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MOTHERS DURING THE PANDEMIC: THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND
ONLINE PARENTING GROUP EXPERIENCES OF MOTHERS

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Mothers During The Pandemic: The Covid-19 Pandemic and Online Parenting
Group Experiences of Mothers

Pandemide Anneler: Covid-19 Pandemisi ve Annelerin Çevrimiçi Ebeveynlik
Grup Deneyimleri

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ABSTRACT

The parents' experiences during the pandemic and the online parenting group experiences were explored in this study. Semi-structured interviews were separately conducted with nine mothers. In the narratives, the participants expressed the effects of the pandemic on their parenting, online parenting group experiences, and their suggestions for improving the online parenting group. Data analysis was carried out with the thematic analysis method, and four basic themes emerged as a result of the study. These were: Mothers' perception of themselves and their spouses' as a parent, Effects of the pandemic, Online Parenting Group (OPG) experience, and The OPG design. The study results showed that parents and their children were negatively affected by the pandemic, the workload of mothers increased during this process, the negative effect of gender-based disproportionate responsibility in parenting on mothers, and the importance of father involvement. In addition, the participants' positive experiences regarding the online parenting group, such as sharing, feeling that they are not alone, and acquiring knowledge, showed the necessity of supportive parenting groups and the importance of the participation of both parents. The findings of this study provided valuable information for psychotherapists who work with children, adolescents, and families in online parenting. The limitations of this study were discussed and suggestions for future research were presented.

Keywords: Covid-19, pandemic and parenting, online parenting group, social support, father involvement.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada ebeveynlerin pandemi sürecindeki deneyimleri ve çevrimiçi ebeveynlik grubu deneyimleri incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmaya dokuz anne katılmıştır. Her bir katılımcı ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Katılımcılar söylemlerinde pandeminin ebeveynliklerine olan etkilerini, çevrimiçi ebeveynlik grubu deneyimlerini ve çevrimiçi ebeveynlik grubunu geliştirmeye yönelik önerilerini ifade etmişlerdir. Veri analizi tematik analiz yöntemiyle gerçekleştirilmiş ve analiz sonucunda dört ana tema ortaya çıkmıştır: Bunlar: Annelerin kendilerine ve eşlerine yönelik ebeveynlik algısı, Pandeminin etkileri, Çevrimiçi ebeveynlik grubu deneyimleri ve Çevrimiçi ebeveynlik grubu tasarımı olarak isimlendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları ebeveynlerin ve çocuklarının pandemiden olumsuz etkilendiğini, bu süreçte annelerin iş yükünün arttığını, ebeveynlikte cinsiyete dayalı orantısız sorumluluğun anneler üzerindeki olumsuz etkisini ve baba katılımının önemini göstermiştir. Ayrıca katılımcıların çevrimiçi ebeveynlik grubuna ilişkin paylaşım yapabilme, yalnız olmadıklarını hissetme ve bilgi edinme gibi olumlu deneyimleri destekleyici ebeveynlik gruplarının gerekliliğini ve bu gruplara her iki ebeveynin katılımının önemini ortaya koymuştur. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, çocuk, ergen ve ailelerle çevrimiçi çalışan psikoterapistler için faydalı bilgiler sunmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın sınırlılıkları tartışılmış ve gelecek çalışmalar için öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Covid-19, pandemi ve ebeveynlik, çevrimiçi ebeveynlik grubu, sosyal destek, baba katılımı.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This research examines parents' experiences who attended the online parenting group during the pandemic. The narratives of nine mothers who participated in the online parenting group during the pandemic were examined through semi-structured interviews. More specifically, the impact of the pandemic on mothers, their spouses, and children, and the online parenting group experiences of the participants were investigated.

During the Covid, with the end of various contexts such as school and peer groups, families became even more critical for children. Therefore, it is more important than ever to focus on the parents closest to the child during the pandemic (Karki et al., 2020). The Covid-19 is a unique process, and it is thought that in-depth understanding of the mothers' experiences during this process will contribute to the field. For this reason, this study aims to examine the mothers' experiences in depth.

1.2. COVID-19 OUTBREAK AND ITS EFFECTS

1.2.1. Covid-19 Outbreak in the World and Turkey

The coronavirus disease, defined as Covid-19, which emerged in Wuhan, China, in 2019, spread rapidly worldwide, and the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a pandemic on March 11, 2020. Pandemic is a definition given to epidemic diseases seen in many continents or countries and has a widespread effect (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Health, 2020). Covid-19 is one of the most severe and wide-ranging epidemiological incidents lately (Jin et al., 2020; Park et al., 2020; Rothan & Byrareddy, 2020). Its effect on mental health is a heightened problem (Holmes et al., 2020). To decrease the spread of disease, many public health policies were taken by governments (Cheng et al., 2020). These public health preventions included the temporary closure of educational institutions, workplaces,

arts, and cultural venues, social distancing, and curfews, as well as confinements to prevent disease transmission.

In Turkey, the government closed all educational institutions across the country to avoid the spread of Covid-19 and switched to distance education on March 23, 2020 (Çaykuş & Çaykuş, 2020). The government first initiated the curfew at the age of 65 and above to reduce the spread rate of the pandemic. Later, children and adolescents under the age of 20 were included in this restriction as of April 3, 2020 (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Interior, 2020). According to the Presidential Circular (2020), as the spread of the pandemic within the country and its consequences worsened, scientific and cultural activities were postponed. All domestic and international flights were stopped. Employees in public institutions and organizations were either given administrative permission or were allowed to apply flexible working methods such as remote work or rotational work. As reported by the WHO (2020) data, Turkey was among the top ten countries with the highest total number of cases as of May 2020, with 163,942 Covid-19 cases. Despite the decisions of education taken are not consistent, as of October 2020, kindergartens, primary school first grade, and 8th grade provide in-person education two days a week.

1.2.2. Psychological Effects of Covid-19 on Children and Adolescents

Children and adolescents have experienced strict restrictions in their daily lives due to Covid-19. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) assumed that nearly 1.5 billion children could not access educational services and outdoor activities due to Covid-19 (Cluver et al., 2020). Even though children were at lower risk for Covid-19 (Sinha et al. 2020), they have faced the possibility of losing someone they love and were exposed to social, environmental, and physiological restrictions. Therefore, it could be said that children were the most affected group from the pandemic, both because they were restricted without their own will and they were still in a critical stage for psychological and physiological development (Karakoç Demirkaya, 2020). Schools are educational places for children that provide children with routines such as personal hygiene, healthy eating habits, and physical activity (Sylva, 1994). In

addition, the school offers quality leisure activities and peer interaction for children (Ghosh et al., 2020). Therefore, it can be assumed that children's physical and mental health and their sense of normality provided by schools were adversely affected due to school closures and curfews (Lee, 2020; Stewart, 2018).

Çaykuş and Çaykuş (2020) stated that children's anxiety and fear levels increased due to factors such as remote education, decreased communication with friends, and family members working from home. In addition, Duraku et al. (2020) revealed that social distance, isolation, and school closures affect children both emotionally and behaviorally, causing a decrease in children's motivation to do homework and decrease physical activity.

Children spend less time with their families on their way to adolescence (Larson et al., 1996). This creates opportunities for time to spend time outside the family and causes peer relationships to become more critical for adolescents (Berndt, 1989; Buhrmester, 1996; Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). Peer interactions help children to develop emotional closeness with others (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986), guide and advise each other (Buhrmester, 1996), and model each other for social behaviors (Sussman et al., 1994). Due to the pandemic, many adolescents have spent a long time at home with their parents. In Turkey, curfews affected children and adolescents more who were under 20. Remote education and spending a long time at home affected the lifestyles and emotions of adolescents negatively (Buzzi et al., 2020). These drastic changes created an atmosphere where children and adolescents cannot show their anger to others as before (Johnson, 2020).

As a result, the pandemic had severe impacts on the psychological health of children and adolescents (Dalton et al., 2020; Sprang & Silman, 2013; Wang et al., 2020). Ruiz-Roso et al. (2020) found that boredom and stress increased in children during the pandemic. They found an increase in anger toward demands, intolerance of rules, sleeping problems, agitation, and mood changes in children aged 4-10 years (Pisano et al., 2020). Another study found that increase in the anger, fear, and clinginess rates of children (Jiao et al., 2020). Also, Di Giorgio et al. (2020) found that children had difficulties following routines, self-control, and self-regulation skills during the pandemic.

Researchers also examined changes in children during the pandemic that their parents observed. Parents indicated internalizing and externalizing symptoms in children (Orgilés et al., 2020). Also, parents noted that their children become more irritable, nervous, regressed, isolated, physically distanced, anxious, confused, and more aggressive (Buzzi et al., 2020; Lee, 2020; Pisano et al., 2020). Additionally, there were significant changes in children with aggressive and destructive behaviors. They were more agitated and undisciplined with the decrease in their self-regulating capacities (Çaykuş & Çaykuş, 2020; Di Giorgio et al., 2020).

With the longer time in the home and less social contact, children became more involved with technological features like tablets, computers, etc. Children were and still are more exposed to screens which changes their daily routines and causing sleep and hygiene problems (Stern et al., 2020). Children participated in classes from their beds or bedrooms and replaced social media and media with social, physical, and leisure activities. In other words, as the duration and restrictions of pandemic increase, children lost touch with developmentally appropriate activities, contents, and expectancies (Buxton et al., 2015). As children adopted the new reality, the role of parents becomes more important in facilitating their coping mechanisms (Fry, 2021). Additionally, several studies (Ghosh et al., 2020; Pisano et al., 2020) found that sleep problems, decreased vocabulary during speech, reduced appetite, and sudden emotional changes were observed in children during the pandemic.

Children were not only affected in terms of sleep problems, but they also struggled with eating problems. Some children lost their appetite (Orgilés et al., 2020), increased emotional eating, binge, and unhealthy food consumption (Pietrobelli et al., 2020; Ruiz-Roso et al., 2020). In other words, they reacted with either a decrease or increase in their eating habit.

One another impact of the pandemic is that children became more involved with screens and technological devices, according to parent observations (Çaykuş & Çaykuş, 2020). Orgilés et al. (2020) mentioned that the time spent in front of a screen doubled during the pandemic, and it caused more sleeping problems, less social interaction, and severe conflicts between children and parents.

1.2.3. Psychological Effects of Covid-19 on Parents

During the pandemic, parents experienced more stress than adults who don't have a child (APA, 2020). Studies (Hiraoka & Tomoda, 2020; Orgilés et al., 2020; van Tilburg et al., 2020) have shown that parents mention higher stress due to fear of the virus or probable lack of childcare than before the pandemic. This high stress started since parents have to take on multiple roles simultaneously, such as a parent, a spouse, an employee, an employer, and a caregiver (Coyne et al., 2020). Therefore parenting status was seen as a risk factor for fear and anxiety (Lauri Korajlija & Jokic-Begic, 2020).

Many preventions have been taken to decrease the risk of transmission of the disease during the pandemic. The most critical preventions were the remote work of parents and the remote education of children. However, these preventions might have harmful effects on family life (Cluver et al., 2020; Ministério da Saúde, 2020). Many parents both had to take care of their children and continued to work remotely due to the closure of schools, and as a result, they struggled with the stress of these concurrent demands (Fegert et al., 2020; Halvorsen et al., 2020). Social isolation, economic difficulties, and sudden changes in routines created a severe burden on the parents' mental health (Ornell et al., 2020). Parents, who previously benefited from support systems such as schools, kindergartens, extended family, and neighbors, were deprived of help during the pandemic (Ornell et al., 2020; Weems et al., 2020). Due to the lack of social support and increasing demands at home, parents became more sensitive, prone to violence, and had aggressive behaviors during this time (Brooks et al., 2020; Greenaway et al., 2014; Reynolds et al., 2008). In other words, parental stress increased due to the lack of social support and workload. This heightened stress might increase domestic violence and child abuse risk (Brown et al. 2020; Campbell, 2020). Bai et al. (2020) found that the parents' mental health with children aged 0-3 was affected worse because of lack of support. Adolescents with more significant autonomy also needed help during the homeschooling process. (Brom et al., 2020). Being a parent in such unsupported crises was not easy and created higher stress, especially when dealing with emergencies (Vescovi et al., 2021). Pandemic preventions such as isolation were traumatic for many parents. Sprang and Silman (2013) found that a quarter of

parents who were isolated during the epidemic showed signs of anxiety, and they met the criteria for PTSD.

Parental stress is a risk factor for children's and parents' mental health problems (Bøe et al., 2018; Conger et al., 1992; Masarik & Conger, 2017; Sobolewski & Amato, 2005). Increased parenting stress led to changes in the discipline methods of parents. Spending longer time under the same roof with family members forced parents to be more controlling at home (APA, 2020; Chung et al., 2020). Many studies have shown that the relationship between controlling parenting behaviors (i.e., overprotection and coercion) and parents' perceived environmental threat (Fischer et al., 2010; Gurland & Grolnick, 2005; Mauras et al., 2012; Robichaud et al., 2020). Controlling parenting behaviors caused adverse mental health problems in children (Brown & Whiteside, 2008; Creswell et al., 2008; Laurin et al., 2015; Meyer & Wissemann, 2020; Thirlwall & Creswell, 2010; Van Der Bruggen et al., 2008). Many studies indicated that controlling parenting behaviors and children's anxiety is highly correlated (Barrett et al., 2002; Brown & Whiteside, 2008; Bögels & Brechman-Toussaint, 2006; Hudson & Rapee, 2001; Laurin et al., 2015; McLeod et al., 2007; Muris et al., 2003; Pereira et al., 2014; Van Der Bruggen et al., 2008). Wisseman et al. (2021) emphasized the adverse effects of controlling behaviors of parents on children, especially during the pandemic. Additionally, parental burnout experienced during the process will cause a detachment from the child, questions about their parenting capacities, not giving the necessary care to children, and eventually deepens the problem (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2020). Therefore, it can be said that parents who have higher levels of anxiety will use more controlling behaviors, which in turn caused negative impacts on children's mental health (Wisseman et al., 2021).

A recent study found that parents who reported being more affected by Covid-19 experienced higher levels of parenting stress, which was also associated with harsh parenting (Chung et al., 2020). Harsh parenting practices are associated with high levels of control, negative emotional expression, and aggressive behavior (i.e., spanking, offensive words, caning, yelling). Furthermore, there was a strong relationship between harsh parenting attitudes and children's internalization and externalization problems (Pinquart, 2017). In addition, Spinelli et al. (2020) found

that as the level of parenting stress increases, children's participation in the different activities decreases during the pandemic.

Other studies have emphasized especially mother-focused outcomes for the pandemic. The closure of schools and kindergartens has greatly challenged working mothers to meet their children's care needs (Power, 2020). A study conducted during the pandemic showed that the mothers' sleep quality had changed drastically (Cellini et al., 2020). Limbers et al. (2020) emphasized that mothers may experience high stress due to the competition of work and family responsibilities. With the focus of this study, it could be said that the pandemic is quite challenging for parents due to severe changes in routines. While some studies prove this difficulty for parents, it is emphasized that mothers especially have more problems during this process due to the increased household responsibilities (Minello, 2020).

Consequently, it can be said that parents and children were both negatively affected by the pandemic, and the parent-child dyads also affected each other. It was indicated that both parents and children became emotionally disturbed, exhausted from restriction and household life, and more intolerant to others in the home (Di Giorgio et al., 2020). However, parents also struggled with fear of infection, spreading the disease to family and loved ones, and financial problems. These struggles affected children and the parents negatively (Ghosh et al., 2020).

1.3. ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

Ecological systems theory is a model that explains the interaction of the person and his environment on the process-person-context-time (PPCT) axis (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), development is the interaction of a person's characteristics with the characteristics of the person's environment, and this interaction is continuous and multidirectional.

In the early texts of Bronfenbrenner's theory, the individual and his environment were described as the following systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1992). This theory, which puts the person in the center, can be

described as intertwined and interrelated clusters, from micro to macro, respectively.

When we examine these systems, we see that the center is the microsystem. This system includes the child's close relationships such as nuclear family, extended family, friends, school environment. It is significant for the child because a developing child spends the most time in the family, friends, and school environment. The interaction of the person with more than one group in the microsystem forms the mesosystem. For example, there will be a relationship between the child's school environment and family or between friends and family. This relational area is defined as the mesosystem. The exosystem is a system in which the developing person is not directly involved but indirectly affects and is influenced by it. For example, a mother may become angry with her child because of a problem at work, and thus the mother-child relationship may be damaged. The mother's work environment is not an environment where the child is directly involved but an environment that indirectly affects the child. The macrosystem is one of the most comprehensive but farthest from the developing child. It refers to values and social constructs such as the culture, norms, and belief systems in which the person lives. The macrosystem encompasses and interacts with all other systems. Finally, the chronosystem is defined as the changes a person experiences over time. It contains time-bound experiences such as entering adolescence, starting school, and the birth of a sibling (Salifu Yendork, 2020).

When systems theory and the PPCT model are combined, this literature will focus on context. As mentioned above, the microsystem is expressed as the child's relationship with his closest environment. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused children and adolescents to spend a lot of time with their families, with factors such as quarantine, curfews, remote work, and remote education. According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), a supportive environment is needed for the child's best development. The well-being and welfare of the parents, who are the essential parts of this environment, are vital. With the end of options like school and peer group during the pandemic, families have become even more crucial for their children. For this reason, focusing on the parents closest to the child is more critical than ever during the pandemic (Karki et al., 2020).

Turkey has a predominantly patriarchal system (Ivrendi & Isikoğlu, 2010). Evans (1997) found that caregiving is the mother's responsibility. Meeting material needs, such as earning money, is the father's responsibility in Turkish context. The changing conditions during the pandemic show the importance of questioning this patriarchal system. For this reason, it will be valuable to focus on both cultural norms and the parents, where each system mutually affects each other.

1.4. PARENTING

Parenting is defined as having the responsibility of raising a child from birth to adulthood by supporting his social, cognitive, emotional, and physical development (Johnson, 2020). Parenting is inherently stressful and complicated (Crnic & Low, 2002). This section will focus on parenting stress and the importance of father involvement.

