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## The Pandemic Period and the Parent-Child Relationship

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate parents' relationships with their children during the pandemic period. The study is a qualitative research study and was conducted with a case study design. The study group of this research consisted of 19 parents. The study group was selected using the criterion sampling method of purposive sampling. The criteria specified in this research were that parents should have a child attending preschool and at least a secondary school level of education. The research data were gathered during the 2019-2020 academic year via interviews conducted with parents having at least one child who was still receiving preschool education, using a semi-structured interview form. The study variables were age, occupation, education level, number of children, and cohabitation status of the parents. The data obtained from the interviews were analysed using the content analysis method. Accordingly, the researcher aimed to assess, through content analysis, the reasons for directly unobservable or non-quantifiable behaviours of the parents by conducting interviews. The research findings revealed that the positive aspects of the parent-child relationship during the pandemic were stated to be spending time together, sharing, doing activities, and communication, while the negative aspects were reported as social isolation, domestic conflicts, and mobile phone addiction. Changes in the mother-child relationship during the pandemic were revealed to be related to knowing each other, spending time together, conflicts, and obeying rules, while in terms of the father-child relationship, changes were seen in communication, doing activities and sense of responsibility. While participants evaluated domestic relationships positively with regard to being together, being supportive and positive communication, they regarded them negatively in terms of conflicts, communication problems and boredom. Lastly, participants stated that educational activities, playing games, watching educational videos and preparing food were the activities on which the most time was spent.

**Key words:** Pandemic, Family, Mother, Father, Child, Relationship

### Introduction

Virus mutations that can be seen in every period in human history cause major disasters such as pandemics affecting humans and animals. Due to the COVID-19 disease, which appeared in the world towards the end of 2019 and was declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (2020), radical changes have occurred in the lifestyles and habits of individuals and societies. In line with the decisions taken in the pandemic period, measures such as lockdowns, quarantine, social distancing, travel restrictions, closures of institutions and workplaces, flexibility in working hours, implementation of homeworking and conducting the education process online (Üstün & Özçiftçi, 2020) have been included in the new social order. In these new living arrangements, people's lives have been affected in different ways in a physical, psychological, social and economic sense. Families, which make up the smallest units of society, have had their share of these changes. During this period, when there is limited contact with the outside world, many families, who have found themselves imprisoned in their own homes, have faced negative situations such as domestic violence, depression and anxiety (Campbell, 2020). Due to changes occurring in their working lives, while some parents have left work, others have switched to the system of working part time or working from home, and the periods of isolation and time spent at home have increased. In this period, it is seen that mothers' transfer of their working lives to the home environment has caused an increase in their responsibilities related to care and education of their children, and a large increase in their household chores (Akbaş-Zeybekoğlu & Dursun, 2020). Moreover, as a result of the temporary closure of education institutions, the distance learning process has begun, and educational activities are carried out at home under the responsibility of families. These changes have altered the family lifestyle (Yıldız, 2020),

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and with regard to both parents and their children, it has become more difficult to maintain a balanced and sustainable lifestyle.

In times of pandemic, when new lifestyles emerge, families' physical and psychological welfare can be negatively affected. Factors such as family members spending more time together, limitation of open-air activities, disruption of nutrition, sleep and living habits, decrease in interpersonal relationships, existence of negative news about the epidemic, lack of information, and fear of catching the disease or losing loved ones, may hinder the healthy continuation of relationships within the family (Brooks et al., 2020). Pandemic periods create short- and long-term effects on children's physical, social and emotional development (Schonfeld & Demaria, 2015). Although the medical literature (Goldman et al., 2020; Lee, Hu, Chen, Huang & Hsueh, 2020) reveals that children are physically susceptible to the COVID-19 virus at only a limited level, children are mostly exposed to the psychological effects of the pandemic. As a result of the disruption in the normal lifestyle due to school closures, lack of open-air activities, and abnormal nutrition and sleep habits, problems like monotony, unhappiness, impatience, irritability and various neuropsychiatric symptoms may appear (Ghosh, Dubey, Chatterjee & Dubey, 2020). Children whose daily routines are altered continue to be psychologically negatively affected due to uncertainty experienced along with high levels of parental stress, fears, and physical and social isolation (Imran, Zeshan & Pervaiz, 2020). Similar findings were made in studies conducted regarding this process, and various negative situations were revealed in children in the pandemic period such as sleep problems, depression, addiction to technological tools, and increase in parental stress towards children (Jiao et al., 2020; Lee & Ward, 2020; Usta-Yüksek & Gökcan, 2020; Xie et al., 2020). On the other hand, studies can also be found which support the idea that relationships between parents and children have developed and that family ties have been strengthened during the pandemic period (Ragamayi, 2020). This process affects children and other family members in different ways.

Within the family in which they grow up, children become members of societies in which a certain language is spoken, and they are interconnected by religious, economic and cultural ties. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1989) bioecological model of human development, every person develops inside a microsystem within a mesosystem embedded in an exosystem. When considered in terms of the child, relationships and actions with the family, teacher, school and friends are included in the microsystem. In this system, interaction and relations between individuals are reciprocal and affect one another. In other words, the family has an impact on the child, and vice versa (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Woolfolk-Hoy, 2010). The special bonds that are formed as a result of interaction between the family and child last for a lifetime, and these ties form the basis of other relationship models. People of all ages are in need of the family for information, assistance and pleasant interaction. The family is a whole unit and has a mechanism with which members monitor each other and are affected by each other. Relations within the family are a continuous, variable and dynamic process that is affected by the approaches that family members have towards each other and by the communication that they have with each other. Communication within the family and the way in which parents bring up their children also have an impact on parent-child relationships (Beck & Ledbetter, 2013; Delvecchio, Raspa, Germani, Lis & Mazzeschi, 2020; McCubbin & Figley, 2014; Tavassolie, Dudding, Madigan, Thorvardarson & Winsler, 2016). Considered from this point of view, the strength of family members' relationships will affect the health and quality of the family. While warm and strong family ties have a positive effect on physical and psychological health, negative situations lead to developmental problems (Deković & Buist, 2005; Kelifa, Yang, Carly, Bo & Wang, 2020). Intra-family relationships have a complex effect on the child's development, and Bronfenbrenner (1992) names this situation as the "effect of third parties". Third parties may support development or offer inhibitory contributions. For example, sensitive mothers and fathers who have achieved marital adjustment will support each other's behaviours as parents. These parents are warmer, more encouraging and more rewarding. In the exact opposite case, however, parents who punish their children, show less response to their needs and criticise them more, are also encountered. Serious emotional problems may appear in these children. Couples who cannot adapt to relations within the family due to parental conflicts have difficulty in establishing effective communication with their children (Caldera & Lindsey, 2006; Hughes, Devine, Mesman & Blair, 2020). According to Epstein, Baldwin & Bishop's (1983) McMaster Model, the characteristics of a healthy family whose intra-family relations are strong were determined as problem-solving, communication in the family, distribution of roles, affective involvement and responsiveness, and behaviour control. Healthy interaction performed in a healthy family strengthens the bonds among family members. The constructive solution of problems that occur in the family by using the correct channels of communication, and by emotional responses given sincerely by family members to one another, are very important for healthy parent-child relationships.

