10.637, $p<.05$, respectively), while the EDA subscale scores showed the opposite result (m.d.=2.566, $p<.05$).

Comparisons were also made of the subscale scores related to the father's profession, taken both before and during the pandemic. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 7.

In relation to the father's profession, there were significant differences in the pre-pandemic

Table 6

PARI with respect to the mother's profession

	The mother's profession	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
SA subscale	Between Groups	575.088	2	287.544	5.296	.006
	Within Groups	6352.378	117	54.294		
	Total	6927.467	119			
During the pandemic						
D subscale	Between Groups	1779.965	2	889.983	10.210	.000
	Within Groups	9675.552	111	87.167		
	Total	11455.518	113			
EDA subscale	Between Groups	129.942	2	64.971	3.824	.025
	Within Groups	1885.996	111	16.991		
	Total	2015.939	113			
SA subscale	Between Groups	1910.216	2	955.108	15.887	.000
	Within Groups	6673.302	111	60.120		
	Total	8583.518	113			

Table 7

PARI with respect to the father's profession

PARI Subscale	The father's profession	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
SA-subscale	Between Groups	601.064	3	200.355	3.674	.014
	Within Groups	6326.402	116	54.538		
	Total	6927.467	119			
During the pandemic						
D-subscale	Between Groups	1231.874	3	410.625	4.495	.005
	Within Groups	10322.913	113	91.353		
	Total	11554.786	116			
SA-subscale	Between Groups	2095.710	3	698.570	11.817	.000
	Within Groups	6680.256	113	59.117		
	Total	8775.966	116			

SA subscale score as well as in the D and SA subscale scores obtained during the pandemic. The post hoc test found that the pre-pandemic SA subscale scores of the fathers employed as teachers were higher than those of the fathers who were tradesmen (m.d.=6.351, $p<.05$).

Concerning the D subscale scores obtained during the pandemic, the unemployed fathers (m.d.=13.318, $p<.05$) and those working as tradesmen (m.d.=8.272, $p<.05$) both scored higher than fathers who were teachers. The SA subscale scores of the unemployed fathers (m.d.=16,125, $p<.05$) and tradesmen (m.d.=10,478, $p<.05$) were both higher than those of the fathers who were teachers.

After controlling for the demographic variables (child’s age, parents’ educational level, parents’ profession, number of siblings), the difference between the time measurements (before and during the pandemic) with respect to the combined dependent variables of egalitarianism and democratic attitudes (EDA) and strictness and authoritarianism (SA) was determined to be statistically significant ($F(5, 217)=2.564, p<.05$, Wilks’ $\Lambda=.056$). However, there was no statistically significant difference between the time measurements for the combined dependent variables dependency (D), rejection of the homemaking role (RHR), and marital conflict (MC) after controlling for the demographic variables.

Following the determination of the statistically significant differences, post hoc analyses were performed for EDA and SA. According to the data presented in Table 8, post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test showed a significant dif-

ference between the mean pre-pandemic EDA score (MEDA1=20.396) and that obtained during the pandemic (MEDA2=25.665). The mean pre-pandemic SA score (MSA1=44.802) was also significantly different from the mean score obtained during the pandemic (MSA2=32.466).

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Ecological systems theory emphasizes that individual and family functioning are influenced by macrosystem variables. This situation reflects that the adaptiveness of a particular parenting attitude or family interaction style is often determined by the nature of the broader social context [32]. For example, parents who perceive higher levels of danger in their environment tend to be more strict [12]. One study found that 80% of the participants required mental health services during the COVID-19 pandemic [25], while another reported that the majority of children in Bangladesh suffered from mental health problems during isolation [39]. As is evident, the pandemic has had numerous negative effects on the mental health of children and adults in different countries. According to ecological systems theory, this situation indicates that the pandemic affects the individual at the macro level.

Similarly, the results of the current study show that the COVID-19 pandemic led to changes in family attitudes. Although the difference in the marital conflict (MC) subscale scores obtained before and during the pandemic was not statistically significant, the scores for both the dependency (D) and egalitarianism and democratic attitudes (EDA) subscales increased during the pandemic,

Table 8

One-Way MANCOVA and Post-Hoc Results

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error Df	p	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Wilks’ Lambda	.614	27.289	5.000	217.000	.000	.386
Time	Wilks’ Lambda	.944	2.564	5.000	217.000	.028	.056
Dependent Variable	(1) Time	(2) Time	Mean Difference (1—2)	Std. Error	p		
EDA	Before the pandemic	During the pandemic	-5.268	2.398	.029		
SA	Before the pandemic	During the pandemic	12.336	4.830	.011		

Design: Intercept + Time is an independent variable (before and during the pandemic) + The demographic variables are covariate variables

while the rejection of the homemaking role (RHR) and strictness and authoritarianism (SA) scores decreased. According to the MANCOVA results, there were statistically significant differences between the time measurements (before and during the pandemic) in the combined dependent variables egalitarianism and democratic attitudes (EDA) and strictness and authoritarianism (SA), even after controlling for the demographic variables. These results provide important evidence that the attitudes in question were not affected by familial variables but by the pandemic itself (as represented by the time variable).