1.4.1. Parenting Stress

Parenting stress increases the risk of child maltreatment in parenthood (Rodriguez-Jenkins & Marcenko, 2014; Whipple & Webster-Stratton, 1991). One factor of child maltreatment is harsh parenting, which includes discipline and practices characterized by spanking, physical violence, severe emotional pressure, and punishment (Chang et al., 2003). In addition, many studies have shown that as parenting stress increases, harsh parenting practices increase (Beckerman et al., 2017; Oshri et al., 2020), which can increase child maltreatment (Martorell & Bugental, 2006; Rodriguez & Green, 1997). Parenting stress is conceptually different from other potential forms of stress that a parent can experience, but the stress experienced by the parent in different roles may affect each other (Creasey & Reese, 1996; Holly et al., 2019). Lack of necessary resources, low reward, complicated and uncertain daily life are also sources of stress for parents (Wheaton, 1996). Disproportionate workload, unequal domestic responsibilities between parents, imbalances in daily life burdens, and marital conflicts have also been found to increase parenting stress (Armstrong et al., 2005; Kersh et al., 2006; Lavee et al., 1996).

Parenting stress results from a demand-resource imbalance. When the demands expected from the parents exceed the resources that the parents have, this results in parenting stress (Cherry et al., 2019; Holly et al., 2019; Parkes & Sweeting, 2018). Parenting stress includes demands disproportionate to the resources parents expect from themselves (Deater-Deckard, 1998). The demands of parenting roles range from primary care, such as nutrition and protection, to psychological needs of emotional adjustment, care, and attention (Deater-Deckard, 2004). Parental resources are essential and include various mental and physical factors such as financial support, psychological support, personal traits, feelings of knowledge, and competence (Deater-Deckard & Scarr, 1996).

Environmental factors such as work are also crucial for parenting stress (Folkman & Abidin, 1984, 1992). One of the most critical environmental factors that cause parenting stress is work-related stress. The Work-home resources (W-HR) model states that when parents were exposed to high demands in their work and family lives, they consume various resources to cope with these demands. When the personal resources of the parents were depleted, the balance between home and parenting function also deteriorates (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Many empirical studies have found that mothers' perception of workload and having a difficult child are associated with higher parenting stress (Ostberg & Hagekull, 2013).

Various studies showed the adverse effects of parenting stress on children's mental health (Danseco & Holden, 1998; Goldberg et al., 1996; Gorzka, 1999). Goldberg et al. (1996) found that parenting stress is the strongest predictor of emotional and behavioral problems in children, some of whom have chronic diseases. Researchers that examined families who have difficulties in daily life, such as financial problems and being homeless, found that when factors such as chronic illness, financial situation, or homelessness were left aside, the children's cognitive and social development were the most affected when parents experienced high parenting stress (e.g., Danseco & Holden, 1998; Gorzka, 1999).

Abidin's stress model, which is one of the most important and comprehensive explanations of parenting stress, describes parenting stress with three components. The first is the parent area (P), the second is the child area (C), and finally, the parent-child interaction area (R). According to the PCR theory, if

parental stress is high, it will directly affect many other areas. There will be children and parent-child interaction problems and emotional and behavioral problems in children (Abidin, 1990; 1992; 1995). The parental factors were the parent's emotional problems, mental health, support system, and adequate resources; the children's factors included child-related factors such as the children's temperament and physical and mental health status. The parent-child interaction is the most critical area where both sides bring the interaction of their features. The health of this area depends on the rate of conflicts in this area (Eyberg et al., 1992). High disputes in this area can lead to harsh parenting.

Social support has been found to reduce parental stress and negative parenting behaviors (Adamakos et al., 1986; Crnic et al., 1986; Lindberg et al., 1994). In addition to sources of social support such as supportive family, perceived control over stressful events could also act as a buffer against the adverse effects of stress (Frazier et al., 2011; Li et al., 2011). Perceived control is a significant factor for understanding the source of stress and coping with it (Dijkstra & Homan, 2016). Perceived control over events is associated with a decrease in anxiety, stress, and depression, as well as better adaptability (Ballash et al., 2006; Frazier et al., 2004; Grote et al., 2007). In addition to perceived control, acceptance was found to be a powerful coping strategy (Donald & Atkins, 2016). One of the most important sources of family support is spousal support. Spousal support is an important support type for individuals sharing daily life experiences from helping with household chores (Chan et al., 2019). Mothers stated that spousal support is the most critical factor for maternal competence (Crnic et al., 1983). Studies have found that individuals with spousal support balance their home and work lives (Gayathri & Karthikeyan, 2016; Siu et al., 2010).

As mentioned above, parenting stress is associated with many factors. As a result of these many factors, it has been found that parents who experience cumulative stress show more harsh and abusive parenting behaviors towards their children (Hutchison et al., 2016; Liu & Merritt, 2018; Yang, 2015). Parents who can better regulate their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors can adopt a more flexible attitude in the face of events that cause parenting stress (Deater-Deckard, 2004). In addition, the smallest unit of the society where children take their reactions as a role model and learn in this way is the family (Çaykuş & Çaykuş, 2020). Therefore,

during the pandemic, when available resources are minimal and parenting stress increases, the well-being of parents is more important than ever for the well-being of both parents and, indirectly, the children.

1.4.2. Father Involvement

Lamb et al. (1985) stated that father involvement consists of three factors: being interactive, being available, and being responsible. Interaction is the dynamic closeness between father and children. Availability is defined as the emotional and physical presence of the father. In contrast, responsibility is defined as the father's provision of necessary resources for his children and taking responsibility for childcare.

Due to the remote working conditions during the pandemic, fathers spent more time at home with their families, especially with their children, than usual. Even before the pandemic conditions, fathers' time spent with their offspring remarkably increased than in previous periods (Jones & Mosher, 2013; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). In addition, studies have indicated that fathers' expectations of being involved in parenting tasks and their time on parenting tasks have increased (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Yoshida, 2012). As studies on fatherhood increased, the importance of father involvement for the child's well-being, healthy physical, social and emotional development, and psychological regulation was realized (Adamsons & Johnson, 2013; Burbach et al., 2004; Harper & McLanahan, 2004; Lewis & Lamb, 2003).

Ehrenberg et al. (2001) stated that father involvement has many positive effects on children. These positive effects were listed as better cognitive and social development, higher empathy capacity and self-regulation skills, positive father-child and sibling relationships, and better life adjustment. In addition, father involvement has many positive educational outcomes, such as easier adaptation to school (Wilson & Prior, 2011) and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2015). Amato and Rivera (1999) emphasized that children's behavioral problems decreased as father involvement increased. Father involvement is also essential for the future parenting roles of boys. Many studies have shown that paternal behavior is passed on via intergenerational transmission (Belsky et al., 2009). One of the most critical

components of this intergenerational transmission is modeling. Benson (1968) stated that boys learn fatherhood through modeling their father. Hofferth (1998) found in his study that boys who do not have a father or who have less involved fathers exhibit qualitatively lower paternal behavior in the future. According to Lamb (2010), when parents give less importance to traditional gender roles in their parenting, their children also learn this through 'modeling.' Thus, children adopt flexible roles instead of conventional gender roles. In addition, this creates an opportunity to reduce the workload of mothers.

Therefore, the father's involvement is critical to the family system (Bocknek et al., 2014). The father involvement that included sharing parenting tasks was defined as 'co-parenting' (Feinberg, 2003). Co-parenting also affects marital satisfaction. As father involvement increases, the supportive family atmosphere created by co-parenting also increases (Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011). Mothers, who received support from their spouses in the childcare, stated that they have more maternal efficacy, and thus they showed more sensitive and patient parenting towards their children (Crnic et al., 1983). Mothers spend more time with their children than fathers (Wilson & Prior, 2011). In addition, different activities are salient when parents interact with their children. While playing is salient for fathers, caregiving is mainly related to mothers. Fathers' caregiving behavior mostly consisted of doing fun activities outside the home with their children (Craig, 2006; Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Although mothers play more with their children than fathers, outside activities were not dominant for mothers due to their caregiving workload (Downer & Mendez, 2005; Lamb, 2000).

Research on the fatherhood role dates back to the 1970s (Pleck, 2004). Since then, significant changes have begun regarding the quality of childcare, housework, and relationships with children (Craig, 2006; Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Before the primary caregivers were always mothers, fathers were described as 'breadwinners.' (Haas et al., 2010). Researchers indicated that the quality of father involvement is more important than its quantity (Kernis et al., 2000). They emphasized the quality of fatherhood and indicated that fathers who criticize or devalue their children would have children with low self-esteem (Kernis et al., 2000). The value of father involvement and the father figure interacting with their children increases (Hancock et al., 2013). Father's perception of efficacy is one of

the critical factors for father involvement. When the father feels competent about parenting, his interaction with his child increases (Freeman et al., 2008), and they feel more confident that they can cope with fatherhood challenges (Kwok & Li, 2014). Thus, it became very valuable for both fathers and children to spend time together independently from the mothers (Wilson & Prior, 2011).

In Turkey, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (2011) data reported that, in addition to childcare, women do almost ninety percent of daily chores such as cooking, ironing, and cleaning the house. In Turkish culture, the patriarchy positioned fathers as the person of authority and the breadwinner of the family (Ivrendi & Isikoğlu, 2010), while mothers were the main characters responsible for domestic household and childcare (Craig, 2006). Boratav et al. (2014) showed that the most common definition used by married for their identities is 'breadwinners.' Evans (1997) also indicated that caregiving is the mother's responsibility and material needs such as earning money are the father's responsibility. In countries with traditional gender roles, the caregiving position seen as 'feminine' may be the reason why fathers remain in their breadwinner positions. The heavy demands of work life might be another important factor for low fathers' involvement in child caregiving. The father, who prefers to be in a relational position in terms of father involvement and caregiving, may sometimes not maintain this relationality due to the demands of business life (Blazina & Watkins, 2000; Maurer & Pleck, 2006).

In sum, the importance of father involvement has become more salient due to the changing domestic conditions, especially during the pandemic. Moreover, considering that fathers' belief in the efficacy of their parenting, as mentioned above, it seems important to explore fathers' involvement in childcare.

1.5. SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PARENTING GROUPS

1.5.1. Social Support

Social support was defined as positive interaction among people, providing emotional or physical assistance to strengthen coping strategies with challenges

(Cohen & Wills, 1985). Generally, the social environment of the people offers adequate social support and emotional assistance (Schaefer et al., 2002). However, some challenging conditions that require social isolation, such as the pandemic, make it difficult to receive this support from the social environment.

According to Birch (1998), there are four categories for social support: emotional, informational, financial, and appraisal support. Emotional support was defined as listening to someone with interest and being available, while informational support was described as delivering or transferring necessary information to another person. Financial support was defined as providing instrumental assistance for money or essential needs, and appraisal support emphasizes the need for feedback that someone else needs. Social support was explained by Cobb (1979) as having three components: emotional, esteem, and network support. Network support includes schools, teachers, and institutions for parents as well as closer friends and family.

Many studies have found that social support is an essential resource in stressful life events (Lee et al., 2011; Maguire-Jack & Wang, 2016; Parkes & Sweeting, 2018; Schoefield et al., 2012). Increased social support is associated with better physical and psychological well-being and more effective coping mechanisms in individuals (Lee et al., 2011; Razurel et al., 2013). In addition, studies have found that social support is critical in preventing parenting stress for mothers with young children who have more developmental needs (Arikan et al., 2019; Green et al., 2011). Thus, when parents receive social support from others in times of stress, such as information, resources, and emotional support, their stress levels and difficulties they are experiencing in parenting might lessen. Lack of a support system was associated with various adverse effects on parents' mental health (Lebel et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020). In addition, many studies have stated that the lack of social support is a compelling factor for parents (Asbury et al., 2020; Brom et al., 2020; Lebel et al., 2020; Toseeb et al., in press; Wu et al., 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic became a very stressful life event for many parents. In quarantines and isolations, they were forced to multitask, and many parents have lost their close support systems. Studies have shown the psychological effects of the pandemic on different segments of society (Liu et al., 2020; Rajkumar, 2020; Rodríguez-Rey et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). There were PTSD symptoms

with increased anxiety and anger (Mertens et al. 2020; Trnka & Lorencova, 2020). Sprang and Silman (2013) found that a quarter of parents, who were isolated during the pandemic, showed signs of anxiety and met the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) criteria. Social support was seen as a protective factor in traumatic situations involving intense stress (Danuza et al., 2014; Scignaro et al., 2011).

Naerde et al. (2000) examined the levels of depression, stress, and anxiety of mothers with preschool-aged children. They found that mothers always benefited from social support regardless of stressful events. In addition, research has shown the intense need for social support of mothers with children of special needs (Tellenn et al., 1989; Hartmann et al., 1998). It has been suggested that this support acts as a buffer against stress, and this preventive effect might be the sharing of mothers with similar problems (Matloff & Zimmermann 1996; Santelli et al. 1997).

1.5.2. Face-to-face Parenting Groups

Parenting groups started in the 1970s. They were organized to educate parents and improve their knowledge and parenting skills; in the following decade, parenting group practices became widespread (Pugh et al., 1994). Parenting groups change in their aim, size, and durations. They are generally organized each week for two hours, around 8-12 weeks. It has been indicated that parenting groups aim to affect parents' well-being in two ways (Barlow, 2012). First, it seeks to increase parenting capacity by empowering parents in the face of intense parenting demands and giving them a place to rest without judgment. The second aim is to increase parents' well-being. In this way, the empowered mother will be an essential resource for the child's social and emotional development.

These programs were supported by various theories such as behavioral and cognitive. They may include various techniques like role-playing, discussions, and homework (Barlow & Coren, 2017). In addition, in group-based parenting programs, children may sometimes attend sessions with their parents (Cunningham et al., 1995; Sanders, 1999). Parenting programs that use behavioral techniques were based on social learning theory. Their primary purpose was to teach parents behavioral techniques to manage their children's misbehaviors. These programs generally help parents who have children with behavior disorders. Cognitive

parenting programs aim to change the distorted thought patterns that parents develop for themselves and their children (Barlow, 2012).

There are many evidence-based parenting groups such as Incredible Years (IY) Parenting, The Triple P-Positive Parenting, and Coping Power. The IY parenting program is an effective program that includes parents of children aged 0-13 with behavioral problems and child intervention for children aged 3-8. IY Parenting programs teach parents effective discipline strategies, strengthen the parent-child relationship, and inform parents about child development. Increasing parents' capacity for self-regulation is at the heart of the program. At the end of programs, the use of effective behavioral strategies by parents increased, and behavioral disorders in children decreased (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010). Triple P is a behavior-focused parenting program like the IY parenting program (Webster-Stratton & Hancock 1998). The Triple-P program aims to strengthen communication and relationships techniques that will reduce parent-child conflict while increasing parent-child interaction using behavioral techniques (Sanders et al., 2000). The Triple P program was effective in increasing parental satisfaction and reducing parenting conflict in parents of children with ADHD (Sanders et al., 2004). Additionally, studies found a decrease in depression and stress and increased marital satisfaction in parents participating in the Triple P program (Leung et al., 2003; Zubrick et al., 2005). The Coping Power program, on the other hand, is a parent-oriented group based on a social cognitive basis. It includes a 16-session intervention for children with aggressive behaviors. Parents were taught how to manage their stress, reinforce their children's positive behaviors, and set expectations appropriate for their children's age and development. A follow-up study showed the program's effectiveness after one year, the results showed less aggression and less delinquent action, and less parent-reported substance abuse in children (Lochman & Wells, 2004).

Studies have found that parenting groups mitigate harsh parenting (Beauchaine et al., 2005; Kling et al., 2010; Ogden & Hagen, 2008). Moreover, parenting groups increase the parents' sensitivity to their children, and in this way, parent-child interaction improved (Barlow et al., 2011). In addition, studies have stated that parenting groups have a positive effect on emotional and behavioral adjustment problems of children aged 0-3 (Barlow, 2005) and 3-10 who have

behavioral issues (Dretze, 2005). It has been found that behavioral and cognitive group studies strengthen the mental health and parenting skills of parents with children 3-12 years of age and positively affect their children's behavioral problems (Furlong et al., 2012; Michelson et al., 2013). Many studies have found that in-person parenting programs increase children and parents' functionality and positively affect the parent-child interaction (Geeraert et al., 2004; Nowak & Heinrichs, 2008; Thomas & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007). It is noteworthy that these studies include a specific age range and are aimed at particular groups (such as parents with children who have behavioral disorders).

In Turkey, school counselors, hospitals, and NGOs generally provided parent training and family education programs for parents. Most of these programs consist of mothers who are willing to improve their parenting skills. The mother-child education program carried out by Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV, 1996), a nongovernmental organization in Turkey, sets an example for such groups (Kılıç, 2016). The mother-child education program (AÇEP) is a scientific program that aims to realize the child's well-being by supporting the mother from the child's closest environment and has been implemented in Turkey since 1993. The mothers participating in this program gather weekly to discuss child development, and home visits follow these weekly meetings. The purpose of home visits is to see mothers applying the parenting skills that they learned and to make field observations (AÇEV, 2007). The participants targeted by AÇEP are 6-year-old children and their mothers who are deprived of kindergarten opportunities. It is a group study to increase the parenting knowledge of mothers. The groups occur with approximately 25 mothers, once a week and in 3-hour sessions, in Public Education Centers. In addition, a group session is held with fathers to explain the importance of father involvement in child development (AÇEV, 2003).

Mothers who participated in AÇEP stated that they wanted the program for fathers as well, and in this direction, the AÇEV Father Support Program (BADEP) was started. BADEP is a scientific program in Turkey since 1997 that aims to increase father involvement and awareness of the importance of fathers for the child's development. Another aim of BADEP is to distribute the responsibilities equally to the mother and father domestically by increasing the father's participation. The target audience of the program includes all fathers with children

between the ages of 2-10. Increasing fathers' knowledge of parenting and communication skills was essential in this program (Koçak, 2004). Groups consisted of 15 people, 3 hours each week, for a total of 13 weeks. In groups, fathers could share their own experiences and issues (Koçak, 2004), and in this sense, it was also helping fathers lower their stress in parenting.

Research conducted by AÇEV (1998) found the positive effects of AÇEV on both mothers and children in the psychological, communicative, and social areas. Studies have found that BADEP increases father involvement (Tezel-Şahin, 1998; Özgündüz, 2015; Taşkın & Erkan, 2009). In addition, the results showed that the authoritarian attitudes of the fathers decreased, and their open communication with their children was increased (AÇEV, 2003). The father group training, however, was still insufficient in Turkey. In the AÇEV research summary, the reasons why BADEP could not become widespread were listed as follows: traditional prejudices and social norms, difficulty in finding a place for the group, and fathers' limited free time due to long working hours (Kurtulmuş & Temel, 2003).

Parenting education and mother education have historically been used synonymously, consistent with mothers' parenting roles as primary caregivers (Budd & O'Brien, 1982; Coplin & Houts, 1991; Lamb, 1995). However, the term parenting includes both mother and father. In Turkey, the importance of expanding group studies for fathers is noteworthy, especially during the pandemic when fathers stay at home with their spouses and children and spend more time.