Family relationships are defined as the interaction between family members within the framework of certain rules. Family relationships change according to the birth of a child. In other words, relationships within the family are shaped by parents' interactions with their children. Due to differences in methods of raising children,

parents choose different ways of interacting with their children (communication, response to crying, education, etc.), but parents' ways of communicating with their children are universal (Becvar & Becvar, 2017; Trawick-Smith, 2014). As individuals, too, mothers and fathers differ from each other in the way they communicate with their children. With regard to the mother-child relationship, Adler stated that relationships within the family were very important for determining an individual's personal characteristics, and that the individual's socio-biological development was entrusted to the mothers (Adler, 2005). According to Freud, the mother is the person for whom the child establishes the first, unique and most powerful affection, which remains constant throughout his/her life (Ainsworth, 1989). Erikson stated that the mother-baby relationship, which is established during the first two years after birth, is very important for forming a sense of security or insecurity in the infant. The quality of interaction between the mother and child in this period forms the basis of development as healthy individuals in an emotional sense (Gander & Gardiner, 2001). In father-child interaction, however, although cultural differences are in evidence, it can be said that fathers are less involved in the care of children, that as well as physical games, they fulfil responsibilities such as feeding and giving baths, and that fathers who are supported by their wives take more responsibility in areas related to their children (Bouchard, Lee, Asgary & Pelletier, 2007; Kuo, Volling & Gonzalez, 2018). Although parental roles and interactions vary according to the social and cultural structure, the positive relations require parents to take the necessary responsibilities and cooperate together (Feinberg, 2003). Consequently, in healthy families in which intra-family relationships are strong, parent-child interaction is reciprocal and in these families, quality care is provided for the children. Quality care of children can be listed as providing them with a safe environment, giving them access to games materials appropriate for their ages, and offering them opportunities to take part in suitable activities (Santrock, 2011). According to the UNESCO (2020) data, during the pandemic period, an estimated 1.38 million children have been unable to go to school, and have had no access to different activities, team sports or games areas. It is certain that in long periods of lockdown, when parents try to keep their children busy and safe at home, parents who manage home environments are in more need of new skills such as offering their children quality care (Szabo, Richling, Embry, Biglan, & Wilson, 2020). For this reason, in order to strengthen parent-child relationships, it is very important to convert this long period spent stuck at home into an opportunity and to provide support for parents and children.

In recent years, the relationship between the parent and child has been discussed in the framework of a two-way interaction in which the child and parent affect each other reciprocally. The basis of the relationship between the parent and child is formed by attachment defined as an emotional bond established between the child and the person providing the child with primary care (Cummings, Braungart-Rieker & Du Rocher-Schudlich, 2003; Kochanska, Boldt & Goffin, 2019). Bowlby (1988) argued that in attachment theory, the emotional bond established between the mother and child in the period after birth represents the attachment process that continues throughout life, and that it has a function in determining an individual's relationships with other individuals. Zeanah et al. (1994) stated that the style of relationship between the mother and baby determines the quality of the bonding relationship between the mother and baby. In addition to attachment, the parent's childrearing attitudes and behaviours, and the effects of these on the child, are also very important for the parent-child relationship. Baumrind (1971) explained parenting styles as authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. Based on Baumrind's classification, Maccoby and Martin (1983) discussed "permissive parenting" in two different categories, namely, "permissive/indulgent" and "permissive/neglectful". Hetherington and Clingempeel (1992) studied the parent-child relationship on the basis of positivity and negativity, and evaluated a positive parent-child relationship as the extent to which the parent is sensitive, concerned and warm towards the child, the degree to which he/she establishes good communication with the child, and the extent to which he/she is happy to be the child's parent. A negative parent-child relationship is revealed to be conflict in the relationship with the child, and negative emotions, and high levels of punishment. When the research findings related to the parent-child relationship are examined, it is seen that a positive parent-child relationship supports the child's development positively (Dereli & Dereli, 2017; Mahoney & Bella, 1998) and affects shaping the child's personality and the future adult life (Bernet, Wamboldt & Narrow, 2016; Kennison & Spooner, 2020; Orth, 2018; Vasilyeva & Shcherbakov, 2016).

It is seen that the studies conducted on the parent-child relationship in Turkey are generally related to parental attitudes and are discussed in the context of parental attitudes rather than parenting styles. When the studies on parent-child relationship in early childhood are examined, it has been revealed that the parent-child relationship differs according to various variables related to mother and father (age, education level, employment status, etc.) (Cantekin & Akduman, 2020; Sweeney & MacBeth 2016; Uzun & Baran, 2019) and that family education programmes are effective in developing the parent-child relationship (Erdoğan & Zelyurt, 2016; Feinberg, Jones, Kan & Goslin, 2010; Saygi & Balat 2013; Zorbaz, 2018). In this context, this research was conducted due to the fact that there is a lack of early childhood studies based directly on the positive parent-child relationship and the negative parent-child relationship, and at the same time, the fact that there are few studies in the

literature examining relationships within the family during the pandemic period (Amakiri et al., 2020; Başaran & Aksoy, 2020; Di Giorgio, Di Riso, Mioni & Cellini, 2020; Lee & Ward, 2020). When the research findings are examined, it is revealed that both positive and negative family experiences have occurred in the pandemic period, and that this period has had psychological effects on families. It is considered that discussion, from different aspects, of parent-child relationships that have undergone changes during the period of the pandemic, which has resulted in big changes (working from home, isolation et al.) in the lives of family members and altered habits and lifestyles, is important in terms of both families and children, and will serve as a guide for intervention studies that are conducted on this subject in the future. In this difficult period, supporting and improving the positive aspects of the parent-child relationship by reducing its negative aspects will contribute to strengthening the relationship between parents and children and in this way, to maintaining the existence of healthy families.