Another noteworthy finding was the low score for rejection of the homemaking role, a result that could be explained from the perspective of feminist family theory. In their study, Bradbury-Jones and Isham reported that violence within the family increased in numerous countries throughout the world during the COVID-19 pandemic [8]. The researchers also noted that women and children, who constitute the physically most vulnerable members of a family unit, were exposed to violence and even murder during the pandemic. Therefore, a reason for the low score for the rejection of the homemaking role could be that mothers, given their lack of power within the family, might be trying to protect themselves, prioritizing the overall unity of the family rather than aiming to increase their own power within it.

In the present study, the differences in parental attitudes associated with the demographic variables were also of interest. The mothers with a six-year-old child had higher scores for egalitarianism and democratic attitudes (before the pandemic) and dependency (during the pandemic) when compared to those with a five-year-old child. Since, according to the families, six-year-old children are better at taking responsibility and making shared decisions than five-year-olds, the parents demonstrated more democratic attitudes toward their six-year-old children.

The educational levels of the mothers and fathers participating in this study were determined to be significant as well. The mothers with a university degree had higher pre-pandemic dependency and strictness and authoritarianism scores than the other mothers. During the pandemic, the university-educated mothers had higher egalitarianism and democratic attitudes scores, while those with lower levels of education had higher dependency and strictness and authoritarianism scores. The pre-pandemic strictness and authoritarianism scores were higher for fathers with a university degree, whereas during the pandemic, those same fathers scored lower on that subscale compared to those who completed secondary education. Similarly, studies have shown that parents with less education demonstrated higher levels of strictness and authoritarianism while more educated parents scored higher on democratic attitudes [26; 27; 33]. In this regard, one interesting finding was that strictness and authoritarianism scores were high for the parents with low levels of education during the pandemic, as situations such as the latter contribute to feelings of stress, anxiety, and fear, while the more educated parents scored higher on egalitarianism and democratic attitudes. Based on this result, knowledge, higher literacy levels, and skills acquired via education may be inferred to lead to more positive results in managing extraordinary circumstances such as a pandemic. Moreover, our results showed that during the pandemic, parents with a university degree were more successful in demonstrating democratic attitudes, which are the most beneficial ones in terms of child development.

Another variable related to the parents' educational background was their profession, which in this study was also revealed to play an important role with respect to parental attitudes. The pre-pandemic strictness and authoritarianism scores of the fathers and mothers working as teachers were higher than those of the mothers who were housewives. During the pandemic, the mothers who were housewives and the fathers who were either unemployed or tradesmen had higher subscale scores for both dependency and strictness and authoritarianism, which represent negative attitude dimensions. In addition, the mothers employed as teachers scored higher on egalitarianism and democratic attitudes, which are positive attitude dimensions, than the mothers who were housewives.

The present study found no significant differences before or during the pandemic in any of the PARI subscales in terms of the child's gender or

the parents' ages, which is consistent with the literature [26]. Regarding the number of children in the family, a significant difference was observed only in the pre-pandemic data. The results of the present study, in which there was no significant difference in parental attitudes in terms of the number of children during the pandemic, suggest that parents adopt similar attitudes regardless of how many children they have.

According to our findings, the pandemic precipitated changes in family life and parental attitudes. These results also support ecological systems theory, which examines the internal and external factors that affect a child's growth and development. Each child is born into and grows up in a certain social and cultural system influenced by other social and cultural systems. The family unit is connected to educational establishments, other institutions and communities, and society as a whole. All of these interrelated elements exert great influence initially on the child's family and secondarily on the child him/herself [6].

Regarding the limitations of the present study, the original study design included only a single measurement, as the research had been planned before the start of the pandemic. As a result, the pre-pandemic data were not compared on a one-to-one basis for each individual participant. With the second data set obtained during the pandemic since prior to the pandemic, no identity-related information had been gathered, such as coding the names of the participants. However, an overall comparison of the data collected before and during the pandemic was conducted. The initial study design was followed at the beginning of the pandemic, and the same data collection forms were distributed to the mothers for the second data collection. For this reason, the two different

data sets (before and during the pandemic) for the mothers were not compared in the analysis process. Instead, as the mothers at the same schools had been contacted, the same samples were compared as a whole. Although this situation could be regarded as a limitation with respect to our research findings, this situation is not assumed to have resulted in any change in the results. Another limitation of the study was that the research data were collected only from the mothers, given that the content of the PARI subscales may be considered more applicable to mothers. It should thus be kept in mind that the results of the research were interpreted accordingly.

The basic premise of social contagion theory maintains that every thought and every behavior in a group is potentially contagious [17]. Children tend to approve of their own thoughts and behaviors based on the influence of their parents, to whom they feel they belong [31]. Individuals interact with each other more intensely in stressful or chaotic environments compared to normal conditions; hence, in such circumstances, the thoughts and behaviors of individuals may be more affected than usual by the actions of other members of the group/family. Taking this phenomenon into consideration, we recommend that the effects of the pandemic be examined within the framework of social contagion theory in future studies. Furthermore, different measurement tools could be used to collect data from both mothers and fathers to compare their attitudes toward parenting, and parental attitudes should also be examined following the conclusion of the pandemic. Investigating whether the pandemic has led to a permanent change in parental attitudes is of critical importance for studying children and family dynamics.

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