1.5.3. Online Parenting Programs

Parents frequently use online parenting interventions (Flujas-Contreras et al., 2019; Hansen et al., 2019) because these groups are easily and quickly accessible and practical (Enebrink et al., 2012; Wetterborg et al., 2019). Difficult life experiences such as social isolation, illness, and divorce may lead parents to seek online parenting help (Anastopoulos et al., 1992; Gurdin et al., 2005; Schwartz et al., 2003). Many parenting programs designed to empower parents have been adapted to the online platform (Nieuwboer et al., 2013). Online groups can be divided into synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous groups are groups where

participants are online simultaneously through platforms that enable audio and video communication, such as Zoom. Asynchronous groups usually use internet forums such as Google groups or platforms such as Whatsapp with instant messaging (Weinberg, 2020).

Studies on the effectiveness of online parenting programs are limited (Spencer et al., 2020). According to experts, web-based supports have more advantages than traditional supports. In addition, participants found web-based education equally or more beneficial when compared to their satisfaction with face-to-face parent training (Russell et al., 2016). One of the most important factors was that it reduced the effect of constraints such as space and time and provided social support anonymously (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008; Ritterband et al., 2009; Sanders et al., 2014). In meta-analytic studies, online parenting interventions were found to be the most effective in reducing parenting stress. This effect was followed by parenting knowledge and parenting efficacy, respectively (Flujas-Contreras et al., 2019). Thongseiratch et al. (2020) found that online parenting interventions reduced psychological problems such as parenting stress, depression, and anxiety. In addition, Florean et al. (2020) emphasized the positive effect of online parenting intervention on parenting efficacy. Nieuwboer et al. (2013), in their reviews, indicated that online parenting programs are as effective as face-to-face parenting programs. Love et al. (2016) found that parenting stress was reduced when using online parenting programs in high-risk families. For example, parents of bipolar disorder children indicated lower parenting stress and increased parental self-confidence after attending online parenting groups (Jones et al., 2017). The Triple P program is one of the programs with an online version (TPOL). It was designed for parents of children aged between 0-12 with behavioural problems. The program consisted of 8 modules, each taking approximately 30 minutes. Each module contains psycho-educational videos and activities. It is a web-based self-directed parenting program (Baumel, 2017). Researchers investigating the output of this program have found long-term positive improvements in parental anger control, non-adaptive parenting styles, and parental self-efficacy (Sanders et al., 2012). Two studies examined online parenting groups attended by parents of children with traumatic brain injury. The results showed a positive change in parents' attitudes toward their children (Mast et al., 2014; Wade et al., 2009). Thus, it could be stated

that online parenting programs are effective for many parenting problems (Spencer et al., 2020).

Most of the online studies that were carried out were focused on specific populations, such as parents who had children with behaviour disorders or bipolar disorders. The current online parent groups (OPG) were designed to support nonclinical parents living in Istanbul-Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic conditions, psychological support was essential for parents living in the city. The literature on online Turkish groups, however, was quite limited.

1.5.4. OPG Features

The phrase ‘OPG’ is used as the abbreviation of the online parenting group. The OPG aims to support parents to discover their resources, support parents' communication with their children, and open a sharing place for parents to strengthen themselves in changing life conditions during the pandemic. The three supportive parenting groups were semi-structured that were designed according to the age of the children: preschool, school-age and adolescent. The parenting groups' topics were chosen according to the children's age and the group members' needs. Major group topics were as follows: children's temperament, routines, parenting styles, symbolic play, emotions and emotion regulation, boundaries and discipline, self-care, and adolescence. In addition, small online activities such as color your world, grounding, and relaxation exercises were carried out with the parents.

1.5.5. The Present Study

Many studies have shown that parents mentioned higher stress due to fear of the virus or insufficient childcare during the Covid-19 pandemic (Hiraoka & Tomoda, 2020; Orgilés et al., 2020; van Tilburg et al., 2020). This stress occurred since parents had to take on multiple roles simultaneously, such as a parent, a spouse, an employee, an employer, and a caregiver (Coyne et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic had many adverse effects on children, adolescents, and families. Both parents and children became emotionally disturbed, exhausted from restriction and household life, and more intolerant to each other at home (Di Giorgio

et al., 2020). According to Abidin's Stress Theory, children and parents mutually influence each other (Abidin, 1990; 1992; 1995). In addition, according to the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1992), the closest environment of children during the pandemic is their parents. In pandemic conditions, children and parents had to spend long hours under the same roof. Many studies have found that social support is an essential resource, especially in stressful life events (Lee et al., 2011; Maguire-Jack & Wang, 2016; Parkes & Sweeting, 2018; Schoefield et al., 2012).

The present online groups aimed to support parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. The three parenting groups were run on the Zoom by six group leaders who were graduate students in Clinical Psychology Master Program at Istanbul Bilgi University. The online parenting groups were carried out between November 2020 and January 2021 for 8 weeks. Parents were grouped according to their children's ages: preschool, school-age, and adolescent. Fourteen mothers participated in the three groups, and 9 of them consented to participate in the present study. The distribution of nine mothers who participated in this study was as follows: two mothers from the preschool group, three from the school-age group, and four from the adolescent group.

This study was designed to understand the effects of the online parenting groups during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, it was aimed to understand the parenting experiences during the pandemic and provide information for clinicians who are planning to work with parents through online platforms. Therefore, this study had the following research questions:

- a. What are the parenting experiences of parents who participate in online parenting groups in times of pandemic?
- b. How has the parenting experience of parents who participate in online parenting groups changed during the pandemic?
- c. How did parents benefit from an online parenting group?
- d. How could the online parenting groups be improved according to the feedback from the parents?

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

2.1. DATA COLLECTION

After the Ministry of Health and the Ethics Board Committee of İstanbul Bilgi University approvals, the study was announced to the participants by the online parenting groups' leaders. The study aimed to understand the experiences of participants who attended the online parenting group during the pandemic; for this reason, the inclusion criterion in the study was to participate in the online parenting group.

The researcher conducted two pilot interviews with the previous parenting group participants. At the end of these preliminary interviews, the questions were revised and finalized in consultation with the thesis advisor. The researcher contacted the participants who volunteered to participate in the present study and explained the research details. Interview times were determined with the participants. The informed consent form (presented in Appendix A) was sent to the participants via email to be signed. Participants were asked to read and return the informed consent form via email containing a statement that they agreed to participate and record their voices.

Interviews were held between 8-15 February 2021 with nine participants. The 'Participant Information Form' (presented in Appendix B) containing demographic information was obtained at the beginning of the online parenting groups. The researcher used the participant information form for the necessary demographic informations. Further information that was necessary for the present study was asked during the interview.

At the beginning of the interview, the researcher initiated a small conversation with each participant to facilitate semi-structured interviews. The interviews lasted 30 to 90 minutes on the Zoom. The semi-structured interview consisted of 28 open-ended questions that questioned the participants on their parental characteristics and those of their spouses, their children's experiences during the pandemic, their parenting and online parenting group experiences during the pandemic, and their views on the online parenting group. The researcher took

field notes to better understand the participants' experiences of parenting during the pandemic and the online parenting group experiences. Observations about the participants' psychological condition and domestic environment during the interview were also noted. Two tape recorders recorded all 9 semi-structured interviews, and the audiotapes were later transcribed. All audiotapes and written transcripts are protected in a password-protected file. All records will be kept for 5 years after publication.

2.2. PARTICIPANTS

Nine mothers participated in the study. Seven mothers are married, and two mothers were separated from their spouses. The age of the participants varied between 31-47, and the mean age was 40. The age of being a mother of the participants ranged between 21-39, and the mean age was 30. Only three participants live in İstanbul. All participants defined their income level as medium. Demographics, including the details about age, marital status, children, education, work status, and Covid-19 related experience information, are presented in the table below (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. *The Demographic Characteristics of the Participants*

ID	Age	Marital status	Children	Education	Work status	Covid-19 diagnosis	Lost someone due to Covid-19
P1	37	married	M (9)	university graduate	not working	No	Yes
P2	37	married	F (11) M (7) M (3.5)	university graduate	not working	No	Yes
P3	34	married	F (4)	university graduate	working	No	No
P4	43	married	M (6.5)	university	working	No	Yes

			M (2.5)	graduate			
P5	41	married	M (19) F (15)	high-school graduate	not working	Yes	Yes
P6	31	married	M (4)	university graduate	working	Yes	Yes
P7	45	not married	M (14)	high-school graduate	working	No	No
P8	47	separated	M (7) M (7)	university graduate	working	No	No
P9	43	married	F (19) F (16) M (7)	university graduate	not working	No	No

*M: Male, F: Female

2.3. DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyze all nine transcripts to deeply understand the parenting experiences and online parenting group experiences of the participants. Because Covid-19 pandemic was unexpected and anxiety-provoking, each participant's experience was unique to make sense of this period. For this reason, the thematic analysis method, which provides an understanding of the participants' experiences in-depth, was chosen for this study. The Thematic analysis is a method that helps investigators to describe participants' unique experiences in detail and in-depth by following a series of steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

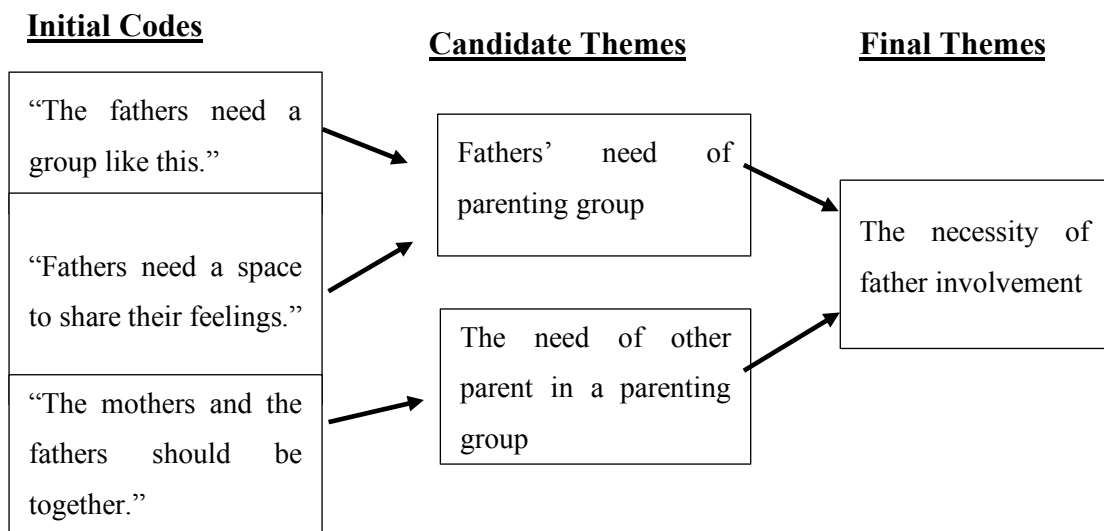
First, the investigator transcribed the data, and then the transcriptions and the field notes were revised. This procedure provided the investigator an opportunity to formulate the data in a more easily interpretable way in the context

of Thematic Analysis. After the investigator decided on initial codes, she combined these codes into probable themes. The investigator determined which extracts were used to present each theme. The investigator integrated all related data under the proper themes to specify and define the major themes. The investigator shared the common themes that emerged from the interviews with all participants at the end of the research and obtained their approval (member checking). After the approval of the participants, the investigator checked the harmony of extracts and themes and concluded the process by relating the analysis with literature and the research questions.

All interviews were recorded and stored on a password-protected mobile device to transcribe and analyze the data. The investigator took notes starting with the transcription process together with taking field notes right after each interview. In the coding process, the MAXQDA Software program was used. From the early phases of coding to the formation of the final themes, interpretations were discussed and revisited with the thesis advisor when needed. To describe how initial codes were transformed into themes, Figure 2.1 is presented below.

Figure 2.1.

A Description of The Development of Initial Themes



2.4. TRUSTWORTHINESS

The primary investigator held a pilot interview with two participants who had previously participated in an online parenting group. As a result of these

interviews, the interview questions were revised and finalized with the thesis advisor. The primary investigator collected data in two different ways to strengthen trustworthiness: audiotapes and field notes. During the interviews and data analysis, the primary investigator reflected her own perspective. After the analysis was completed, the final themes for member checking were sent to the participants via e-mail.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

This section provides the results relating to the nine participants' narratives. Four main themes emerged in the interviews: Mothers' perception of themselves and their spouses' as a parent, Effects of the pandemic, OPG experience, and The OPG design (Table 3.1). Each major theme includes subthemes that offered a comprehensive extract of the data analysis. In this section, the phrase 'OPG' is used as the abbreviation of the online parenting group.

Table 3.1. *The Themes and The Subthemes of the Present Study*

Themes	Mothers' perception of themselves and their spouses' as a parent	Effects of pandemic	OPG experience	The OPG design
Subthemes	Being compassionate and understanding	Emotional effects	The novelty of being a part of OPG	The necessity of father involvement
	Being controlling	Physical well-being	Expectations and motivation of the participants	This group is the 'parenting' group!
	Being an altruistic mother	The changes in daily life	Sharing	The importance of the low number of participants

Table 3.1. *The Themes and The Subthemes of the Present Study (continued)*

Themes	Mothers’ perception of themselves and their spouses’ as a parent	Effects of pandemic	OPG experience	The OPG design
Subthemes	Fathers’ low involvement in parenting	The changes in the relationship	Participants’ awareness	The necessity of professional involvement
		Gender awareness in parenting	role in making new friendships	Duration
			Feeling that you are not alone and making new friendships	
			Learning from source	
			Increasing communication and interaction within the family	
			‘I am glad I attended’	

3.1. MOTHERS’ PERCEPTION OF THEMSELVES AND THEIR SPOUSES AS A PARENT

This theme is based on parental characteristics by which mothers define themselves and their spouses. Mothers mostly made maternal attributions to themselves, but ‘controlling’ was also salient in mothers' accounts regarding their

self-attribution. Controlling parenting behaviors (i.e., overprotection and coercion) is a parenting style that causes adverse mental health problems in children (Brown & Whiteside, 2008; Creswell et al., 2008; Laurin et al., 2015; Meyer & Wissemann, 2020; Thirlwall & Creswell, 2010; Van Der Bruggen et al., 2008). The mothers' statements mainly mentioned that their spouses do not take primary responsibility in childcare. Their spouses only take care of their children on the weekends, and they cannot adequately respond to their children's expectations and needs, such as playing and doing homework. This theme provides a deeper understanding of the workload intensity of mothers and their lack of childcare support. During the interview, the complaint of the participants about their spouses' lack of support was noticeable.

To better understand this theme, four following subthemes will be explored: 1) Being compassionate and understanding, 2) Being controlling, 3) Being an altruistic mother, and 4) Father's low involvement in parenting.

3.1.1. Being Compassionate and Understanding

Many participants stated that they were compassionate and understanding. Two participants expressed their parental characteristics as gentle and full of love. This was their definition of a compassionate mother.

I guess I am very compassionate in addition, I am full of love. (P2)

Usually, I am very gentle as a parent. (P9)

One participant explained her compassion in her efforts to prevent her child from going through painful experiences.

I am a compassionate mother. I don't want my child to experience the pain I experienced. (P7)

One participant defined herself as compassionate and acknowledged her effort to calm herself by considering that her child is still a child, no matter how difficult she is.

I am compassionate as much as possible. Even though I get angry and I go through a breakdown, at that moment, I try to think that my child is little and he doesn't understand me (P6)

Three participants mentioned that they tried to understand and listen to their children. In addition, being able to empathize is an essential component of 'understanding parenting'. For participants, being understanding brings along the ability to empathize.

I always try to understand my children, I try to think like them. (P5)

I'm trying to understand and listen. I'm trying to explain the reasons for it instead of saying yes or no directly. (P1)

Umm..., I define myself as a parent who communicates as well as possible, who empathizes. (P9)

3.1.2. Being Controlling

Nearly half of the participants stated that they were 'controlling mothers.' Participants mentioned that they had backup plans and they were not able to let things go due to the struggles of daily life. It was observed that mothers' frequent interactions with children and the primary caregiver's responsibility make them always in control.

Some participants emphasized the primary caregiver's responsibilities by describing the rush they experienced and the necessity to plan the whole day.

I am a person who set boundaries and provides more control umm I am a person who loves 'go-go go' so I do not believe in letting life to its own rhythm or leaving the children to their rhythm because you always have a rush to catch up somewhere and do something. (P1)

Planning umm how can I explain it? I umm I do not plan forward but I plan my day umm I have a schedule from the time to eat to the time to wake up. I always have plans. (P7)

I am a controlling person, I always have a plan a, plan b, plan c umm I feel that I should always have alternative plans. (P8)

I can say the same about motherhood I'm a controlling person. (P6)

3.1.3. Being an Altruistic Mother

Five participants expressed being an altruistic mother. One participant mentioned that the underlying reason for the difficulty in setting limits related to altruism.

I am a very altruistic parent; I am setting limits. First, I violate this myself, I do not know, at least I try to reduce the duration of television watching, I don't want to upset the children. (P2)

In another participant's narrative, the relationship between altruism and meeting their children's expectations is remarkable.

I'm trying to meet their expectations. (P5)

One of the participants emphasized that altruism could be inherent in parenting.

Parenting means devoting; you have to be altruistic; it is not something extra. (P9)

One participant stated that she could not put her own priorities first, and the other participant mentioned that she started to prioritize herself last year. All of the discourse pointed to mothers' altruism.

I am not a person who manages to put my own priorities first. (P6)

Actually, I forgot myself, I said it in this parenting program too; I've been taking care of myself for a year; I just came to my own world. (P7)

3.1.4. Fathers' Low Involvement in Parenting

One participant stated that her spouse only cared for their children on the weekends and could do her professional work or household chores during this time. However, another participant noted that her spouse was not interested in the responsibilities during weekdays, and he plays a 'sweet father' role on the weekends. For this reason, she mentioned that her spouse had fewer problems than her.

He takes care of my son during the weekend meanwhile I work or I do housework. (P6)

So...children's homework finishes on weekdays, the responsibilities related to the house are also finished. He experiences 'sweet parenting', so he has less difficulty. (P4)

While one participant mentioned that her spouse did not take care of the children interactively, especially he left the responsibilities such as homework to his wife, another participant stated that she was the one who took most of the duties regarding the children. Here again, it was seen that the primary person who takes responsibility for school-related matters is the mother.