Accordingly, the sub-aims of this study, which aims to examine the parent-child relationship during the pandemic period, are to reveal, according to the views of parents:

1. What are the effects of the pandemic period, when family members remain at home for long periods, on parents' relationships with their children of preschool age?
2. What are the changes occurring in mother-child relationships during the pandemic period?
3. What are the changes occurring in father-child relationships during the pandemic period?
4. What are the changes in relationships within the family during the pandemic period?
5. What are the activities carried out by parents together with their children with the aim of strengthening parent-child relationships in the pandemic period?

## Method

The method section of the study includes the headings of research model, study group, data collection tool and data collection, data analysis, and validity-reliability.

### Research Model

The aim of this study is to investigate parents' relationships with their children during the pandemic period. The research is a qualitative study and was conducted with a case study design. Qualitative research enables researchers to define the world in which people live, the experiences that they have, and the meanings assigned to these experiences (Glesne, 2016). A case study is a qualitative investigation made in cases where a current phenomenon occurs and where differences between the phenomenon and context are not distinct (Yin, 2015). In this context, an attempt is made in this study to investigate the current state of the relationship between families and their children during the pandemic period, using a qualitative research method and a case study design.

### Study Group

The study group of this research consists of 19 parents who were determined by criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods. A purposive sampling method utilises a sample that is appropriate and necessary for the aim of the research within the scope of the study (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). Criterion sampling is the determining of certain criteria suitable for the aim of the research, and the forming of the sample from these criteria (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2015). The criteria specified in this research were that parents should have a child attending preschool and at least a secondary school level of education. In the study, the variables were determined as age, occupation, education level, number of children and cohabitation status of the parents. A total of 19 participants were included in the study, and according to the age variable, 2 participants were aged 26-31, 9 participants were aged 32-37, and 8 participants were aged 38 and over. Among the participants, in terms of occupation, there were 8 housewives, 9 teachers, 1 civil servant and 1 tradesman. With regard to education level, 7 participants had completed secondary school, while 8 participants had bachelor's and 4 participants had postgraduate level education. Regarding the number of children, 9 participants had 2 children, 6 participants had 3 children and 4 participants had 1 child. Moreover, 1 participant was separated from her spouse, while 18 participants lived with their spouses.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

Participant code	Age	Occupation	Education level	Number of children	Cohabitation status
P-1	26-31	Housewife	Secondary school	2	Living together
P-2	38+	Housewife	Secondary school	3	Living together
P-3	38+	Housewife	Secondary school	3	Living together

P-4	32-37	Civil servant	Bachelor's	2	Living together
P-5	32-37	Housewife	Secondary school	2	Living together
P-6	26-31	Housewife	Secondary school	2	Living together
P-7	32-37	Tradesman	Secondary school	2	Living together
P-8	38+	Teacher	Bachelor's	1	Living together
P-9	32-37	Housewife	Bachelor's	1	Living together
P-10	32-37	Teacher	Postgraduate	1	Living together
P-11	32-37	Teacher	Postgraduate	3	Living together
P-12	38+	Housewife	Secondary school	3	Living together
P-13	32-37	Teacher	Bachelor's	2	Living together
P-14	38+	Teacher	Postgraduate	3	Living together
P-15	38+	Teacher	Postgraduate	2	Separated
P-16	38+	Housewife	Bachelor's	3	Living together
P-17	32-37	Teacher	Bachelor's	2	Living together
P-18	32-37	Teacher	Bachelor's	1	Living together
P-19	38+	Teacher	Bachelor's	2	Living together

### Data Collection Tool and Data Collection

The data of this research were gathered during the 2019-2020 academic year through interviews with parents who had at least one child still attending preschool. The interview method is a process that is carried out with at least two participants and requires the gathering of detailed information about the subject (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). A semi-structured interview form was used in the study. Accordingly, an attempt was made to access detailed information by addressing the interview questions and additional questions to the participants. In a semi-structured interview form, although the questions are prepared beforehand, additional questions are addressed to the participants during the interview process, which gives the researcher the opportunity to access more detailed information (Longhurst, 2010). The semi-structured interview form used in the research consists of two sections. In the first part of the research form, demographic information related to the participants' age, occupation, education level, number of children and cohabitation status is included. The second section of the research form contains five questions related to the aim of the research. Views on the draft interview form that was prepared were sought by sending it to 2 specialists in the field and 2 linguists, and according to these, a pilot interview was held with 3 participants. At the end of this process, the final revisions of the draft form were made, and the research was begun. Because of the pandemic period, the research data has been collected over a four-week period by using mass communication tools, and the participants took part voluntarily. Prior to commencement of the interviews, explanations related to the aim, scope and confidentiality of the research were given to the participants, and the interview questions were addressed to them. Each interview lasted an average of 15-25 minutes, and in cases where adequate responses were not received, more detailed responses were obtained by means of additional questions.

### Data Analysis

The data obtained as a result of this study, which was conducted with the case study method of qualitative research, were analysed using the content analysis method. Content analysis is a method that makes it possible to examine, by way of communication, human behaviours that cannot be directly measured or observed (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). Accordingly, the researcher aimed to assess, through content analysis, the reasons for directly unobservable or non-quantifiable behaviours of the parents by conducting interviews. The data obtained in the research were first converted into a computer environment and made ready for analysis. In the process of content analysis, data are analysed in the stages of (1) coding the data, (2) finding the themes, (3) organising the codes and themes, and (4) describing and interpreting the findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The data obtained in this study were analysed using the NVivo 10 software program. At this stage, the codes and themes were specified and coding consistency was investigated by sending them to 2 specialists in the field. With this aim, the method specified by Miles and Huberman (1994) for assessing data consistency was used:  $P$  (percentage of agreement) =  $\frac{Na}{Na + Nd} \times 100$  (Number of Agreements / (Number of Agreements + Number of Disagreements)) X 100. Examining the expert opinions, it can be said that a coding consistency rate of 90% was achieved, in other words, that the coding was done in accordance with the aim of the research. A high rate of consensus between coders in research indicates that the codings are reliable (Stemler, 2000).