Well, our father is not interested in her children's lessons by himself, he prefers to stay in the background, he does not take any responsibility. He leaves that burden on me. (P2)

I am in control, so he is not aware of anything. I am responsible for the WhatsApp groups. Well, if there is a usual thing, I will share it with him. Generally, I tell him everything, and we talk to each other. But as I said before, I always have a backup plan. At worst, if I can't handle it, I pass it to him. So, he is having the comfort of this. (P8)

One participant stated that regardless of the pandemic, her husband does not take responsibility for her child's basic needs, and this responsibility always belongs to her.

I mean, if we put the pandemic aside, of course, in terms of interest, of course, he is a very caring father, but he was not very interested in basic needs, vital needs (laughing) such as nutrition and sleep, he still was not interested (P3)

Two participants mentioned that their spouses only provided financial support and did not play with their children. For these participants, their spouses' parenthood meant providing financial support for their children and ensuring their children's well-being.

If we need anything.. he is very sensitive to meet our needs, for example, regarding health. Apart from that, he doesn't care whether our child plays with him, eats his food, or sleeps regularly. He wouldn't care anyway; he still doesn't (P9)

He has never played football with his child. He couldn't play with him. Unfortunately, he's not a good father. When he says 'hello how are you boy' and gets an answer, he thinks that it is enough. He gives financial support for his child, so it is enough for him (P7)

3.2. EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

3.2.1. Emotional Effects

The emotional effects of the pandemic were the most frequently mentioned subthemes in the participants' narratives. These subthemes include the emotional effects of the pandemic that participants observe on themselves, their spouses, and their children. The participants focused on five aspects of the emotional effects regarding pandemic: 1) 'Frankenstein mother,' 2) Fathers' burnout, 3) Anxiety, 4) Increased anger in children, and 5) The longing to be in the school.

3.2.1.1. "Frankenstein Mother"

The majority of participants talked about fatigue and anger, which is the most intense emotional effect they experienced during the pandemic, and the burnout caused by multi-tasking. This state of exhaustion and burnout experienced by participants was independent of participants' identity as working women or homemakers.

Two participants stated that they felt pretty tired and inadequate during the pandemic. One participant is an employee, and the other is a housewife, and this feeling of fatigue and inadequacy they feel during the pandemic is expressed independently of employment status. It is emphasized that the feelings of inadequacy during the pandemic arise from the obligation of mothers to do many tasks simultaneously.

It was very difficult! You can't fully focus on anything. You may need to attend a meeting, or you may need to prepare for a meeting... with my son on my lap. 'Alright honey, be quiet, just stay here, I'll just deal with something.' The kid does not stop, and I could not say, 'This is my private space, this is my own time, I have to work, please wait outside the door.' Even though we had a babysitter, the kids were always with me when I was at home. I mean, it was very rare that they went inside and played so I could attend the meeting in peace. There was always

chaos, always a crisis; banging on doors, ...umm... I was not fully efficient when I was working; the kids were crying over there; I was not fully efficient in my parenting... The feeling of inadequacy was very strong. (P4)

I am very tired. I used to be very active, much more lively... After the pandemic, I felt like I was inadequate. (P2)

Two participants mentioned that their threshold of tolerance decreased considerably during the pandemic, and they reacted to their children with anger in a way they would not normally do.

One participant made the best description of the state of fatigue, exhaustion, and anger expressed by many participants during the pandemic with the definition of 'Frankenstein'.

I have an example. It really summarized me during the pandemic. Umm, it was the evening; I sat down to work. My daughter woke up around ten, which is normal, a child could wake up, you can wake up, a person can wake up from their sleep; but I was crazy, I was shouting 'how can you wake up.' umm, then the kid finally said 'I'm sorry, mommy for letting you down' and I put the laptop aside, and hugged her. I did not understand what I have become; I thought about my behavior that night and told myself that I need to try to be the old me. That was a very specific example, especially for the last three months; I was like, 'come on come on'. I became the parent that I despised (laughing). It was as if a Frankenstein came out of me. (P3)

Sometimes when he does not do as I say, I get angry... That's the extent of my getting angry. (P8)

One participant stated that she had bursts of anger she had to change her plans for her child due to the pandemic.

My son and... I had big dreams of my son starting that school, he would socialize, free himself from the situation at home, I was happy – for myself, too – and had made plans for my own, too. He was supposed to start on March 20th, but we had to lockdown on March 13th, such an ...umm... unfortunate time... In the beginning, it was really difficult for me, I had bursts of anger because just when you thought it would change, it just got worse and worse... We could not even go outside at all (laughing) that was a really stressful period. (P6)

3.2.1.2. Fathers' Burnout

Nearly half of the participants stated that they also observed fatigue, anger, and burnout in their spouses.

One participant mentioned that her spouse had an extroverted personality, and his rage increased due to the restrictions related to the pandemic.

After the pandemic... My spouse is really outgoing and extroverted, spends time outside... And him being in a lockdown made him a more aggressive, less happy, more introverted person that spent a lot of time on his phone. (P4)

Another participant noted that her spouse started seeing a psychiatrist during this pandemic.

He also started taking medication, I took him to the psychiatrist last week. (P5)

While one participant stated that her husband's tolerance threshold decreased, the other participant emphasized that this process of prolonged staying and working at home was new for her spouse. She stated that her spouse had difficulty adjusting to the pandemic due to this unique situation, and therefore he was angry.

His tolerance dropped quite a bit, naturally... I especially feel it nowadays, his patience is also wearing thin. (P3)

Because this is a period of my son's life when he is very active and on his feet all day, it was a shock to my husband... He is impatient that way, I usually warn him because he gets angry at my son. (P6)

Another participant emphasized that her spouse is not used to staying at home, thus he is pretty bored.

Well, obviously, he was also stressed. He was bored of staying home. (P2)

3.2.1.3. Anxiety

One of the most striking subthemes in the narratives of the participants was anxiety. The anxiety subtheme includes the anxiety-based situations observed by participants in their children and themselves.

Three participants mentioned that they were intensely worried about their children getting sick during the pandemic.

One participant stated that she started to become more sensitive about her child's hygiene due to the pandemic. Therefore, she noted that she has a strict attitude towards her child.

When we came from outside, a hand-washing crisis... it might have been optional back in the day, but now it is a must... even if he screams or shouts "I don't want ittttt", I say "you must wash your hands (P4)

Another participant stated that she was worried about her child getting sick outside as hospitals were not accessible.

Nothing should happen to his health... We cannot go to hospitals because hospitals are really in no condition to be visited (P1)

One participant also expressed concern about the possibility of re-fever during the pandemic due to her child's past high fever illness.

We were very cautious because of my child's situation. What would we do if he had a fever, you know Covid causes fever in adults, too... We were very careful about it. (P6)

Three participants talked about the increased electronic device and screen usage time of their children during the pandemic. During the interview, the participants were upset that they could not control their children's screen usage time and expressed this in a somewhat anxious way.

One participant stated that although she tried to pull her children away from the screen, she could not be successful in this.

They became more electronics-addicted. No matter how much I try to distance them, this period became more... I mean, they are more of an addict now. (P2)

One participant emphasized that the precautions they had previously taken for the screen time were disappeared with the transition to the online education system.

A kid that does not know tablets, games... this sort of a kid that we protected that we wrapped in cotton (laughing) evolved into a kid that spent all of his education life in front of a computer, on the internet... meanwhile, of course, curiosity... he is discovering internet sites. (P4)

We were always home during the pandemic... it's just ... the screen time really increased a lot. (P6)

Another participant mentioned that they made decisions to shorten the screen usage time with her children. However, she stated that they could not be successful in actualizing the decisions they made.

We make decisions, for example, thirty minutes before bedtime, we should keep her away from the screen ...umm... not bring phones to our living space, etc. But she says 'I can't sleep without sound', 'I can sleep when it is playing there'. She makes excuses saying she is setting up an alarm, and I can't say anything. He says 'I can't sleep' and he likes games, digital games. (P9)

Three participants mentioned their concerns about their children's education during the pandemic. One participant heard how much the school-age children struggled around her, even though her child was not at school age, and showed her reaction to the lack of adequate investment for children's education in our country during the pandemic.

The worst aspect of parenthood during the pandemic, I think, is that the kids' education, school halted, this is a topic above all else. We all have our own problems, I think this is above all else. I mean I am not in it directly, but I see it around me, children are struggling, and they lost 1.5 years of their academic life. (P6)

Another participant stated that she had her child take private lessons to make up for the first year of school, which is an essential time for her child to learn literacy skills, and she was concerned that her child lacked these basic skills.

This is a period when I struggle with the question, 'what can I do for my own child?' My anxieties, my anger, my efforts for control are actually because I have a child that could not get an in-person education. We should have private lessons, somebody should come, and the kid should be taught face to face... until he learns to read and write, we are talking about the skill to hold a pencil. (P4)

Another participant expressed her concern that the schools were closed. She mentioned that her child was preparing for the exam, and she suffered a loss of motivation in the absence of an interactive school environment.

My daughter's... whoever seizes this period will enter a good place, guarantee a good place... so... We are not good for my daughter actually, well, when she was going to school, she was more motivated, she studied better. Now it feels like we are inside a large emptiness, there is nothing to hold, nothing to connect. (P9)

One participant stated that even if she was very cautious, her child's anxiety level increased due to the pandemic circumstances.

My son's anxiety level increased because, due to his age, we had to explain the topic, we had to tell him that we wanted him to adhere to a certain level of hygiene standard and wear a facemask for in-person education. When he asked, 'Why aren't we doing certain stuff?' 'because of the pandemic, we will do it once the pandemic is over' or 'that's when we will go to crowded places' was the information that we gave. That's why even though the news was not followed, newspapers were not read, and sicknesses were not shared, he started to experience above a certain level, within his own understanding. (P4)

Another participant noted that they could not be together as a family in the early days of the pandemic due to her husband's job, and therefore her child got anxious.

Since we spent that period away from his father, longing and anxiety was added above all. (P1)

One participant mentioned that her child had camera anxiety in the online education system, and therefore, her child did not want to attend classes at times.

The webcam should always be turned on because the teacher wants to see everyone so that the teacher can stay motivated. But we had some problems with my son; there were times when he did not want to attend the class or just wanted to turn the camera off. (P8)

Nearly half of the participants stated that they were anxious due to the uncertainty of the pandemic and the fear of getting sick.

One participant mentioned that she felt the anxiety she felt in the early stages of the pandemic again and increased preventions against this disease.

Back then, I was like 'I wonder when will it be our turn?' now that feeling is starting to reemerge. For the last two days, I'm nervous, drinking water all the time ...umm... trying to drink something herbal. I asked the children, 'are you bothered?' etc. (P2)

One of the participants described this process as a vicious circle, while another participant stated that the environment in the country triggers insecurity and anxiety.

We struggled a lot during the pandemic. The first days before the what the disease was, accessing the statistics... I do not know how you were like at the beginning, but we cleaned the stuff we bought from the market, they are then taken inside, put into quarantine, put into isolation, then we cleaned them with 'cif', and after that, we placed them in the fridge or if there was someone else that used the lift before us, we assumed we were infected, we would experience it very badly. (P4)

Because really ummm you are inside something, a 'dead end' so to say, the same old stuff all the time. (P1)

At first, we thought it would not last too long, some cure would be found, but then the process became unknowable, the numbers went up, people became

indifferent. Most importantly, the uncertainty of the policies, I mean anything, can change at a moment's notice. That also creates distrust for the classes too. (P8)

3.2.1.4. Increased Anger in Children

Many participants mentioned that their children became angrier during the pandemic. During the interviews, all participants agreed about the increased levels of anger in their children.

He became a slightly angrier kid. (P6)

Well, he became a bit angrier. (P8)

Two participants emphasized that their children started to say 'no' more frequently than usual, and they started to react harshly during the pandemic.

There is now this strong notion that everything happens because it is my wish; washing hands, changing clothes, even personal care stuff led to him saying 'no'. (P1)

Umm he is very nervous and aggressive. He used to be calmer. But then he became angry over the tiniest thing, reacted strongly... he used to be more easygoing, not aggressive, his reactions were appropriate. Now, (laughing) it's always bickering, always a conflict. (P2)

Naturally, there was tension; she is more irritable because of the social life being restricted. (P5)

Two participants described their children's anger, stating that their children were having temper tantrums.

They had some temper tantrums; they were intensely crying. (P8)

Temper tantrums have increased. (P3)

3.2.1.5. The Longing to Be in the School

Nearly half of the participants stated that their children miss being at school and interacting with their friends.

One participant noted that her child became very emotional while talking about her school and her friends.

It also affected her. For example, she wants to see her friends, play with them. She says she missed them a lot, umm, she says she missed her school, classroom, gets teary-eyed... Probably because she missed school too much, so when we talk like this she also wants the schools to be opened again. (P2)

Says a lot 'nobody cares about me' 'nobody likes me, I have no friends' 'I already missed my school a lot.' (P3)

Increase of things like missing friends and school. (P8)

Another participant mentioned that her child, who has just started university, had a different perception of university life and is disappointed with staying at home.

That's why it's difficult, for example, he says himself I couldn't imagine that there were no online classes' (laughing) ummm he says, 'just as I thought it was the time to relax, now we are back stuck at home.' (P5)

3.2.2. Physical Well-Being

Nearly half of the participants stated that their children could not get rid of their pent-up energies during the pandemic due to the limited areas to move. Their children had difficulties because of this energy.

One participant mentioned that her child felt more depressed because she could not meet her routine activities.

For example, she does not walk; it was very important for her. She was swimming, that was a really great exercise for her. But now, she becomes more depressive without them. (P9)

Umm I mean, my son's actions had to be bounded by the house, and this made him troubled physically. Umm, now there is no effort spent and much more boredom, umm, now he jumps from the tops of chairs and sofas to whatever. (P1)

Two participants found alternative solutions such as jumping on the sofa and climbing stairs to spend this energy on their children.

Not being able to go outside, go running, he wants to play football with his friends... not being able to do these physically affected, I did not know what to do. His father made him carry 19-liter water bottles; he is bursting with energy (laughing); the sofas will break with all the jumping and knocking down and back and forth and back and forth and back and forth. Then, what should we do? I just put him out the door, in pajamas or anything, not important. I also take the coats, and umm dress him, in the elevator, let him get some fresh air, count the stars, consume his energy, count leaves, something, let us see a cat 'whoever sees the first cat with dots wins' or something, and I convince him to go out, and it was good for him. Umm, if he still was energetic, and if there is still unspent energy, I just said, 'go up and down, up and down the stairs.' (P8)

For example, my son is too active in the house because he can't consume his energy. Umm, even right now, if the weather is nice and if he has no meetings, my husband comes out, and they run around the garden, play, wrestle (laughing). I can say that the more physical needs of my son are being met by my husband. (P6)

Another physical effect of the pandemic is that nearly half of the participants have mentioned a significant change in eating habits. Two participants stated that there was a change in their own and their children's eating habits.

I can say the whole family gained weight. (P2)

One participant said that their eating habits did not change much. However, weight gain as a result of changing eating habits was significant.

Eating... well, our eating habits did not change too much, but we all started gaining weight. (P9)

One participant stated that her child is very demanding due to changing eating habits.

Well, when our eating habits deteriorated, my son started being too demanding. (P6)

One participant also noted that her child was constantly on a diet due to his weight gain.

He gained weight again with the pandemic, so again there is an increased frequency of 'ugh I can't lose weight ugh I can't lose weight how will I lose weight what should I do what' keeps searching for diets. (P5)

3.2.3. The Changes in Daily Life

The changes in daily life were the most mentioned subtheme in the participants' narratives. This subtheme includes the changes in everyday life experienced by the participants during the pandemic. The participants focused on five aspects of the changing daily life regarding pandemic: 1) The loss of routines, 2) The difficulty in managing the work-family balance, 3) Changes in socialization, 4) Lockdown, and 5) Making radical decisions.

3.2.3.1. The Loss of Routines

Nearly half of the participants mentioned that the routines have changed during the pandemic. Particularly the change in sleep routines is striking in participants' narratives. Two participants stated that irregularities in these routines also seen in their children.

Our days and nights mixed up. No bedtime, no wake-up time, no study time... (P9)

Well, there used to be more of a routine. Now we get up at a different time, sleep at a different time, everything. (P2)

Before the pandemic, my daughter had a regular life. She slept and got up and studied in a timely manner, but now, because of the pandemic... As I said, there is no telling when they sleep and get up. (P5)

One participant mentioned that when her spouse started working from home during the pandemic, she realized that the order at home was disturbed, which was difficult for her. She stated that she noticed that the familiar layout of the house had changed significantly during this pandemic.

Well, then the home population increased by one (laughing); that was a more different world with my husband staying home. Well, it was good in some ways and bad in some others because now there are three people instead of two. We realized that the order in the house changes a lot. (P6)

One participant stated that the life routine had changed during the pandemic and that adaptation to this change forced her.

Getting into a routine took us around two weeks; it was a difficult two weeks. (P8)

3.2.3.2. The Difficulty in Managing the Work-Family Balance

The change of work routine during the pandemic has been one of the most striking changes.

Two participants mentioned the difficulties of carrying out household chores, working life, and motherhood simultaneously in this process. Two participants stated the problem of working from home from the children's perspective. It seems complicated for children to adapt to the fact that their parents are working at home.

At the same time, life goes on, you cook, you clean, and when the kid sees you home, he does not think of you as in your working life; he thinks of you as always reachable, or some problem occurs with the technical stuff, he can just call you immediately when you are in a meeting. So crises like these, nothing major, but by especially giving from ourselves, we supported the kids during the day and tried to finish my work during the night by giving up sleep. (P8)

It was very difficult! You can't fully focus on anything. You may need to attend a meeting or you may need to prepare for a meeting... with my son on my lap. 'Alright honey, be quiet, just stay here, I'll just deal with something.' The kid does not stop, and I could not say that 'This is my private space, this is my own time, I have to work, please wait outside the door.' Even though we had a babysitter, the kids were always with me when I was at home. I mean, it was very rare that they went inside and played so I could attend the meeting in peace. There was always chaos, always a crisis; banging on doors, ...umm... I was not fully efficient when I was working; the kids were crying over there; I was not fully efficient in my parenting... The feeling of inadequacy was very strong. (P4)

Sometimes she comes and shouts (laughing) because she is a kid. Sometimes it is just a very cheerful moment for her, and she wants to share it, but the dad is in a very important meeting right then. Well, I mean, that comes from there, of course,

there is a system where you earn your money, and she intervenes, and it is very difficult to find the middle ground, I mean being able to do that. And we don't have the luxury to expect this from anybody. (P3)

One participant mentioned that she is used to this new routine brought about by the pandemic since she has been working from home for a long time, but it is still challenging to do all these things together.