### Validity and Reliability

In research studies, while validity refers to the data collection tool, accuracy of the data, and stages of the research, reliability provides information about the consistency of the research. Information is given as to whether or not the research questions measure the topics intended, and the extent to which this is successful

(Creswell, 2014). To ensure validity and reliability in the study, plausibility, transferability, consistency and confirmability were taken into account. Accordingly, for plausibility in the study, a deeply-focused data collection technique was used, besides which, the participants' demographic information, the stages of the research, and the data collection tools are explained in detail (Creswell & Miller, 2000). To ensure transferability of the research, the data have been transferred without making revisions or interpretations. Furthermore, the planning of the research, the sample selection, the number of participants and the analyses are described in detail. To enable consistency of the study, the codes were sent to experts in the field and consistency with the researcher was calculated according to the formula for inter-rater consistency developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). Finally, to ensure confirmability in the research, the data were subjected to the views of the participants, who confirmed the statements that they had made. In addition, all information and documents, sound-recordings and notes collected during the research process were archived.

## Findings

In this section of the study, information related to the findings is included. Within this scope, an attempt was made to reveal the positive and negative aspects of parent-child relationships during the pandemic period, to reveal the changes seen in mother-child relationships and father-child relationships, to make an evaluation of relationships within the family, and to find out which activities families spent time on during this period. The findings obtained as a result of the research are explained with diagrams.

### 1. Positive and negative aspects of parent-child relationships during the pandemic period

As the first problem question of the research, an attempt was made to reveal the positive and negative aspects of parent-child relationships during the pandemic period. Figure 1 below shows the positive aspects of parents' relationships with their children according to the views of the participants.

#### Positive Aspects

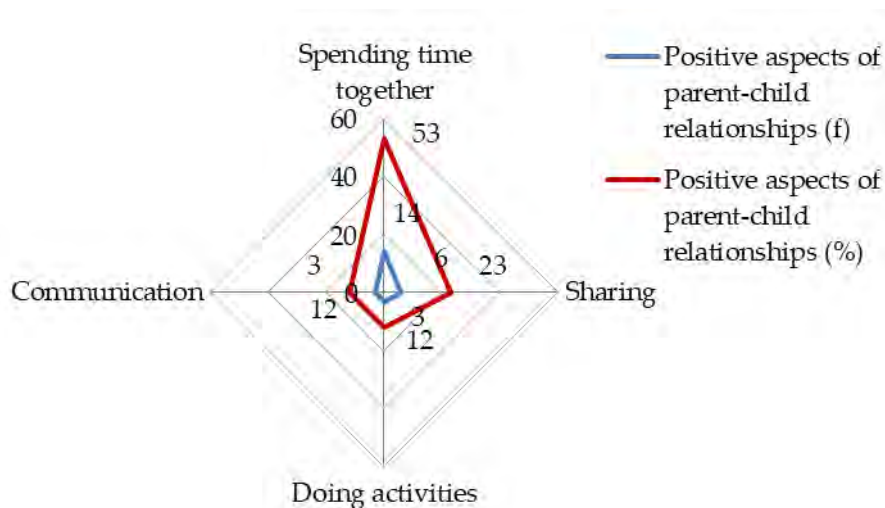


Figure 1. Positive aspects of parent-child relationships

Examination of Figure 1 reveals that the pandemic period had a positive effect on parent-child relationships in 4 subthemes. These were expressed as spending time together (53%), sharing (23%), doing activities (12%), and communication (12%), respectively. Positive views of participants related to these subthemes are given below.

"We had more time to spend time together. We spent this time very enjoyably. For the first time, we became so aware of being a family. We did a lot of activities, we played games, we watched films, and we cooked meals. All these activities showed us how valuable the time we spend together is." (P.3)

"We had the chance to spend more quality time with our child, to play games and do activities. We had the opportunity to do many activities that we hadn't been able to do before due to being busy with work and school time. Moreover, we began to help each other more as family members with housework (cleaning, tidying the bedrooms, setting and clearing the table, etc.). We chatted more and had the chance to develop our mutual relationships as parent and child." (P.10)

"We managed to play a great number of different games together, and in my opinion, our communication improved. We also had the chance to understand and get to know each other better. I saw that we could spend time together and that I could share things with my child." (P.19)

“It was positive in terms of the things we shared and the activities we did together. We spent the whole day together. Instead of doing nothing, we planned joint activities at all times of the day. Therefore, we saw that we always needed each other, and took pleasure in doing things together.” (P.14)

When the positive findings related to the first research question are examined, it is seen that the majority of participants gave importance to spending time together and that they considered that this process contributed to their perception of the family. Furthermore, the participants were united in their view that sharing among family members increased, that time was set aside for joint activities, and that all of these improved communication within the family.

### Negative Aspects

Figure 2 below shows the negative aspects of parents’ relationships with their children in the opinions of the participants.

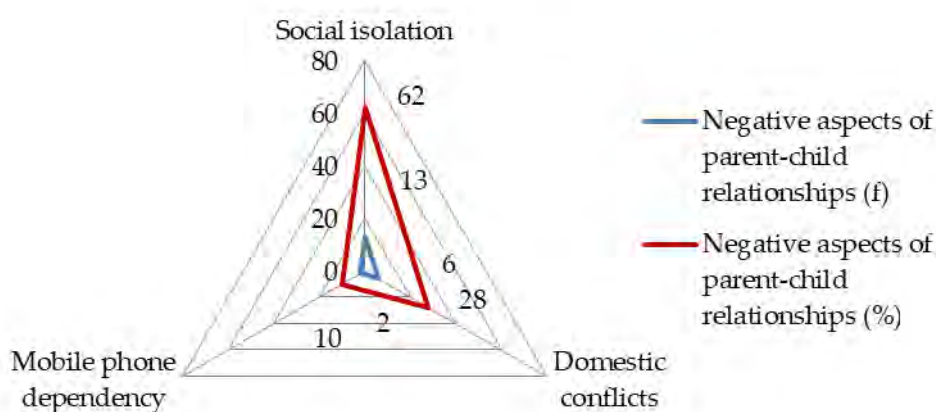


Figure 2. Negative aspects of parent-child relationships

Examination of Figure 2 reveals that the pandemic period had a negative effect on parent-child relationships in 3 subthemes. These were stated to be social isolation (62%), domestic conflicts (28%), and mobile phone dependency (10%), respectively. Negative views of participants regarding these subthemes are given below.