For the last four years, the routine that everybody started to live in our family had that routine for the past four years. I was working from home and haven't received any support, and it was a difficult process; there were times I was extremely busy with work. The fact that I can't send my son to school and that I have to juggle everything was quite difficult. (P6)

3.2.3.3. Changes in Socialization

Nearly half of the participants mentioned the changes seen in their children during the pandemic. While one participant stated that her child spends more time on the phone due to not socializing, another participant mentioned that her child was trying to compensate for the loss of socializing by chatting with friends on the phone. Here, the participants emphasized the increase in phone use in their children with the state of being closed up in the house and the loss of socialization caused by the pandemic.

She introduced the phone; the phone leads to the internet, social media, that sort of stuff to her life. (P9)

Now, for example, my daughter created a girls group with her girlfriends, now they communicate there. They want to meet in person, too, just trying to make it up like this, quell their longing. (P2)

One participant stated that her child tried to cope with the loss of socialization during the pandemic by playing war games, and then the time spent playing these games decreased when she started to spend time with her friends.

Game, war game, she started playing it all the time. Lately, she started spending time with her friends and decreased her time playing video games. (P5)

One participant mentioned that her child is used to being indoors at home and does not want to go out anymore.

My son really got used to staying inside (P6)

3.2.3.4. Lockdown

Three participants stated that they could not do the activities they used to do with their children during the pandemic.

One participant mentioned that although they cannot do these activities very often, these are a part of their lives. The most challenging part of the pandemic is not being able to meet with their own family but not being able to touch them.

During the pandemic, our old habits were interrupted, like going outside on a whim or taking the kids to a park if the weather is nice on the weekend. We would wake up early and, for example, have breakfast, or we would just wander around, go to the park after breakfast, grab something to eat, and head back home. These are not too much like we were doing this once a month, but they were really nice. Now for the past year, we can't do those, didn't go to a picnic. A whole summer has passed, and we haven't gone to a picnic for 3 months, these sort of things were restricted. The pandemic period affected life outside the house; we could not go outside easily, freely. These affected, the worst is I can't see my family. When I see them, I can't hold them. I was really affected by them. (P2)

One participant stated that actual human contact and conversation in the pandemic is over.

House lockdown ended our relationships with real people that we touch and see. (P9)

Another participant mentioned that she started to visit important museums in Istanbul with her children and that cultural activities were interrupted.

We would see around, get to know Istanbul a lot... If there was something more special, let's say the Basilica Cistern, we would see it with its story or mythological side like it is old, we would talk about every aspect of it, we started going to the museums, but now it's just interrupted, I think it's a shortcoming of it. (P8)

3.2.3.5. Making Radical Decisions

Three participants mentioned the change of routine, which includes a change of place during the pandemic.

One participant stated that she went to her mother due to the pandemic.

Well of course, when our tolerance decreases, she was also affected a lot. Especially in the first months, we made a mistake... I went to my mother's house as I was uncomfortable. I thought it would be more isolated there, but then she separated from her father, and she thought my husband and I were breaking up. She was kind of traumatized. The environment was always nervous, certainly, she felt that. (P3)

Another participant noted that she moved to a calmer place with a radical decision during the pandemic. All these radical displacements are important decisions brought about by the pandemic.

We can spend time in the garden, my son can play, we have neighbors and kids, and that's a small city. Let me say this, give this example, normally, if I were to go to the hairdresser, I put it off a lot back in Istanbul because there was nobody to leave the kid with. Now I just get in the car and leave my son off at the corner near my mom's, my mother comes and picks him up, and I just go to the hairdresser and pick him up on the way back and head back home. This is quite a privilege for me, and this is a very great change; we are free from Istanbul after all these years. (P6)

Another participant mentioned that she moved her parents, living in a different city for a long time, to an apartment closer to her.

Like I said, the grandmother... We asked tenants to move from my mother's house and brought my parents here. (P7)

3.2.4. The Changes in the Relationship

More than half of the participants mentioned that being urged to stay at home during the pandemic affected the mother-child relationship.

One participant described the difficulty of the role confusion created by being a mother, a playmate, and a teacher at the same time.

My phone is ringing, and he is asking 'who is this?' I say well.. 'my friend,' he wants to talk to my friend because there is no more privacy, we are not parent-children anymore, we are like peers. Then you say 'no, I am your mother' but then, three minutes later, you are back to play or talking about classes as a teacher. It is all mixed up. (P1)

Two participants stated that hierarchy in the parent-child relationship disappeared due to the lack of discipline.

We are now too close with the kids. (P2)

As if we are glued together, now there is no weekend playgroup. (P4)

One participant stated that the fact that both mother and father are always at home allow her child to turn this situation into an opportunity to use it. She said that having two authority figures at home affects the nature of the parent-child relationship.

I can say he started using the fact that both the mother and the father being home. When it was just me, I had some authority, and he was aware of it. (P6)

One participant mentioned that she has always had a positive mother-daughter relationship with her child, but this relationship was damaged during the pandemic.

My positive relationship with my daughter really suffered. (P3)

Two participants stated that there was tension in their family relationships during the pandemic. One participant noted that because of the noise caused by everyone being at home, her child had difficulty listening to his lectures, and this created tension in the house.

Since we are all at home, there is constant tension; for example, my child says, 'be quiet, I am in the class.' He had final exams, for example, and that was naturally difficult. (P5)

Another participant mentioned that being together 24/7 at home affected sibling relationships negatively, and their children cannot get along with each other.

Even if one compliments the other takes it the wrong way, they started to feel repulsed by each other because they are always in the same space, 24/7 is what I think. (P2)

Another participant stated that despite the high tension between the two siblings during the pandemic, the siblings could make this situation better. She said that different from the previous explanation, two brothers managed to be playmates and play with each other during that period.

They spent so much time together and fought so much that they created a system to set up games. Before that, the older one said... complained about the games, the younger one could not understand or play, he felt as if he was not paid his worth. 'let him grow up and play my games' 'he disturbs the game I set up' 'play with that there and play with me here'... Now they started setting up three-person games, and now both of them can enter. My older son directs him, and he feels like the older brother, and the other one already admired him, followed him; now they have a nice dynamic, but it is always like a fire ready to start burning. (P4)

Three participants stated that the pandemic had a positive effect on their relationships with their children.

Two participants noted that their daily communication was limited since their children used to spend time outside and at school, so staying at home brought mothers and children closer to each other during the pandemic.

We have got closer because school was part-time for a long time, he was there in the day, and then he wanted to rest when he returned. And then he ate a bit and did something on his own, and we could not do anything together except the weekends. Well, the pandemic affected my son well because we got closer and attended a lot of activities. (P7)

The schools have been closed for ten months a year. We started spending much more time with them, and there is the curfew; we are together 24/7 right now. They used to have school, and I had my own, umm, life, for example, I would go here and there, we would not see each other that often. Now we see each other much more frequently, I started seeing that thinking like them is more positive. (P5)

Another participant mentioned that after overcoming the period that required rapid change of routines brought by the two weeks of the pandemic, she turned this situation into an opportunity to spend more time with her children and enjoyed this situation.

After two weeks, we realized 'it's not that bad, it's actually an excuse to spend more time with the kids' and it is a positive thing. (P8)

3.2.5. Gender Role Awareness in Parenting

During the pandemic, the heightened awareness of the two participants of womanhood and motherhood was quite striking.

One participant stated that she realized how much she was overwhelmed during the pandemic as she took her spouse's responsibilities too. It was clear that the conditions here were not the same for men and women.

Well, I thought about the concept of womanhood, umm, let me give another example, it explains me better... It was a moment of depersonalization. I was in front of that thing, the sink, washing the dishes, while on the right, my laptop is on, I am answering an e-mail from the company. That on the right, on the left, was my daughter playing on top of the kitchen counter and I was stirring the food, and of course, then my husband is working, and I was also working, I was doing four lines of work and I probably was thinking of when to hang the clothes at the same time... And I don't want to say it's his fault or anything, but that's the Turkish family structure maybe it is similar in other countries too. That's the standard family structure that's the summary. A woman does five lines, and she still has to smile because there is this silly notion that she is the core of the family, and if she collapses, the whole family collapses; but on the other hand, there is this person with the luxury to say 'could you please be quiet, I have a meeting.' (P3)

Another participant mentioned that her spouse could only empathize with her when he stays at home during the pandemic and understands her workload.

My husband was also very helpful, but he is an instrumental parent...psychologically, he did not know how tiring it was. Now I think he also realized, in fact, he changed (laughing); sometimes I do, let's say pre-pandemic, we argued about something, I say 'that's why I was offended back then, now you understand it better' or something. For example, he was going out, having fun, I was not able to, could not leave the kid alone, umm, did not want to leave the kid alone, to be honest, he wanted me to go, but I was not feeling comfortable. That feeling of staying home alone is a bad one. Already, when you were tired the whole day, now, for example, he spends time with the kid, when my work was first done he can just run to his room, now I say that 'you understand better,' you want some me-time. (P6)

3.3. ONLINE PARENTING GROUP (OPG) EXPERIENCE

3.3.1. The Novelty of Being a Part of OPG

Nearly half of the participants stated that they experienced the online parenting group for the first time.

It was an experience I had never experienced before. (P1)

One participant stated that she had joined a maternity-related group before, but mainly in that group, mothers talked about what they brought from their parents and noted that the online experience was new to her.

I used to attend 'mother circles' face-to-face before, but I had no online experience; I was talking more there in the mother circles, we talked about our relationship with our mother, about our motherhood ee our children, this time a pandemic was added. (P4)

Well, this is the first time I agree with such things. Secondly, I met you on Zoom like this. I never knew about such things. (P5)

Of course, I did it for the first time too. (P7)

One participant said that she thought her problems would be shared with close relatives unless there were severe problems. The participant emphasizes that these groups have just started to become widespread in our country.

This is the first time I have participated in a group; I guess it is because of the environment I came from or the socio-economic situation people talk to their close relatives the most and share a little bit and pass over such things you know, they consult an expert when they are unable to deal with the problems. You know, these are new for our society, at least I think so. (P8)

3.3.2. Expectations and Motivation of Participants

Three participants mentioned that they joined the online parenting group to expect a 'way out, relaxation, window to breathe,' as they describe. Participants stated that, during the pandemic, they had difficulties as parents and that they thought it would be good for them to participate in an experience that could offer a solution to them in this challenging process.

The seeking of solutions umm regarding like way out, tips, saving the moment, spreading time umm communication. (P1)

As we mentioned before, in the beginning, when I was panicky, my reactions, my patience, my expectations from the children were mixed and overwhelming. I was in a period when I couldn't find a place to breathe, and I said, let me try this I participated, hoping for a window to breathe. (P4)

This research that was done by your university umm I will say, like the workshop I joined, the hoping for relaxation umm this was a harsh period really harsh period. (P3)

One participant stated that she joined the online parenting group due to her desire to receive support for the problems that parents will experience due to the difficulties of the pandemic.

You know, parenting during the pandemic and the problems that parents in this period may experience with children or what we can contribute our children and to see what they contribute us. (P7)

Another participant mentioned that she joined the group as she wanted to improve her parenting skills.

I participated so that it would contribute to my life, it could contribute to me. (P9)

Two participants stated that they participated in the online parenting group, thinking they would get practical information from the group leaders. The narratives and attitudes of both participants during the interview show that they want the group to be more information-oriented rather than sharing.

I thought that the two people who manage there would give us suggestions, but that was not the case. Well, it didn't go in the form of questions and answers; nobody gave us a suggestion. (P2)

I was thinking I would get more practical information. (P8)

Another participant thought that the group would be didactic, but on the contrary, stated that she was pleased because it was a sharing-oriented group.

I mean, like I thought it would be something didactic. I don't know why, I thought somebody would come up and say 'do this and do that' People that have nothing to do with the topic umm or someone from outside my age group might have older children or somebody that I would not click with, umm, somebody that would not fit in with my childcare style, then I would not care what they would be saying, I know myself. But it was not like that, umm, didactic; there was definitely nothing like that. (P3)

3.3.3. Sharing

Sharing was one of the most striking sub-themes in the participants' narratives. This theme includes the sharing-oriented experiences of the participants in the online parenting group. The participants focused on four aspects of the sharing regarding the OPG experience: 1) The healing effect of sharing, 2) Feeling comfortable with sharing, 3) Sharing with spouse and friends, and 4) Learning by sharing.

3.3.3.1. The Healing Effect of Sharing

Many participants stated that space, where they can routinely share their experiences every week, was good for them.

Three participants noted that the therapeutic effect of talking to someone and feeling understood was good for them.

I realized that talking felt good and expressing yourself felt good umm feeling understood felt good. (P8)

Talking to somebody, knowing that somebody is there, felt good, it contributed a lot, for all of us. (P9)

Sharing your experiences over a specific theme that week felt good. (P6)

One participant emphasized the importance of having a space that is only open to sharing and being listened to in this area without judgment.

It was joyful to meet every Thursday, talking about our problems, and witnessing that nobody judged anybody felt and I felt really good. (P3)

One participant mentioned that before the problem that she was experiencing during the day grew, she stopped herself thinking that she could share her problem in the parenting group.

I knew there were some problems with them; it would feel good to talk about it in the meeting, would feel good to share it. Let's freeze this now; talk about it tomorrow again. And when tomorrow comes, and we reopen that topic, I feel like I am answering with my mind and not my emotions. (P4)

One participant mentioned that the time she allocated to the parenting group was good for her as a time she devoted to herself, while another participant stated that with this group, she regained the social network she lost due to the conditions of the pandemic and to be in contact with people was good for her.

Sometimes I would go a full day, and I would leave it at home, umm, and his friends could not come, and it would be problematic. I would look forward to Saturday every week while sharing, for example, because it was a time allocated for me; it was a relief. (P7)

Talking to ladies really felt good, umm, as you know, we were distant from a social setting. I don't know, before, 'let's get some tea, some coffee' we would come together or would meet in a place. Now that we do not experience those, umm, talking to them felt really good. (P5)

3.3.3.2. Feeling Comfortable with Sharing

Many participants stated that they were comfortable sharing in the online parenting group because they felt confident that they would not be judged within the group.

Three participants stated that the participants do not know each other and that it is a closed group that allows them to share safely and comfortably. According to participants, because of the group structure, everyone could safely share their opinions and were not judged by anyone.

Umm, you can say what you want quite easily because they do not know you. I was talking much more comfortably, and I would explain what I wanted better. For example, if I were to tell my problems regarding my child to someone close to me, it might come back to my child. I don't know, it leaves the wrong impression but since you don't know the people there, you could talk freely about everything. (P2)

You talk to strangers much more freely than you can to the people you know. Umm, the more intimate you become with people, less you share with them, actually. Because they know a lot about your private life and you start to not share some things, which makes the relationship one dimensional. In the parent group I felt relieved a lot, umm, I shared what I could not with my social circle. (P7)

It's like therapy; perhaps it feels easier to talk to people you do not know. You really can't with a familiar person because a lot of things tie you down. That's why you talk to people you don't know much more freely, perhaps more honestly, umm, it's more enjoyable, both in terms of talking and listening. (P9)

One participant mentioned that when she shared her problems with her friends, she had a hard time and did not feel understood, and stated that she was able to communicate comfortably in this group and felt understood. She also said that other participants' perspectives allow the parents to think differently. The group environment was good because the participants listened to each other respectfully and shared their thoughts comfortably.

It was enjoyable to experience that nobody judged each other. (P3)

See, everybody had their own, good sides and bad sides, for example, I could say 'I don't like to play, I don't like to go to the park', my congenial friend would say, the opposite, was sick of her work and would say 'I wish somebody else would do these so I can spend all my day with my kid at the park' but nobody was judging. (P6)

She did not judge me, and I did not judge her. I just heard that the opposite side is also possible. My friends with kids, my older friends, or my friends who do not feel anxious as I do... when I shared with them, they would make me feel like an alien, but there, 'oh, there is this side, too,' 'we understand you quite well,' 'we do this,' 'this could be our alternative solution,' or 'we really have no solution for that' that feeling of being understood felt really good. (P4)

About the importance of talking, because we talked about everything, we were people that did not know each other. (P5)

3.3.3.3. Sharing with Spouse and Friends

Nearly half of the participants stated that they shared with their spouses that many other parents had similar problems. The most important realization for the participants was to see that 'they were no exceptions', and they shared with their spouses that these experiences were shared among all parents.

Well, I said that everybody was going through similar stuff, that we were not exceptions, to make her relax, umm, it was always like this, without going into further detail. (P3)

I started making these suggestions about this to my husband. 'No, the problems are not just ours, other parents share the same concerns' umm these sort of suggestions and explain to him that it should be this way. (P5)

I went every time 'we talked about these, they said this and that, or we can perhaps do this was a suggestion' and talked about these everybody has more or less the same issues, the same routine, it is more, umm, just, because how the pandemic felt for those people, I mean, for my husband, too, this new routine, I am the one who felt, I mean it was nothing that we were used to, he suffered from the same thing, I was saying that, see everybody is going through the same thing. It is best to stay with a sound mind as much as you can; it's always good to have some support. (P6)

One participant also mentioned that she shared the importance of parents' well-being and the awareness of living in the moment with her spouse. This shows that the participant shared the information gained from the group with her spouse and the experience gained.

Again, the processes about us not being alone, that information like 'put your oxygen mask on first and then attend to your children', umm, staying in the moment, seizing the moment with a bit more joy, skipping the past, today, tomorrow, we talked about these. (P1)

Two participants stated that they shared other parents' suggestions with their friends who have children of a similar age group.

As I said, my girlfriends and I have children of similar ages because 'another experienced a similar thing and found this solution, tried it, and it worked' things like that, we had chats like these. (P1)

From the school where he went for his fifth year, we have common friends with our children. I shared with my friend group, umm, not the nature of it and the contents but as a topic, and took it for myself, and it helped; I was able to suggest 'you can also try this.' (P7)

Two participants mentioned that the group was very good for them and shared their positive experiences with their friends.

It always felt good, I said and shared with my friends, for example, we will move, the suggestions on the process of moving, I have heard this and that, and if they don't need it, it's something new and different, so I told them all. (P6)

I told some of my close friends, I wish I had included you in this group, I wish I had told, I shared with them that I obtained good information. (P2)

3.3.3.4. Learning by Sharing

Many participants stated that they learned a lot from the shared anecdotes in the online parenting group.

Two participants mentioned that the book suggestions shared in the group were very beneficial for them. It was very important for the participants to listen to other participant's experiences in the group. In this way, they discovered solutions they couldn't see on their own. It was observed that the exchange of information and suggestions among the mothers within the online parenting group and the interaction of the participants had a positive effect on mothers.