“This could have formed a habit that reached addiction level in him. I tried to keep him away from his phone and to do physical activities as much as possible. In this sense, this period could have been dangerous.” (P.1)

“My child began to spend more time with technological tools that she had previously spent limited time with, and she began to grow less interested and more bored with the activities we did at home. Moreover, as a result of staying at home for long periods, more aggressive and bad-tempered reactions began to form in my child’s behaviour than previously.” (P.7)

“Since the children are unable to go out and socialise, the parents also become tense. Problems occur in social life and conflicts form within the family. This situation has an impact relationships and all members of the family are affected.” (P.4)

“Since we were forced to spend time at home, we turned a blind eye to certain behaviours and allowed them. However, children do not know the limits of this. The pandemic period resulted in the relaxing of certain rules. The children thought that the rules were not important and that they could bend them.” (P.11)

“Since we have only one child, she always wants to play with us. When the games are left to her, they take the form of chatting with her doll and this upsets us a little. After a time, we began to have difficulty finding different games for her that we could all enjoy together.” (P.18)

Examination of the negative findings related to the first research question reveals that most of the participants emphasised their desire for socialisation and for this wish to be responded to. It can be said that for individuals who cannot meet their need for socialisation, conflicts are seen in the families they belong to. In this context, the importance of socialisation among basic human needs is also revealed. Furthermore, it can be said that children used mobile phones or other technological tools more often because the activities that families carried out with their children during the pandemic period were not sufficient.



## 2. Changes experienced in mother-child relationships during the pandemic period

The aim of the second problem question of the research was to reveal changes experienced in relationships between mothers and their children during the pandemic period. Changes that occurred in the mother-child relationship in the pandemic period according to the views of participants are shown in Figure 3 below.

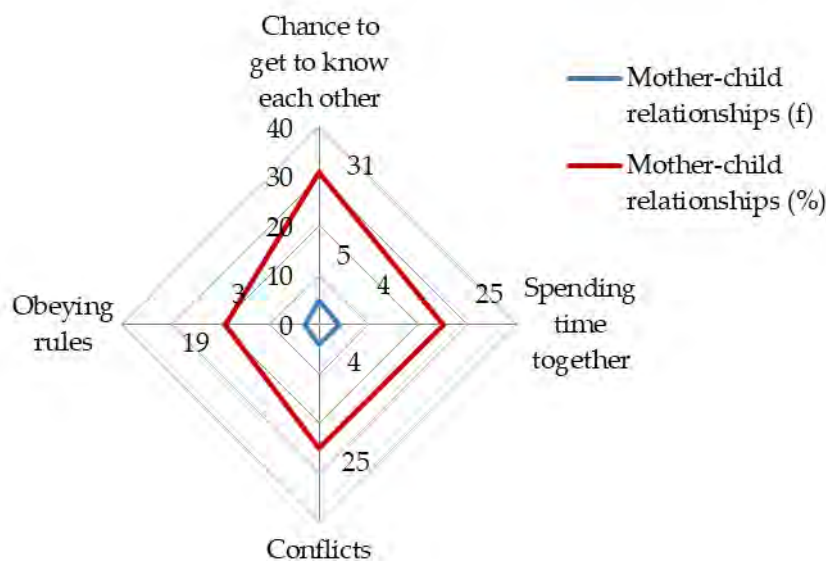


Figure 3. Mother-child relationship

Examination of Figure 3 reveals that changes were seen in the mother-child relationship during the pandemic period in 4 subthemes. These were expressed as the chance to get to know each other (31%), spending time together (25%), conflicts (25%), and obeying rules (19%), respectively. Participants' views related to these subthemes are shown below.

"This period had a partially negative effect on our relationship. Since our child could not see his friends or teachers, was unable to go out, and became very bored at home, he began to display rather peevish behaviours and his demands increased. As for me, during this period, I tried to prevent these and to explain that he would not be able to get everything he wanted." (P.3)

"To be honest, it was rather a tiring period. Staying at home, not being able to go out and being with us all the time tired him out. We had conflicts from time to time because he found it hard to obey rules that needed to be obeyed at home. We relaxed the rules during this time, but he only wanted more." (P.6)

"Because the number of things we shared increased, we had the chance to spend more time together and to get to know each other together. On the other hand, problems occurred regarding obeying the rules. Waking up time, playtime, bath time...everything became confused with leisure time and the concept of time became a process of „I'll do it later“." (P.8)

"We did not experience any health or financial problems. As a mother that generally works, spending more time with my child made me happy. But of course, from time to time I experienced more flexibility and relaxation in my mutual relationship with my child. For example, I can say that the child began to more easily disobey rules that needed to be obeyed at home." (P.10)

"Staying at home for a long time made the child more active, and also more emotional and tearful. My child continually asks when the roads will be opened so that we can visit grandma and grandad, and cries. Her overactive state also makes me nervous, but I try to remain calm." (P.18)

When the findings related to the second research problem are examined, it can be said that during the pandemic period, participants had the opportunity to spend time together as mother and child, and in this context, to get to know each other better. This situation also shows that during normal times, the rapid pace of life leads to ruptures in relations between mothers and their children. Moreover, it can be said that children had difficulty in obeying rules due to being continually at home during the period of the pandemic, and that conflicts occurred between mothers and their children with regard to obeying rules.

### 3. Changes experienced in father-child relationships during the pandemic period

The aim of the third problem question of the research was to reveal changes that occurred in relationships between fathers and their children during the pandemic period. Changes that were experienced in the father-child relationship in the pandemic period according to the views of participants are shown in Figure 4 below.

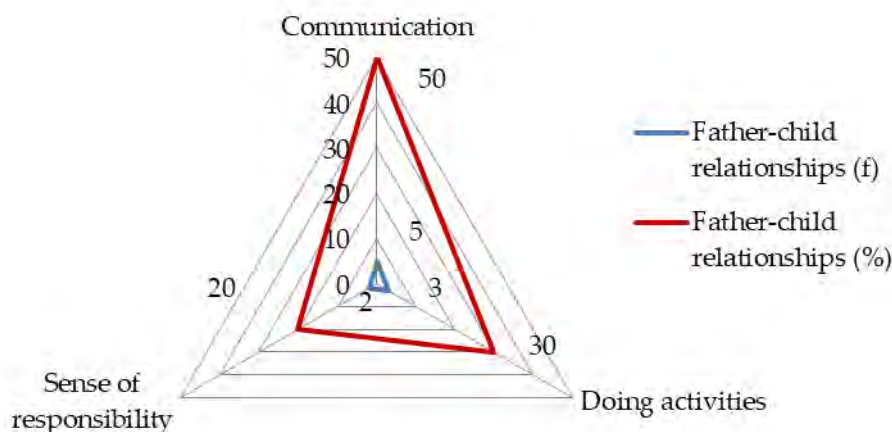


Figure 4. Father-child relationship

As can be seen in Figure 4, changes were observed in the father-child relationship during the pandemic period in 3 subthemes. These changes were stated to be related to communication (50%), doing activities (30%), and sense of responsibility (20%). Participants' views regarding these subthemes are given below.

"More togetherness was made possible, and the father's responsibilities and the child's perspective on the father changed. This had a positive impact on communication between them. We did activities and played games together. This also strengthened the bond between us." (P.8)

"Since work became part-time, we spent a lot of time together at home. We had the chance to get to know each other. We did more activities together while staying at home. These activities were both entertaining and instructional. This also strengthened the communication and bonds between us." (P.13)

"I think this period consolidated our relationship. I did not have much spare time in my life previously. During the pandemic, we did a lot of activities together and enjoyed ourselves. Now and again, he asked for his friends or did not obey the rules, but I responded positively to this." (P. 18)

"The children were stuck at home, could not go out and see their friends, and missed their teachers. They tried to spend their energy at home. At this time, they did not obey the rules. I had to warn them constantly. This put a strain on our relationship." (P.14)

Examination of the findings related to the third research problem reveals that participants emphasised communication between the father and child. This situation also reveals that fathers cannot normally spare enough time for their children in daily life. Moreover, it can be said that by spending more time at home, fathers became aware of their responsibilities. Participants also stated that they set aside more time for their children by doing activities with them.

### 4. Evaluation of relationships within the family

The fourth research problem question aimed for an evaluation by mothers and fathers of relationships within the family during the pandemic period. Figure 5 below includes an evaluation of relationships within the family in the period of the pandemic according to the views of participants.

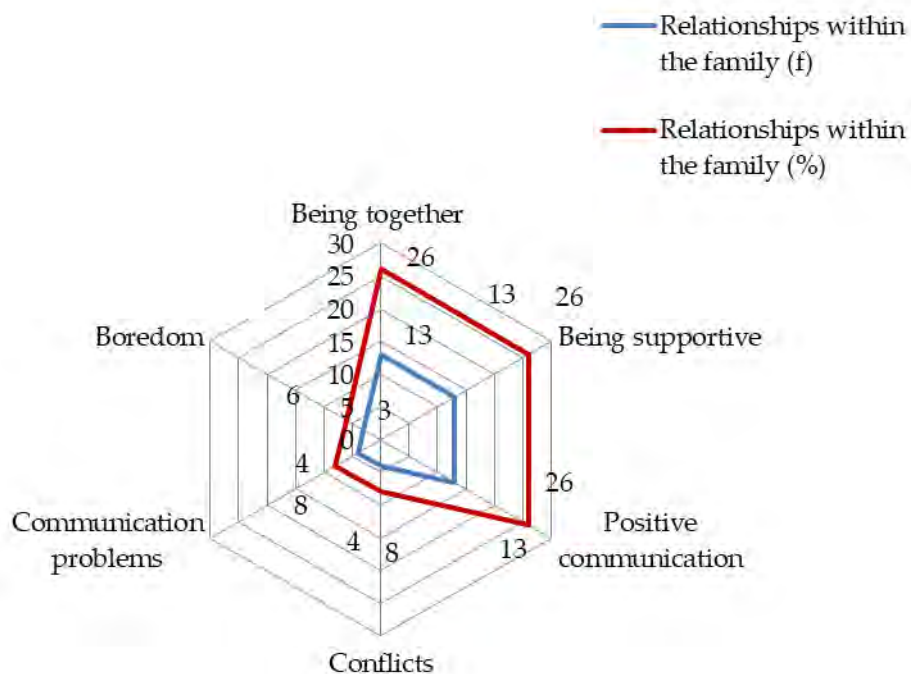


Figure 5. Evaluation of relationships within the family

It can be seen in Fig. 5 that relationships within the family during the pandemic are evaluated in 6 subthemes. These assessments were expressed as being together (26%), being supportive (26%), positive communication (26%), conflicts (8%), communication problems (8%), and boredom, respectively. Below, views of participants related to these subthemes are given.

“As a family, we did not have any negative experiences. We were pleased to be together, we supported each other at every opportunity, and we developed positive communication. This situation strengthened our family bonds.” (P.16)

“Overall, my assessment is positive. This period taught us a number of values. Being together was good for all of us and we had the chance to get to know each other. Moreover, since we were together all the time, our communication also developed in a positive way.” (P.17)

“I can say that it had a negative effect. Since we were together all the time during the pandemic, we became bored, and at times, we even had differences of opinion and disputes. This also caused breakdowns in family communication from time to time.” (P.11)

When the findings related to the fourth research problem are examined, it can be seen that the participants mostly gave positive assessments of relationships within the family during the pandemic, and they stated that during this period, they were together, they supported each other and they established positive communication with each other. This situation shows that individuals preserve the importance of the concept of family and that even if conditions change, they continue to pay attention to relationships within the family. On the other hand, there were also parents who stated experiencing negative situations such as communication problems, conflicts and boredom due to spending long periods of time together. That could have been come in sight with differences of communication format in family members and with each other.

##### 5. Activities carried out with children during the pandemic period

The aim of the fifth problem question of the research was to identify the activities conducted with children during the period of the pandemic. Activities carried out with children during the pandemic are included in Figure 6 below.