There was, like, the exchange of umm, books, for example, the idea of books, for me, is a very precious area. That was already a nice plus for me; I can tell you that. And some, among that chaos or dark, and umm shared what the children used to or have been experiencing, the mothers... from that, I found some points where I could go 'ah, yes, I can do that too' or when talking about a problem, 'maybe not thinking about it so much could be the solution' these ideas came about, and I assessed them in fact, in my own life. (P3)

A lot of, like, book names, perhaps ones that I can't reach or find or I am very interested in children's books, I would look for them; but I haven't thought that there would be a book about moving, never thought about researching it,

honestly. Umm, let's say when the kid will have a younger sibling, there would be a book about a sibling, or if you need to talk about death, there would be a book about death, but I did not think that there would be a book about moving (laughing) umm the other friend umm, for example, she made a lot of suggestions when that happens and it expanded my horizons, I would now research anything I could think of. (P6)

And this started in the recent weeks, probably, the mothers started messaging and asking, umm, one of our mothers, for her children, for example, said 'I turn on some music while baking cookies' and I tried to do the same, but then there was chaos (laughing) there it was like an interaction, it was nice, her kids to me said let me ask you something, ours got helping books and asked her, etc., etc., there were these nice friendships and sharing. (P4)

For example, a mother said to take walks to relax the kids, but the time does not fit for us, one's lecture ends, thirty minutes later or an hour later, the other one's new lecture starts, and I could not put that to practice, but I took them out to the garden when I could, and the fresh air felt good. (P2)

Listening to other lives, umm, having an opinion on those, and having an idea of how they do what was nice. (P1)

Two participants noted that they gained significant awareness of their parenting through the shared experiences and discussions. One participant stated that she changed her understanding of discipline with the suggestions of other participants, and another participant mentioned that she gained awareness of her perception of her child in line with the guidance in the group. One participant noted that she gained awareness of her strengths from sharing with the group members about each other.

And when obsession is the discussion topic 'what is the subject that your child is doing and that you are uncomfortable of' umm, those days, we were at home, so every morning when he washes his hands and face and changed out of his

pajamas, I want that bed to be made. As I said, I have the habit of planning and order, umm, and one of the friends there said 'let it be, let it be unmade, it's their room' and I said 'I can't, the bed always catches my eye as I walk along the corridor and this is being responsible' umm, she said 'let it be for once, see what he does' and I said 'okay, I will' I left it alone for a week, and after 3-4 days of having an unmade bed, he started tidying up his bed himself I realized. since then, I do not talk about it and he always makes his bed, it makes me happy. (P7)

It felt good to be among the mothers because I myself told and got answers, for example, like this, for example, a lot of women, umm, made me see that I was in a period where I constantly focused on my childrens' negativities. Now I started thinking about their positivities, as well. For example, there was a mother who told me that, for example, umm 'you always mentioned their negative sides, why don't you talk about their positive sides' and that felt really harsh, for example, 'oh, it turns out I always see the negatives about my children, not the positives' and now I started seeing the positives. (P5)

I felt incomplete in a lot of ways, umm, not just as a parent but also due to parenting, because I could not take care of myself, because I postponed my self-care, it was heading in a bad direction, I think; but the friends there, thankfully, we shared some things in the last week that we were in the same group, everybody talked about each other and said some things, they made me realize myself there. (P6)

One participant was inspired by other mother's shares about arts and sports activities for her child within the group and stated that she would actively guide her children to find their interests at the end of the pandemic.

For example, what had happened, one of the mothers from the parent group was talking about her child; but mentioned so many things, plays basketball, goes swimming, rides horses, and another thing, music, said he plays music, and I said 'see, when the pandemic is over, I'll hopefully take you swimming,' or somewhere with musical instruments, you'll understand which instrument you like, and if you

want to play an instrument, we'll arrange it. There are these kinds of children that do something, ride horses, run. (P8)

Two participants noted that they understood what they could experience with their children in the future through the discussions of other mothers with older children, and they felt competent.

The age groups, for example, there are older ones, and I think that when my children reach that age, I will experience those feelings. The communication between the children, similar age groups to me, experience similar things, so I have experienced what could be experienced in the future. (P2)

Aside from that, as I said, they, for example, there were families with children of older age, in their twenties or older; while listening to those mothers, I made a note of what I might encounter in the future. I do not know whether it will stay on my mind, but at least I believe it will be a lesson. I tried to learn from them. (P7)

3.3.4. Participants' Awareness

Many participants stated that they gained awareness of parenting during the group. Participants mentioned that they were reflecting on the topics and shared them in the group during the week. Participants said that the group allowed them to reflect on issues they had not been able to think of for a long time.

Three participants noted that sessions create opportunities for thinking.

I realized that during this process, I did not think about what was making us feel good. (P7)

These issues that I have been complaining about are now more out in the open, I think I can say, I mean I remembered the parent that I once was. (P3)

Every time you question yourself, at least once, and realize some things. Then you realize it and research and research the topics. We spent weeks saying, 'what am I, who am I, what am I doing, what am I not doing, oh they are doing these like this.' (P8)

One participant stated that she started thinking about parenting thanks to the group and had not thought about it before.

During the group sessions, I started observing my parenthood. Before within that flow, trying to do something, I took a breath and saw that I could change it, let's keep this; I can't do anything about it right now; let's freeze it. Looking at it from a distance, taking a step back, and looking from a distance came over me within these 8 weeks. (P4)

Three participants stated that they were able to clear their minds thanks to this opportunity.

Even giving yourself that break to think is good because it creates that time, even that was very good, you increase your awareness of things. (P6)

I gathered my thoughts, I mean, umm, I had all of it, but as the questions came, I gathered my thoughts and thought it over in a more orderly manner, what was I doing about this issue. (P9)

For every week's topics, for topics that changed every week, I thought about how I approached that topic. (P1)

Four participants stated that they became more aware of their parenting and their attitudes towards discipline during the group. They realized that they were very controlling.

Two participants noted a reduction in controlling parenting attitudes.

I also needed to hold myself back; I learned a lot during that phase, to let go of the control, umm, that was not normal, during this parenting experience. (P8)

Controlling made me more panicky and worrying because we can't control everything umm I mean, when you reach that mindset, I started to relax a bit. 'Yes, we can't control everything.' He'd get sick, he'd fall, or I don't know, there'd be an earthquake, we will experience that, we also got Covid, and panicked a lot, but, we got it at the end. Umm, I try to calm myself down on every subject, including parenthood, and try to go with the flow. I can say I have become that kind of a person in parenthood, too. (P6)

One participant noted that the discussions about feelings created awareness in her, and this awareness helped her reduce her controlling nature. The work that the participant is mentioned is the "color your world" activity. In this activity, the participants say random emotion names out loud and decide together the colors represented by each emotion. Finally, they describe their world of emotions with the colors they represent on a blank piece of paper.

We have done this one exercise; everybody had to assign colors to emotions, and then we painted with those colors. Yes, the emotion of each of us and the tree we are on have different colors; but when it comes together, the colors form something greater. When we interpret the same thing in daily life, my son's emotion represents a color, there is also something that my husband brings and unites from the life outside, and this was not something that I was used to experiencing; this color circle, we are in it. The kids are thrown around too, as well as us, 'okay, alright, this will pass, as well, this is a process, we will overcome this, but no need to spend too much time and effort and control to overcome this.' It was a very valuable lesson for me. (P4)

I realized some of my mistakes; I observed that I need to let them a bit looser. It was too tight, I mean, I was strangling them, umm, in the name of taking auto control, like I said, not necessarily related to me, related to my kid... There were points where I was angry at myself, I mean, my worry was not that advanced, but I

realized I was pressuring my child a bit because of worries. I faced that because these were talked about. (P7)

One participant stated that her child started to go to bed half an hour later.

I postponed the bedtime for about half an hour which was something huge for me. (P1)

Another participant mentioned that she no longer forces her children to eat.

I am trying not to make it a problem, as I said, on the one hand, myself, umm, I can now say that, okay, if the child did not eat it today, that's fine, let him not eat it today. (P8)

One participant mentioned that she develop empathy towards her child thanks to the questions about how she was in her youth, and in this way, she better understood her children's behavior.

It really made us make a comparison, I mean, when you were asked, 'How were you when you were young?' for example, 'Oh, we did similar things back in the day.' Now, as parents, our children are going through the same periods, we see that that's why I started understanding them, agreeing with them. This group made me realize that. (P5)

Four participants stated that they realized the importance of their well-being and attached more importance to self-care.

One participant noted that she decided to continue walking, which was good for her in the past.

I mean, I increased my walks a bit more because I liked it, I like it, umm, I tried to increase my personal time, umm, as I said, it made me aware that these are not unjust, in fact, it made me realize that I needed it. (P1)

Another participant stated that she started to take better care of herself thanks to the group.

I saw that it was good for me, let me pay attention to the hours, let me take care of myself, I will talk there. (P8)

One participant mentioned that she learned not to give up what was good for her.

Yes, we need to spoil ourselves, this coffee will be drunk when it is hot, and if you turn on cartoons for the kids meanwhile, then that is also okay; there is nothing wrong with that; I managed to be flexible like this. (P4)

Another participant mentioned that she can now make time for herself by going out while she could not live in the past.

I go out when she says, 'Let's go out,' I never wanted to before; for example, now I can go outside when she says, 'Let's go get some fresh air.' There is a new awareness after the group. (P5)

3.3.5. Feeling That You are Not Alone and Making New Friendships

Most of the participants stated that they realized that they were not alone in the group and that everyone experienced similar problems.

Participants mentioned that being with mothers with similar problems relaxed them, and the solutions from mothers who had similar issues were meaningful.

It makes you feel not alone when you hear similar things from other mothers. (P1)

I thought 'I'm not the only one going through these problems, everybody has it the same' Before, at home, I thought this problem was only mine, but when 8 other people say the same thing like there were 6 participants and everybody had the same general issue 'It's not just me, everybody in the world experiences similar issues' I realized that. I mean, everyone had a similar problem. (P2)

One participant pointed out the good feeling of being understood in women's solidarity.

First of all, in a group of women, in female solidarity where there are shared problems, I talked about my problems, heard about theirs, saw how similar or how different they were, felt understood, so it felt good. (P4)

After I joined this parent group, I saw that I was not the only one with problems, and I felt more relieved; I could say 'I was not the only one.' (P5)

Another participant emphasized the importance of hearing other ideas on a complex topic such as parenting.

I really needed it because umm, on your own personal therapy, yes, you fulfill a need; but, it is extremely valuable to hear that you are not alone with issues like these, like motherhood that is a strain on your conscience. (P6)

Listening to other friends' experiences, umm, listening to different lives felt good because sometimes you feel like you are the only one. (P7)

Well, I saw that they were experiencing the same problems, how to put it, the fact that you share the same destiny, the same problem feels good, like 'I'm not alone'. (P8)

Everybody experienced something, found some remedy to something, an exit point, or still, experiences continue, umm, that helped. (P9)

Three participants stated that they established friendships with group members in the group and these friendships continued after the group. This ensures the continuity of sharing opportunities for mothers.

Like, it was such an earning, I was very happy to have made a new friend, above all else. (P6)

We met new people; it was a defined process, umm, we are still in contact with one of them; I made a friend in the end, that's what's new about it in my life. (P7)

We are still in contact; we see each other. (P8)

3.3.6. Learning from Source

Two participants stated that they learned scientific knowledge about their children from the group leaders.

And I talked about, when one of the children did, umm, what was it how was it, when he gets so angry that he cries, and I would always ask what's wrong, what's the matter. However, there should have been a hug; I shouldn't have asked about the subject; I learned that. You learn a lot, even though about child puberty (laughing), that really affected me. (P2)

For example, I learned something that I have never heard about before, umm, they said, for example, 'the frontal lobe develops until 25, and they become more rational after 25,' these were the sort of information that I learned about. I can say it met my lack of information. (P5)

Two participants mentioned that they became more aware of the importance of parents' well-being when the group leaders emphasized it.

The thing about the oxygen mask felt a bit more logical because I was more like 'I am happy if my son is happy,' 'I am feeling good if my son is feeling good' type of person. I was in that group that believed that reflecting helps umm; as I listened and thought about it, I realized that doing what made me feel good was not unfair to him. In fact, I started believing that as I felt better, I could make him feel better, too. (P1)

And the thing we all forget about is 'put on your own oxygen mask,' yes, we might have heard it multiple times before, but remembering it there felt good. (P4)

Three participants stated that they learned the importance of symbolic play and understood how they should play with their children. The participant realized the importance of letting her children show negative emotions in the play and not giving direction to her children.

One participant realized how meaningful it was even to be with her child during the play.

For example, we are playing games, games of certain styles, there are certain games that we play more in the household, let's say. I was not treating something as playing with him, but there was something called symbolic play, and the fact that my son wants me by his side means something. For example, we pour the Lego on the floor, both sit on top of it, I find the pieces, and he is building, like that, umm, we are not necessarily following a scenario like when playing house or form a specific game because my son currently does not ask for that, but the other kind and I learned that it is very precious. (P6)

Symbolic play, without direction, yes, we all read it in the books; but, really, when he says to have an accident while riding that motorcycle from here to there 'oh, no, let's not have an accident' or 'yes, it indeed had an accident, what are we going to do, let's call an ambulance' and the feeling of partaking in the game, trying to listen to his feelings, emotions. (P4)

About the process of games, forming and non-forming, this duo. Our two psychologists implemented a scenario together, they did something, played a game, and that made me realize which side I was on and I remembered that was not really refreshing for the kid. (P1)

Two participants stated that the concept of a 'good enough mother', which is an important topic covered in the online parenting group, was good for them.

The concept of a 'good enough mother' was really good. (P4)

One participant mentioned that she left her perfectionist nature aside and became a 'good enough parent'.

Please be a good enough mother, don't push yourself any further, I mean there are inadequacies, everybody has them, none of us is perfect, and I have actually given very much from myself and, now, I approach those things which give me trouble with 'well, that's going to happen if it is going to happen,' meaning, more, umm, I mean I was by my child's side for so long, and I see it as a positive, a profit, I have done everything 'good enough', I am now sure of it. (P6)

3.3.7. Increasing Communication and Interaction within the Family

Four participants stated that their communication and interaction with their children improved because of the online parenting group.

One participant noted that suggestions from other mothers in the group strengthened her bond with her children.

We got closer with the children, more intimate; after this period's stress, it felt better; the things that were talked about and suggested strengthened the bond, in my opinion. (P2)

We conversed more in the evenings, everybody feels better when we talk before going to bed, kids feel more relaxed, etc; it is good. (P8)

One participant stated that she started watching movies and TV series with her children and went out together.

For example, we started watching TV series, we watch them together, we can watch movies together or when my daughter, umm, prepares fruit, we sit and talk together and eat them, these were the sorts of changes. Or I go out when she says 'Let's go out,' I never wanted to before, for example, now I can go outside when she says 'Let's go get some fresh air.' There is a new awareness after the group, in my routines, and in my daily life. (P5)

One participant mentioned that her well-being reflected on her energy and thus increased their interactions by doing sports with her child during the pandemic, thanks to the online parenting group.

It affects my mental state, contributed to my psychology, like, we continued with our lives physically but, naturally, when your head is more relaxed, when you can overcome the problems you perceive, automatically, the strength of daily psychology reflects on the bodily wellness and comfort. With that, we started doing sports; we are doing sports in front of the TV from YouTube, umm, we take more frequent walks, that. (P7)

3.3.8. "I'm Glad I Attended"

Many participants stated that joining a parenting group was a very beneficial experience for them, making them feel very good during the process. They said that the group's structure, topics covered, and sharing experiences and knowledge were very rich.

It was a good, enjoyable experience; I am really glad we were in a group of people that respectfully listened to each other, people that tried to understand, or

kept silent instead of dogmatizing, so to say, umm, listening instead of commenting.
(P1)

Two participants mentioned that they were looking forward to the day of the group and were sorry that there was no session for one week.

I mean, way ahead of my expectations, in fact, an experience that contributed to me greatly, was a very, very enjoyable experience. In fact, 'I wish it was Thursday now so that we could talk a bit' It was like a coffee-tea break with friends, in fact, we could not meet for one week, and I was sad 'why didn't it take place' (laughing). (P3)

Eight weeks, I was sick -beginning of Covid- and could not attend one week, and the second week was still with Covid, and when other friends also had some issues, it was canceled, believe me, there was that 2-week empty period, and I was waiting impatiently for the group for the next Thursday to come. I loved to attend, and it felt good. (P6)

One participant stated that she was sleepy due to the late hour of the group but still wanted the group to never end.

For example, because of the bedtime of kids, I sleep early, starts at 9 and then continues, during that last hour, my eyes close, even though I was physically sleep-deprived, there were sessions that I did not want them to end, it was very good, very enjoyable, very beneficial. (P4)

We have been through a very difficult time, umm, in this parenting group, I really experienced its support; it was beneficial, I mean. (P5)

It was nice, I got informed, I enjoyed it, I mean there was an exchange. I mean, it was not a Q&A setting, but, for example, everybody commented and gave information and talked about their experiences on a topic; that's how it went. (P2)

I will always remember this period thinking, I am glad I attended, umm, it made me feel good in that period. (P8)

3.4. THE OPG DESIGN

3.4.1. The Necessity of Father Involvement

Four participants stated that the online parenting group should also be run for the fathers.

One participant recommended that separate parenting groups for mothers and fathers should be organized.

The fathers need a group like this arranged because we, as the mothers, are now aware, I am not the only one, sleep problems are not unique to my children or playing a game is not unique to my child or reluctance to specific things was not unique to my children, I realized that, umm, as I said, I mentioned these to my husband, 'It's not just us, see, everyone's children are having the same issues', that's why I said the fathers need a group like this, too, they also need to see this. (P5)

Another participant mentioned that another parenting group should also be arranged for fathers.

It could be that the studies done with the mothers should not be done to fathers separately because the fathers might not benefit from individual work unless there are mothers present; but, for example, this has been done with the mothers once, and a group with the spouses can be formed and these can be explained to them, after all, they are our spouses, we have nothing to hide, I don't think it would be an ethical issue because I am sure the fathers will not share that much, they will share less. (P6)

One participant stated that fathers need space to share the stress of parenting.

At the same time, fathers need a spot, a space to discharge among them.
(P3)

Another participant emphasized that the subjects explaining the importance of fathers in the family should be addressed in the parenting group for fathers.

A group study that only has the fathers and aims to increase the awareness of their absence would be nice. (P4)

Five participants said that parents should join the online parenting group together.

Three participants stated that fathers should join such a group to become conscious of parenting and normalize what happens at home.

The mothers and the fathers should be together. Fathers have this notion that what is happening is unique to our own household; no other place has it like this; they need to hear the problems of the women from other households, only then can you have the understanding of 'oh yes, really, everybody is like that,' or 'look all men are the same or all women are the same. (P3)

For example, I would have said a single group aimed at the fathers, but maybe mothers and fathers could be together, I mean, I think they can attend together, there can be groups like that because it would be beneficial for me 'I wish my spouse was also here, hearing these. (P5)

I think they would have brought in the fathers a bit more is what I think, not individual but with spouses, because fathers also need to be educated on these; that's why it could have been a couple's group. (P2)

One participant said that fathers were expected to participate at the beginning of this group, but this did not happen.

This could be turned into something more effective because the fathers were not a part of this even though it was expected. (P6)

One participant emphasized that even the group's name is 'parenting group', but the subject of fathers has not been mentioned much.

Maybe the father could have attended a session or a survey or something like that could have been done, it has 'parent' in the name but the word 'father' is mentioned maybe five-six times. (P8)

3.4.2. This Group is the “Parenting” Group!

Two participants stated that they did not know that fathers could also join the online parenting group. They said that their spouse was at home, but they thought the group was for mothers since no one had a spouse. Obviously, it is not sufficiently stated here that this group is a parenting group and it is not very well emphasized that fathers can participate.

It was always the mothers; my husband spent time with the kids in the next room, so we did not attend with the father; the father was with the children in the living room. I attended, and it was always the ladies, so I did not think that someone extra could attend. I mean, when it started with the ladies, and there was nobody by their side, I think my husband would come and listen because he was at home on Saturdays around that time because of the curfew. (P2)

I mean, my husband was at home or the husbands of the others, but none of ours came. (P5)

One participant noted that one father only joined the group for a week, but did not join the group again, possibly because there were no fathers.

Among other friends, only once, one of the husbands attended, but after seeing that there were no other husbands, I believe he decided not to attend anymore. (P6)

3.4.3. The Importance of the Low Number of Participants

Three participants mentioned that they thought that the group's number should be low to share comfortably and many in-depth topics.

One participant stated that essential issues were tackled at the beginning of the group and that the number of participants was too high at that time, and that she forgot what she would say until it was her turn or that she could not share in-depth.

Actually, there are topics to be talked about, umm, while we are talking to each other, I mean when the parents talk to each other, by the end, the number of attendees decreased; but the topics at the start were also important, umm, if we had fewer people back then perhaps the shared content would have been of better quality because you think of something and when there are 7-8 people, by the time it is your turn, the topic shifts to another point. Straying away from that topic, your own idea or when you can't get what you wanted to get and when you switch to another topic, automatically, that time has passed, then you think you did not profit enough, or it stays with you because you could not share. (P7)

Another participant mentioned that she could sincerely share their thoughts because of the low number of people in the group.

Having a small number of people helped in this way: I talked about a lot of things that I normally would not because there were a few people and we established some intimacy, and I am sure other friends felt the same way, that established a feeling of closeness. (P3)

It was very crowded in the beginning, with 6 families, I think, but it did not last that way, after the first session, we were 4 people, and then dropped to 3. Well, the small number is better because it is sharing, and actually, there are benefits to a large number in terms of time. (P6)

3.4.4. The Necessity of Professional Involvement

Many participants mentioned that they wanted more information and feedback from the group leaders.

One participant emphasized that it would be good to create question-answer times during the group.

Umm, every week because the topic is going to pass, after the first week's introductions, parenthood and it would be more among the parents, umm, because we should be able to ask the moderators questions. Now it's too late for me, but the new participants can ask questions, and time can be allocated for Q&A. (P7)

Two participants stated that they expected information appropriate to the general developmental needs of the children. Participants emphasized the importance of not sharing in-depth information specific to each participant's children but increasing the informative sections appropriate for the age periods of the children. Participants also stated that they expect group leaders to give suggestions, again because it is not very specific.

'When you are stuck here, you can actually do this and that' like this; I was waiting for some key takeaways at times, to be honest. For example, 'Children aged 8-10 has this specific period, and the children can say 'No' more, might do whatever, this could happen, that could happen where the technical information that I was waiting for, at times. (P1)

Information as well as feedback, I mean, the example I have just given to you, my son goes to the toilet with me, I say it as an example, 'We understand that

a 2.5-year old boy goes to the toilet with his mother, now there is the pandemic, etc., etc., but if you solve this within the medium-term, it would be better for your child's development and in order to solve that, we can suggest this and that.' I mean without taking too much of everybody's time, umm, how to say, 'Sometimes, you need to tell Stop to children, to set some boundaries and yes, there is indeed a violation of those boundaries, it may be good if you focused on this', feedback of this sort. (P4)

I would have wanted them to give more support or say some guiding things, honestly. (P5)

I only thought that maybe, for example, umm, we went into some deep topics, too much sharing, of course, that might be not appropriate in terms of psychology, I don't know, if the psychologist fellows there suggested some things to them, something small, even, that might have been good. (P6)

One participant stated that she learned by sharing among the participants, but she thought that if the information provided by the group leaders were added to this, it would be a much more efficient group.

I say this for the fellows and the teachers that organize this program, if they include an information transfer, as well, that would be good, more beneficial. I mean, even without it, we earned some stuff, but if it was included, I think that would be effective. (P9)

3.4.5. Duration

Two participants noted that they wanted the online parenting group to last longer than eight weeks.

That study, perhaps, even though 8 weeks were long enough, but I thought maybe it would have been longer. (P3)

One participant stated that in eight-week periods, this group could continue with the participants who were willing because the pandemic was ongoing and such support was needed.

I would have made it longer, like phase 1, phase 2, phase 3. I mean someone that completed the first 8 modules, let's not say the next 8 modules, but something that focuses on 8 different topics, something that people who are willing can continue might have been fun because the pandemic still continues. (P4)

Another participant mentioned that it would be better to extend the session duration or hold an online parenting group twice a week due to many participants.

The time could have been longer, like 1.5 hours feels short for me for 8-9 participants; I mean, they said the same thing to us; in fact, they would say if it was longer. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, we all said, for the last 3-4 weeks, 'it would have been better if it was two days a week.' (P7)

One participant emphasized the importance of reasonable adjustment of participants' speaking time by the group leaders.

When somebody speaks, when the floor is given to any participant, there should be a certain time given, I mean, like in the parliament, they start a 4-minute time window. When it ends, the person should speak accordingly. Because I'm saying for myself, too, not because I am angry or offended at other friends; but, umm. not everyone shows the same respect for the speech time, and not everybody was comfortable with speaking. In fact, group leaders purposefully tried to make 1-2 participants speak, or they had to interrupt, so if this will be arranged again, there should definitely be a time limit for everyone. I mean, Ayse, Fatma, you have four minutes, your thoughts, your opinions on this topic. That was what I desired the most and was the thing I had the most trouble with. (P7)

Another participant described her low tolerance to silence that occurred during sessions.

What forced me is that I am a bit impatient when you don't talk while you should be talking, where you wait silently to include other people; these are very difficult for me, especially when I'm physically exhausted. The time where you are used to taking your phone and fill that two minutes, let me not say, was helpful, but it was what I was struggling with that was one of the problems for me within that 90 minutes. (P4)

3.5. RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE

As a child-adolescent clinical master program student, I have observed that supporting parents is one of the most critical components of working with children in my clinical internship. Including the child's family and working on parenting changed the children's therapeutic process positively. When I started working with a parenting group in the same year, I realized how much parents need a space to talk and observed the positive change developed by meeting and sharing every week. I had the chance to lead the parenting group both face-to-face and online. The most critical point that attracted my attention was that although the group's name was the "parenting group," almost all participants were mothers. Parenting is not a responsibility to be undertaken alone; it requires the joint participation of parents. However, mothers were the only ones who joined the group and sought ways to become "better parents" by developing themselves. In the group where I was also one of the group leaders, we received feedback from the participants that this face-to-face group was beneficial. Some studies conducted with the participants showed that this group was helpful for "mothers." However, regardless of this potentially biased situation, I wanted to investigate whether online parenting work with people who do not know me personally is beneficial. The reason for this research focusing on the online parenting group was the pandemic conditions. Before that, I did not have explicit representations in my mind that the group work could be done online. For me, group work was a study with safe boundaries, where chairs were lined up in a round shape, group leaders and the participants could feel the atmosphere, and immediate intervention could be made in case of any emergency. The change in living conditions and our understanding of security due

to the pandemic, and the fact that parents were forced into a situation they have not experienced before, required them to be supported more than ever. Therefore, online parenting groups were initiated in which the parents were supported and presented a space to share about the problems they have with themselves and their children.

I wanted to do this study using a qualitative method to understand the participants' group experiences in depth and design future online parenting groups depending on their suggestions. While preparing the semi-structured interview questions, I tried to be as cautious as possible not to direct the participants in a particular direction. The questions included the participants' parenting and work routines, their spouses' parenting and work routines, the changes they observed in themselves. Their observations for their spouses during the pandemic, what they observed in their children during the pandemic, their online parenting group experiences, and suggestions for future parenting groups. The interviews were held online via Zoom. Although I could not fully observe the domestic environment, the participants' statements explained the workload of mothers in this process very well. Many mothers were able to carry out interviews with me after they put their children to sleep, or the meetings were arranged according to the work arrangements of their spouses. It was a clear theme in the participants' statements that "mothers do five sorts of work, and fathers only do their jobs, and they still demand silence." It was also an experience that summarized the workload of mothers when children came to mothers frequently during meetings, and the participants had to meet the children's needs to continue the interview. Emotional moments were often experienced during interviews, emphasizing the mothers' workload and emotional damage during the process. The theme of womanhood was also evident during the interviews. Therefore, the statements of the participants such as "as a woman you know that it is challenging to be a woman in Turkey", "why do we take so much responsibility as women", "what is the role of women" aroused strong feelings for me, as well. Although I tried to remain neutral during interviews as much as I could, I also have a bias due to the additional burdens placed on women in the family, and no matter how much I try to control, the position of the researcher will be effective in the interpretation of the study.

In general, the data collection process was very productive for me. However, in my opinion, the best part of this study was the conversations with the mothers. Witnessing the mothers' ability to participate in this study from different cities, overcoming distances, finding alternative solutions, and discovering the importance of fathers in the family helped me look at parenting differently as a clinician.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This study investigated mothers' online parenting group (OPG) experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. Nine women (age range: 31-47) volunteered to participate in the qualitative study. Parental characteristics that mothers attribute to themselves and their spouses, parenting experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, online parenting group experiences of mothers and their suggestions for improving the online parenting groups were investigated. There were four categories of themes that were revealed through analyses. The first category, mothers' perception of themselves and their spouses' as a parent, involved four subthemes: being compassionate and understanding, being controlling, being an altruistic mother, and fathers' low involvement in parenting. The second category, effects of the pandemic, consisted of five subthemes: emotional effects, physical well-being, the changes in daily life, the changes in the relationship, and gender role awareness in parenting. The third category, OPG experience, involved eight subthemes: the novelty of being a part of OPG, expectations, and motivation of the participants, sharing, participants' awareness, feeling that you are not alone and making new friendships, learning from source, increasing communication and interaction within the family, and 'I am glad I attended'. The last category, the OPG design, included five subthemes: the necessity of father involvement, 'this group is the parenting group!', the importance of the low number of participants, the necessity of professional involvement, and duration.

4.1. EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

During the pandemic, parents experienced more stress than adults who don't have a child (APA, 2020). The pandemic took away crucial support systems from parents such as school, kindergarten, extended family, and neighbors (Ornell et al., 2020; Weems et al., 2020). With a decrease in social support and an increase in domestic workload, studies show that parents may have become more sensitive and more prone to violence and aggressive behaviors during this time (Brooks et al., 2020; Greenaway et al., 2014; Reynolds et al., 2008). When talking to mothers

about the effects of the pandemic, the most salient impact of the pandemic on them, their children, and their spouses was the emotional effects. The majority of the participants stated that they felt tired, exhausted, inadequate, and angry as a mother. One mother described this state of burnout, fatigue, and anger as self-alienation. She described this moment of estrangement as a 'Frankenstein' coming out of her during the pandemic, unlike her parenthood. The difficulty of focusing on both childcare and work during the pandemic was emphasized in the discourses of working mothers who were deprived of social support. During the pandemic, supporting their children's online education processes, daily household chores, taking care of children, and for some mothers, the effort to run their own business from home brought risky factors for parenting stress. Similar to our findings, a recent study found a direct correlation between self-reports of being affected by Covid-19 and parenting stress, which is also leading to harsh parenting (Chung et al., 2020). Harsh parenting practices were demonstrated as high levels of control, negative emotional expression, and aggressive behavior (i.e., spanking, offensive words, caning, yelling). Moreover, the researchers found a strong relationship between harsh parenting attitudes and children's internalization and externalization problems (Pinquart, 2017).

Many of the mothers stated that they had difficulties during the pandemic. Mothers had children with different age groups. Despite the loss of social support (e.g., grandparents, schools), parents still had to respond to their children's developmental needs. Bai et al. (2020) found that this pressure affected the worst the parents with children aged 0-3. However, the transition to homeschooling required heightened support even for adolescents with more significant autonomy potential (Brom et al., 2020). For this reason, regardless of the children's age group, the participants had to do many things together with a minimum of support during the pandemic.

The effects of the pandemic on mothers varied according to many individual factors. There were two salient factors: mothers' belief in the pandemic and children's age. Two mothers, whose children were the same age, one was working, and the other was a housewife, had different views on the pandemic. More specifically, their beliefs in the pandemic determined how both mothers were affected by the pandemic. While one participant stated that she was minimally

affected by the pandemic because she did not believe in the pandemic, the other participant said that she was adversely affected by the pandemic due to a major loss caused by the pandemic.

Mothers with school-age children have been more affected because of the school requirements. Mothers had to take on the role of a teacher in addition to their house chores. The online education of school-age children caused many difficulties for parents due to the children's need for help during online classes. They needed to get help with technical problems, or they needed help to understand the content of the lessons.

Participants stated that their spouses also felt exhaustion and burnout, but gender role problems in parenting were prominent themes in the participants' accounts. Mothers emphasized the difficulty of maintaining childcare and working life without support. A study comparing working mothers and fathers during the pandemic has found that mothers spend more time at home in child care and supporting children's lessons (Ferguson, 2020). Limbers et al. (2020) underscored the possibility for mothers to experience higher stress stemming from the competition between professional and familial responsibilities. One of the environmental factors that cause parenting stress is work-related stress. The Work-Home Resources (W-HR) model states that when parents are exposed to robust demands in their work and family lives, they consume their resources to cope with these demands that must be met. When the balance between home and work deteriorates, the parenting functions of the parents can be reduced (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Mothers stated that they have a more significant workload during the pandemic period and they are the only ones responsible for child care. One mother reported that her husband first understood what parenthood meant when he stayed at home with his child for a long time during the pandemic. The striking point here is that fathers were not used to spending such long hours together with their children before. These discourses had notable examples of the gender role in parenting, and the importance of father involvement.

Studies (Hiraoka & Tomoda, 2020; Orgilés et al., 2020; van Tilburg et al., 2020) have shown that parents mention higher stress due to fear of the virus or probable lack of childcare. Many participants stated that they were afraid of getting sick, both themselves and their children and loved ones. Mothers stated that they

approached their children more protectively because of this fear of getting sick. One mother commented that she now forces her child to wash hands. Another mother said that she told her child that he could not go to the hospitals because the hospitals were full, so he should be careful about his behaviors. In the discourses of both mothers, it was remarkable that they were anxious, overly intrusive, and protective towards their children. Sprang and Silman (2013) found that a quarter of parents who were isolated during the epidemic showed signs of anxiety and met the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) criteria. Studies have shown the psychological effects of the pandemic on different segments of society (Rajkumar, 2020; Rodríguez-Rey et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020), with increased anxiety and anger (Mertens et al. 2020; Trnka and Lorencova, 2020). In addition, mothers were very concerned about their children's education. Especially for mothers whose children were preparing for the exams, their anxiety about their children's education was even more salient.

The Covid-19 pandemic could be traumatic for some mothers, and this intense anxiety they experience may cause them to develop PTSD in the future. Two mothers, however, expressed that they did not believe in the pandemic. Denial is an important defense mechanism in psychoanalytic literature. The idea that 'there is no event if I do not accept' forms the basis of this mechanism. In processes where one's life may be at risk, such as in crises, one's capacity to deny emotionally can be life-saving for the person (McWilliams, 2016, p. 125). Two participants tried to cope with this situation by using the denial defense mechanism due to the complicated events and traumatic experiences in their own lives. Therefore, the impact of the pandemic on mothers seems to be related to their coping mechanisms.

Stress occurred since parents have to take on multiple roles simultaneously, such as a parent, a spouse, an employee, an employer, and a caregiver (Coyne et al., 2020). Role confusion is one of the prominent themes in this process. Participants stated that they experienced role confusion by taking on many roles such as a mother, teacher, friend in a house. In addition, severe deterioration in communication with their children, violation of borders, and enmeshed mother-child relationship are significant findings regarding parent-child relations during the pandemic. In addition, spending a long time with the family and having two authority figures at home caused difficulties because families did not have

consistent discipline. This role confusion expressed by the mothers in their discourse and the subsequent stress they experience is compatible with the literature. In addition, some mothers stated the relationships between siblings also deteriorated. One mother, however, reported that siblings became closer to each other during this process. Spending time within families during the pandemic may be a factor that brings family members closer and increases domestic well-being for some families (Janssen et al., 2020). Nearly half of the participants stated that spending long hours under the same roof during the pandemic brought relations within the family closer and increased interaction and sharing within the family. In summary, while the pandemic provided an opportunity for rapprochement for some families, it also deteriorated relationships for some families.