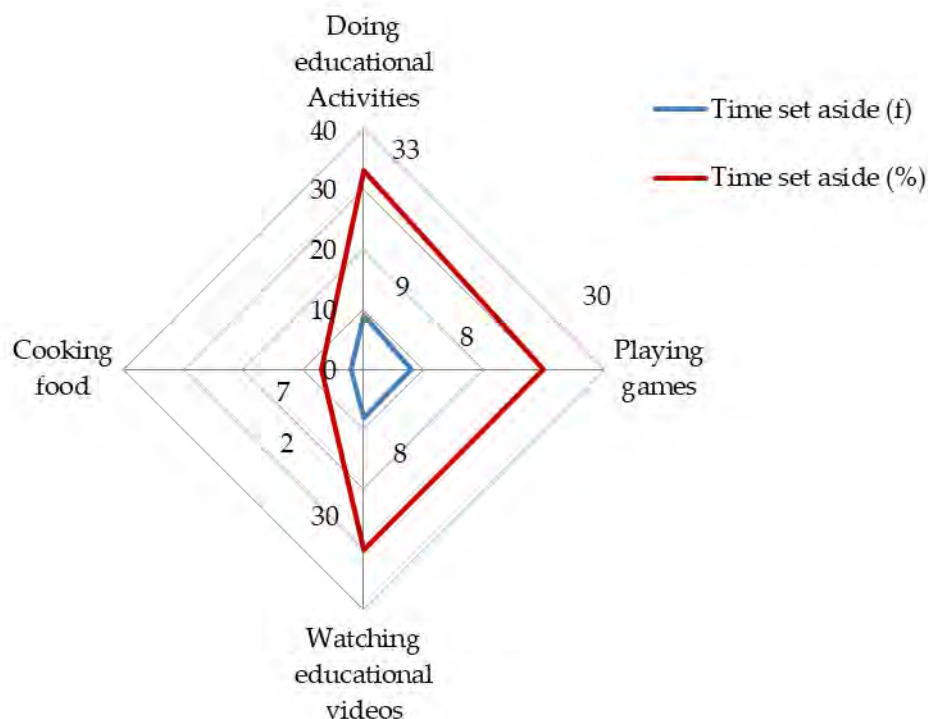


Figure 6. Activities carried out with children

Figure 6 shows that activities done with the children during the pandemic were carried out in 4 themes. These activities were stated to be doing educational activities (33%), playing games (30%), watching educational videos (30%), and cooking food (7%), respectively.

“Since the children didn’t have school, we tried to give them support by doing educational activities at home. We communicated with their teacher and got through this period according to her recommendations. I think it was a successful period.” (P.2)

“I can say it was spent productively. We carried out activities with educational features. Besides these, we played games. We sometimes made the game tools ourselves. These helped him to develop his manual skills. After a time, he wanted to do activities requiring handicraft.” (P.5)

“Whilst not as enjoyable as school, we spent quite an entertaining time under pandemic conditions. We did housework together. She helped me. We cooked, baked cakes and cleaned together. She also got a lot of enjoyment out of this. Later, we rewarded her by playing games. We did educational activities together.” (P.9)

“During this period, we had the chance to learn and discover many games. We played new games together every day. We made every effort possible to ensure that she didn’t fall behind in her education. However, whatever we do, it cannot replace the education given at school.” (P.12).

Examination of the findings related to the fifth problem of the research reveal that families generally attempted to conduct activities that have educational characteristics with their children. The reason for this situation may be that the families did not wish to let their children’s education fall behind. Furthermore, it is seen that families took care to spend more productive time with their children by choosing to watch educational videos and play games. Making various activities to spend quality time which the families have made to support development of the children show that the families have awareness in this regard.

## Results and Conclusion

All societies are faced with important problems at different times in terms of economic, educational, social, political or health aspects, and they attempt to overcome these alone or by obtaining support from other societies. However, certain problems go beyond affecting a single society or region and create effects on a global level, and problems such as these are known as pandemics. Most countries of the world have had to struggle with an epidemic disease that appeared at the end of 2019 and was declared a pandemic, and during this period, many individuals have spent a long time at home with members of their family. In this period, as a precaution, education was also suspended at first, and later, education by distance learning was begun. Students at all stages and in all classes took part in educational activities via distance learning under the control of their

teachers and families. During the pandemic period, which affected all family members in different ways, relationships within the family changed, and in this context, the aim of this study was determined as an in-depth examination of relationships and changes in relations between families and their children of preschool age during the period of the pandemic.

The first problem question of the research aimed to reveal the positive and negative aspects of the pandemic period in terms of the parent-child relationship. When the research findings are examined, it is seen that participants expressed the positive aspects of the pandemic period in terms of spending time together, sharing, doing activities and communication, while the negative aspects were stated to be social isolation, domestic conflicts and mobile phone dependency. According to these findings, from a positive viewpoint, it can be seen that most participants considered spending time together important and that this process contributed to their family perception. Moreover, the participants all agreed that sharing between family members increased, that time was devoted to doing joint activities, and that communication within the family improved as a result. Examining similar studies, it was also determined that positive changes occurred in parent-child relationships during the pandemic (Demirbaş-Kurt & Koçak-Sevgili, 2020), and that together with activities carried out with family members (Başaran & Aksoy, 2020), periods of interaction also increased (Lee & Ward, 2020). Considering the negative findings, however, the majority of the participants stressed their desire for socialisation and for this wish to be fulfilled. It can be said that for individuals who cannot satisfy their need for socialisation, conflicts occur in the families they are members of. This also reveals the importance of socialisation among basic human needs. In addition, it can be said that since the activities that families performed with their children during the pandemic were inadequate, children used their mobile phones or other technological tools more frequently. On the other hand, in studies related to problems experienced in the parent-child relationship during the pandemic, it was revealed that negative situations such as social isolation, intense stress (Amakiri et al., 2020; Brown, Doom, Lechuga-Peña, Watamura & Koppels, 2020), technology addiction, disruptions in nutrition habits (Başaran & Aksoy, 2020; Usta-Yüksek & Gökcan, 2020), increase in physical and psychological punishment (Lee & Ward, 2020), neglect, difficulty in following the education process and failure to use time productively were frequently experienced (Chung, Lanier & Wong, 2020).

The second problem question of the research aimed to reveal the changes experienced in relationships between the mother and child during the pandemic period. When the research findings are examined, it is seen that the pandemic period caused changes in the mother-child relationship in terms of getting to know each other, spending time together, conflicts and obeying rules. According to these findings, it can be said that during the pandemic period, mothers and their children had the chance to spend more time together, and accordingly, to get to know each other better. This also shows that under normal circumstances, relations between mothers and their children may break down due to the rapid pace of life. Furthermore, it can be said that children had problems with obeying rules due to being at home all the time during the pandemic period, and that conflicts were experienced between mothers and their children in terms of obeying rules. Examination of similar studies reveals that since mothers stayed at home for long periods, they spent more time with their children, carried out various activities, and were happy with this situation (Öztürk-Demir, Kuru & Yıldız, 2020; Usta-Yüksek & Gökcan, 2020). On the other hand, it was revealed that since mothers transferred their work conditions to the home environment, due to changes experienced in their role expectations, their workloads became more difficult because of the increase in routine tasks such as cleaning and cooking at home (Akbaş-Zeybekoğlu & Dursun, 2020; Collins, Landivar, Ruppner & Scarborough, 2020; Lee & Ward, 2020). Moreover, mothers' perception of wellbeing was negatively affected since they had to abandon their work lives. During this period, when parent burnout is frequently experienced, the fact that rates of child neglect have increased is also very disturbing in terms of domestic relationships (Griffith, 2020).

The third problem question of the research aimed to reveal the changes that occurred in relationships between the father and child in the pandemic period. Examination of the research findings reveals that the pandemic period caused changes in the father-child relationship with regard to communication, doing activities and sense of responsibility. The research findings reveal that participants placed emphasis on communication between the father and child. This also shows that under normal circumstances, fathers cannot spare enough time for their children in their daily lives. In addition, it can be said that fathers became more aware of their responsibilities by spending more time at home. Participants also reported that by doing activities with their children, they were able to devote more time to their children. It can also be seen in similar studies that during the pandemic, changes have occurred in the sharing of tasks related to housework between parents, and that in this new arrangement, fathers are taking more interest with regard to care and education of their children at home (Mangiavacchi, Piccoli & Pieroni, 2020). Many fathers have transferred to the system of working from home during the pandemic and at the same time, have taken on responsibility for childcare. In this period, when schools and kindergartens are closed and the general need for childcare has increased, fathers' responsibilities

have also increased. It is also likely that during the pandemic, when fathers spend more time with their children, the bond between them and their children will be strengthened (Alon, Doepke, Olmstead-Rumsey & Tertilt, 2020; Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera & Lamb, 2004).

The fourth problem question of the research aimed for an evaluation of relationships within the family in the period of the pandemic. Participants evaluated the positive aspects of relationships within the family as being together, supporting each other and positive communication, while the negative aspects were assessed as conflicts, communication problems and boredom. The research findings show that the participants mostly evaluated relationships within the family during the pandemic as positive, and they reported that during this time, they were together, they gave each other support, and they communicated with each other in a positive way. This situation shows that people preserve the importance of the family concept and that even when conditions change, they still show concern for relationships within the family. However, there were also parents who stated that they experienced negative situations such as disputes, boredom and communication problems because of spending long periods of time together. It has been determined in similar studies that during this period, domestic relationships have been affected both positively and negatively (Başaran & Aksoy, 2020; Demirbaş-Kurt & Koçak-Sevgili, 2020), and that family members respond to this situation in different ways (Daks, Peltz & Rogge, 2020; LaBrenz, Baiden, Findley, Tennant & Chakravarty, 2020; Lee & Ward, 2020). During the pandemic period, it is very important for parents to display a positive parental approach and to be sensitive to their children's individual needs, and for parent-child relationships to be strengthened by overcoming problems in daily life with empathy and respect (Johnson, 2020).

The fifth problem question of the research aimed to reveal the types of activities that were carried out by families with their children during the pandemic period. Participants stated that the activities they allocated the most time to were educational activities, playing games, educational videos and cooking food. According to the research findings, families generally tried to carry out activities that had educational characteristics with their children. The reason for this may be that families did not want to allow their children to fall behind in their education. Moreover, it can be said that by preferring to watch educational videos and play games, families took care to spend more productive time with their children. When similar studies are examined, it is revealed that children spend time at home by playing games or doing activities, but that an increase in their dependence on technology also occurs (Öztürk-Demir, Kuru & Yıldız-Demir, 2020). It is very important for parents to support their children from different developmental aspects by providing physical and emotional support during this period (Coyne, et al. 2020).

## Conclusion

The changes occurring in health, social, economic and psychological fields during pandemic period has affected family life and communication of child-parent in a different way. Positive and negative effects has been occurred in the communication of child-parent in this period. When the results of the research evaluated that has come out besides negative effects of pandemic period on family communication more positive effects has been experienced. It has been determined that the family members have spent more time and shared more with each other. Family members evaluated the positive aspects of relationships within the family as being together, supporting each other and positive communication, while the negative aspects were assessed as conflicts, communication problems and boredom.

It has been determined that some negative and positive differences have been experienced in mother and child relationship, the mothers have spent more time with the children and the time spending with them have increased. Besides it has been determined that staying at home for a long time cause conflicts over the rules in mother-child relationship. Also, positive changes have occurred in father-child relationship in this pandemic period and the fathers have got the chance to strengthen the relationship by spending much more time with their children. It has been revealed that the family members are trying to spend quality time together by making different kinds of activities in pandemic period. Parents stated that the activities they allocated the most time to were educational activities, playing games, educational videos and cooking food.

In regards of these results it can be said that some changes have occurred in the relationship of parent-child, pandemic period has affected the family members and relationship with each other negatively or positively.

## Recommendations

The pandemic period may be one of the best times for parents to play more of a role in the care and skills development of their children, and to spend quality time with them by strengthening family ties, and for family members to share many things together. In this period, it is important for parents to play games with their



children so as to increase communication with them and to allay their fears and worries, and to engage in activities together like singing and dancing in order to encourage physical activity. In this period, when education is carried out mostly by parents, it is essential for them to be sensitive towards their children's individual characteristics and needs, and to help them to develop their capacity to control themselves. Moreover, parents should ensure that their children continue their everyday life rhythms and routine activities during the pandemic period. Instead of paying too much attention to information about the pandemic, children should set aside more time each day for activities aimed at manual skills with games that support physical and mental development. At the same time, children should be encouraged to communicate with their friends and family members via telephone or internet. During this period, state institutions can also help families to maintain domestic relationships by ensuring that families' basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, safety, health and finances are met. It is also very important for inequalities between children in education to be removed in this period.

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