Many participants stated that they observed an increase in anger in their children during the pandemic. Participants described this anger as increased temper tantrums, tension, and increased controlling behaviors in their children. Spatially restricted lifestyles such as remote education harmed the emotional world of children and adolescents (Buzzi et al., 2020). Such limitations bring along an atmosphere where children and adolescents cannot experience and express their anger with others as before (Johnson, 2020). Additionally, children faced a decrease in their self-regulating capacities, which led to a higher sense of agitation and a diminished sense of discipline, thus yielding aggressive and destructive behaviors (Çaykuş & Çaykuş, 2020; Di Giorgio et al., 2020). Children aged 4-10 exhibited a hot-tempered nature towards external demands, an intolerance of rules, sleeping problems, agitation, and mood changes (Pisano et al., 2020). Another study found an increase in anger, fear, and clinginess rates of children (Jiao et al., 2020). Also, Di Giorgio et al. (2020) found that children had difficulties following routines, self-control, and self-regulation skills during the pandemic. Also, parents observed that their children became more irritable, nervous, regressed, isolated, physically distanced, anxious, confused, and more aggressive (Buzzi et al., 2020; Lee, 2020; Pisano et al., 2020). Some participants stated that their children were more isolated and used to staying at home. This isolation seems to increase children's screen usage time and frequency of electronic device use. One other outcome of the pandemic is that parents reported their children becoming more in touch with screens and technological devices (Çaykuş & Çaykuş, 2020). Orgilés et al. (2020) found that

children were spending double the time in front of a screen, which induced sleeping problems and inhibited their social growth, setting the ground for severe conflicts between children and parents. In their discourse, mothers stated that their children's daily life routines were disrupted, and their days and nights were mixed up. This seems to result from the sleep problems in children, and the mothers' statements are in line with the literature. In addition, the increase in controlling behaviors observed in children seems to be a coping mechanism developed by children to combat uncertain conditions such as the pandemic.

Many participants stated that their children miss their friends and being at school. In addition to their educational purposes, schools also teach children certain routines such as personal hygiene, a healthy diet, and physical activity (Sylva, 1994). In addition, the school provides quality leisure activities and peer interaction for children (Ghosh et al., 2020). The closure of schools seems to have adversely affected children's socialization and peer communication. Due to the pandemic, curfews and practices such as remote education have led to severe changes in children's daily routines. The lack of school that provides healthy eating habits, physical activity opportunities, and daily routines has caused children's routines to change. According to Duraku et al. (2020), in addition to distancing from the school environment, isolation and social distance also affected children emotionally and behaviorally, making it challenging to motivate the duty of homework and maintain the same physical activity level. Many participants stated that their children's eating habits changed, they gained weight as a family, decreased their children's physical activities. While some children lost their appetite (Orgilés et al., 2020), some children increased emotional eating, bingeing, and unhealthy food consumption (Pietrobelli et al., 2020; Ruiz-Roso et al., 2020). The increase in junk food eating and the change in eating habits in their children, stated by many participants, are compatible with the literature.

In addition, three mothers reported that their young children could not spend their physical energies during the pandemic because there was not enough space at home, and this was a big struggle for both their children and themselves. Therefore, it is inferred that school closures and curfews will hinder children's physical and mental health along with their sense of normality (Lee, 2020; Stewart, 2018). According to the mothers' accounts, the effects of the pandemic on themselves, their

spouses, and children were discussed. In general, the necessity of mothers to carry out processes such as child care and their own business during the pandemic and the strain and burnout experienced by mothers were very significant. During the pandemic, the importance of father involvement has become clear for the family system to function better.

4.2. THE OPG EXPERIENCE

Parenting groups aim to improve parents' knowledge and parenting skills and, in this way, reduce parenting stress. Since parenting stress has serious effects on children's emotional and mental health, these studies indirectly aim to reduce these negative effects experienced by children. They are generally organized for approximately two hours each week and a total of 8-12 weeks. These programs can be supported by various theoretical programs such as behavioral and cognitive and include techniques such as role-playing, discussion, and homework (Barlow & Coren, 2017). The OPG was an 8-week supportive group that included three different age groups, namely preschool, school-age, and adolescent groups. It was conducted with mothers who have children in this age group during the pandemic. It was semi-structured and had no specific theoretical background. As a result of the analysis, many positive effects of the OPG, reported by parents, emerged. Participants stated that they applied to this group for reasons such as finding a way out, hoping for a window to breathe, looking for a solution, and how they should treat their children during the pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused the domestic environment to become a severe stressor to parents, as households are now required to perform multiple tasks simultaneously and spend a prolonged amount of time together, compared to before. Parents who previously used support systems such as school, kindergarten, extended family, and neighbors were deprived of this support during the pandemic (Ornell et al., 2020; Weems et al., 2020). Adhering to social-distancing precautions made many parents lose their close support systems, negatively impacting their mental health (Lebel et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020). In addition, many studies have found that the lack of social support is a risky factor for parenting. (Asbury et al., 2020; Brom et al., 2020; Lebel et al., 2020; Toseeb et al., in press; Wu et al., 2020). Social isolation, economic

difficulties, and sudden changes in routines proved to tax parents' mental health (Ornell et al., 2020).

The most important benefit of groups for mothers is that they can easily share with the safety of knowing that they will not be judged. Participants indicated that they experienced many emotions such as anger, exhaustion, and inadequacy during the pandemic. Talking with other parents about feelings of confusion, guilt, anxiety, anger, and depression help parents to resolve any issues and provide emotional support (Kerr & McIntosh, 2000). Previous research on social support has shown the intense requirement for social support of mothers who have children with special needs (Telless et al., 1989, Hartmann et al., 1998). It has been suggested that this support acts as a buffer against stress and that this preventive effect may be the sharing of mothers with similar problems (Matloff & Zimmermann 1996, Santelli et al. 1997). Theoretically-oriented groups or support groups found in the literature appear to contain a specific sample. Examples include children with special needs and their mothers, children with behavioral problems, mothers, or new mothers.

The OPG is a unique group as it is a sharing group without a specific theoretical approach to make space for parents. Everyone lived in pandemic times, and they had children in similar age groups; thus, all of these helped parents to find common problems in group discussions. Especially during the pandemic, where socialization opportunities are limited and social support has decreased, the importance of sharing similar problems with others every week on a particular day and time was very helpful for all parents. Mothers noted that the group made them realize that they were not alone. The fact that everyone experiences the problems provided a broad perspective for mothers. Kerr and McIntosh (2000) found that, operating on multiple levels, contacting with other parents' transforming effect was salient. They were interacting with parents and meeting or hearing about other children who shared similar experiences removed feelings of isolation and provided ways to visualize an ordinarily active and social life for their child.

Many studies have found that social support is a beneficial resource when dealing with stressful life events (Lee et al., 2011; Maguire-Jack & Wang, 2016; Parkes & Sweeting, 2018; Schoefield et al., 2012). Increased social support is associated with better physical and psychological well-being and effective coping

mechanisms in individuals (Lee et al., 2011; Razurel et al., 2013). One of the OPG participants stated that even if she goes to her therapy, she emphasized that this parenting group environment is very different. Such support is much needed in sensitive and challenging issues such as motherhood. Abidin's stress model, one of the most comprehensive explanations of parenting stress, explains parenting stress with three components. The first is the parent area (P), the second is the child area (C), and finally, the parent-child interaction area (R). According to the PCR theory, if parental stress is high, it will directly affect other areas, there will be problems in the fields of child and parent-child interaction, and in this way, the possibility of developing emotional and behavioral problems in the child will increase (Abidin, 1990; 1992; 1995). While the parent area includes factors such as the parent's own emotional problems, mental health, support system, and adequate resources, the child area includes child-related factors such as the child's temperament and physical and mental health status. The parent-child interaction is the critical area where both sides bring the interaction of these features. As mentioned in theory, there is a bidirectional relationship between the well-being of the parent and the well-being of the child. Parenting is inherently stressful and complicated (Crnic & Low, 2002).

One participant emphasized that parents always need support. It is thought that this discourse is important for the dissemination of sharing groups, which are not very common in our country. Another important factor mentioned by mothers is the calming effect created by unfamiliar people in the group. Mothers stated that they could easily share their problems, which they could not talk to with familiar people and their close circles, in this closed group. The participants said that they were judged when they shared it with their relatives and that the issues about their children were brought up again by the people they shared with. For this reason, the opportunity to share in a democratic environment where there is no trial and no one knows each other has been found very valuable for mothers. Some participants also shared what they learned in the group and their own experiences with their spouses and friends. The most striking part of communicating with spouses is that they report similar problems in every house. Here, fathers may tend to think that the issues they experience at home are solely their own. Fathers also need a sharing environment, hear what other fathers are going through, and feel that they are not

alone. The mothers shared the solutions found in the group with their own friends. When the mothers share the useful information they learned in the group with their spouses and friends, there is a possibility of disseminating the truth to broader groups. From this point of view, when we consider sharing a group of mothers with their spouses and friends and their well-being on their children, we can claim that the group study had various positive effects. Many participants stated that they learned new information from the sharing of other mothers in the group. Parents were able to deal with many daily problems with the help of practical advice and support from other parents (Kerr & McIntosh, 2000). Book suggestions and solutions from other parents for both children and their well-being were highlighted in-group sharing. In addition, the participants stated that the anecdotes of mothers with older children gave them an idea about what their children might experience in the future. One of the most important benefits of the sharing group seems to be sharing information and advices from other parents.

The well-being and welfare of the parents, who are the most critical parts of a supportive environment, are very important for children's development. The importance of nuclear families' well-being has drastically increased in this pandemic process. Therefore, it will be very important than ever to focus on the parents during the pandemic (Karki et al., 2020). For many participants, the online parenting group has been a process where they gained awareness. Participants stated that the nature of the group prompted them to think about their parenting. Many participants said that they had not thought about the good things for a long time, and they just realized how worn out they were over time. It is pretty remarkable that one participant stated that she was considering her parenting for the first time. The participant, who stated that she had never thought about her parenting before, stated that she made a severe effort to do this for the first time. One participant said the help of the parenting group made her realize that her parenting was changing for the worse during the pandemic and that she is trying to revert to her old parenting. One participant also said that she had the opportunity to organize various new information. The findings of this study support research indicating that parenting groups mitigate harsh parenting (Beauchaine et al., 2005; Kling et al., 2010; Ogden & Hagen, 2008). Some participants became aware of their parenting

styles. They understood their controlling and harsh parenting attitudes and tried to change them.

Mothers indicated that they increased doing things that were good for them after group discussions. They stated that they understood that it is not a luxury to walk, pay attention to self-care, and take a break and that parents should also take time for themselves. The concept of a 'good enough mother' that Winnicott brought to the psychology field explains that being a good enough mother is better than being a perfect mother (Winnicott, 1953; 1967). This concept was acknowledged by all mothers in the groups. This concept helped mothers to regulate themselves, to control their perfectionism and negative attitudes. Mothers saw this group as a time they set aside for themselves. The 'oxygen mask' example was one of the remarkable terms that remained in the participants' minds. "Just as stated in-flight announcements, before helping others, one has to put her own 'oxygen mask' on herself first. Mothers understood that self-care is essential; before helping out others, their children, their spouses, their families, or anybody else." The discussions on parents' well-being helped mothers to attune to themselves. The fact that mothers come to this group and start to devote time to themselves seems to be a new beginning for their well-being.

Barlow et al. (2011) found that parent-child interaction improved by parenting groups due to increased sensitivity to the child. Many studies have found that in-person parenting programs increase children and parents' functionality and positively affect the parent-child interaction (Geeraert et al., 2004; Nowak & Heinrichs, 2008; Thomas & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007). Parents with better emotion regulation capacity can be more resilient to life events that cause stress (Deater-Deckard, 2004). Four participants stated that they were calmer after following the suggestions they received from group leaders and parents. They indicated that their communication with their children increased. They started activities such as watching movies and walking with their children. Many participants stated that they learned new information on the symbolic play, parents' well-being, the importance of self-care, adolescent brain development, and emotion regulation. All participants indicated that they were pleased to participate in this group study and that such studies should be more widespread.

4.3. THE OPG DESIGN

Two significant opinions stood out in the mothers' answers to the question on how to improve the online parenting group. The first is that fathers should be required to join online parenting groups. All mothers believe that their spouses should experience this group support, relief and feeling that they are not alone. Some participants believe that this group should include mother and father together, while some participants believe that there should be a separate group for fathers. In addition, it was stated that the group for fathers and the groups with the joint participation of the parents should be carried out together. Father involvement makes parenting education more beneficial. It was found that positive changes took longer in mothers who participated in parenting education with their spouses than mothers who attended alone (Webster-Stratton, 1985). In addition, Bagner, and Eyberg (2003) found a relationship between father involvement and positive educational gains in training with fathers.

There are various reasons why fathers do not participate adequately in parenting groups. According to Lundahl et al. (2008), mothers and fathers may face different participation difficulties for parenting groups. For example, one participant stated that her spouse was busy with their child as there was no one else to look after their child at home, and therefore her husband could not join the group. Two participants stated that their spouses did not join the group because they did not know that their spouses could join the group even though they were at home. Another participant said that only one father joined the group in the first week, and there was no father's participation in the following weeks. In addition, she also said that she guessed that the father did not rejoin the group because he saw that there were no other fathers. Although this online parenting group was designed to be open to all parents, it became a group that only mothers participated. An important finding to note here is the need to emphasize better fathers' involvement in the announcements of online parenting groups. Moreover, we need to explain the importance of father involvement for children's mental health in our culture. Programs like father support groups organized by AÇEV should be implemented in every neighborhood of the cities.

Since 1993, it is seen that mothers have a desire to increase the involvement of fathers. One of the obstacles to paternal participation may be the historical lack of encouragement of paternal involvement (Firestone et al., 1980; Tiano & McNeil, 2005). Parenting groups have become much more important for parents whose need for social support has increased during the pandemic. As stated in the above studies, the difficulties experienced due to the limited time of fathers caused by their working arrangements and the inability to find suitable places for the group were encountered to be the biggest obstacles for implementing father groups. Online-based parenting interventions can be an option against face-to-face alternatives for parents with restrictive conditions (e.g., working hours, transportation, distance, and being a single parent) (Baker et al., 2017). Online parenting interventions are used extensively by parents (Flujas-Contreras et al. 2019; Hansen et al. 2019). The rapid access of parents makes these studies advantageous (Enebrink et al., 2012; Wetterborg et al., 2019). Benefiting from parenting education is affected by educational program characteristics, personal characteristics of participants, and cultural factors (Lundahl et al., 2008). The contents of the parent education program must be designed by considering the needs of the fathers. Especially in our country, where fathers are in a hierarchical authority position, and the importance of fathers' participation has not become widespread yet, it may be essential to inform fathers about this issue and proceed with a supportive attitude. It may be helpful to gradually involve the father, who is often secondary in child-rearing and domestic responsibilities. The importance of paternal participation and co-parenting has been demonstrated in many studies. For this reason, it is predicted that the spread of online parenting groups will be very beneficial for family life and, therefore, society.

The second important factor that the participants stated was that they wanted more scientifically-based information from the group leaders. In the groups, parents were able to deal with many daily problems with the help of practical advice and support from other parents (Kerr & McIntosh, 2000). Mothers stated that they learned a lot and experienced new things from sharing. Although they knew that the OPG was a sharing group, they thought this group would have been more productive if they received more educational information from the group leaders.

The information that parents expected was mainly on the developmental stages of children. They also stated that when parents within the group have similar problems, they expected suggestions from the group leaders. In the future, the online parenting groups' contents can be enriched with child development information. It may be helpful to prepare brochures containing the developmental characteristics of children and share them with parents. Other suggestions made by the participants were the importance of the size of the groups, small number of participants. Especially for sharing confidential information, the small number of participants was important. Although it is possible to reach more people online, many of the participants stated that they were efficient because the group participants were low. They thought that if the number of participants was high, they would not share with this confidence level. Another opinion was that it might be better if the online parenting group took longer than 8 weeks. Parenting groups are generally organized for approximately two hours each week and a total of 8-12 weeks (Barlow & Coren, 2017). In this case, taking into account the parenting stress and strain created by the pandemic conditions, the duration of the online parenting group should be increased from 8 weeks to 10-12 weeks.

In summary, all participants found the online parenting group very useful, and all participants expressed their satisfaction with participating in this group. According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), the parents' well-being and welfare are the most important parts of the supportive environment required for the child's best development. For the good of the family system, the parents must be good. It seems that online groups can eliminate many barriers such as transportation, location, and time. Many of the participants of this group are from different cities. Therefore, the advantage of online groups is to carry out and disseminate information and support everybody.

4.4. THE NECESSITY OF FATHER INVOLVEMENT

When I asked the mothers how they defined themselves as a parent, three special categories were present: being compassionate and understanding, being controlling, and being an altruistic mother. For mothers, being compassionate and understanding included being patient, communicating openly with their children,

and not wanting their children to go through their own difficult experiences. Nearly half of the participants described their parenting as controlling. Showing affection to the child in traditional families (Kağıtçıbaşı et al., 1993), as well as not encouraging autonomy and maintaining close management and control (Fişek, 1993; Kağıtçıbaşı & Sunar, 1992) are an important factor in raising children in the Turkish culture. The paternal hierarchical distance from their children may cause fathers to behave more comfortably towards their children (Fişek, 2018, s. 29). The participants' self-identification as controlling may be a result of the traditional family structure. In this structure, the mother is the one who provides control and gives love, and the father is the one who is hierarchically higher and distant. Therefore, mothers may experience parenting stress more intensely because they are under more responsibility. Parenting stress results from a demand-resource imbalance. Parenting stress is defined, in multiple studies, as the situation where the resources that the parents have are insufficient to meet the demands expected (Cherry et al., 2019; Holly et al., 2019; Parkes & Sweeting, 2018). The intense needs and lack of resources parents experience make them vulnerable to parenting stress, leading to exhaustion and depression for some mothers. Mothers' desire to control can be a powerful coping mechanism with parenting stress. Parenting behaviors such as having a backup plan, planning, and managing the time of everything, which are salient in the accounts of mothers, can be an important defense mechanism they apply to cope with this stress. Mothers who define their parenting characteristics as controlling may be coping with the intense parenting stress and difficulties they experience by exerting control in the field of parenting.

Spousal support is one of the most important factor for maternal competence (Crnic et al., 1983). All of the mothers stated that their spouses' support was insufficient. Mothers indicated that their spouses only take care of their children on the weekends, and they are not involved in school-related responsibilities such as primary care and homework. They play seldom or never with their children. Mothers spend more time with their children than fathers (Wilson & Prior, 2011). Similarly, fathers in this group spent less time with their children than mothers. Mothers stated that when their spouses support their children in providing financial means, they think they fulfill their fatherhood responsibilities. When focusing on Turkey specifically, we see that the strongly-rooted patriarchy positions the fathers

as the authority figure and the breadwinner (Ivrendi & Isikoğlu, 2010), while the mothers were delegated to be in charge of household chores and childcare (Barker et al., 2009; Craig, 2006; Lang et al., 2014).

Many studies have shown the positive impact of father involvement on children and mothers and the family environment. These positive effects were found in children as better cognitive and social development, higher empathy capacity and self-regulation skills, positive father-child and sibling relationships, and better life adjustment (Ehrenberg et al., 2001). Mothers indicated that their spouses do not contribute to household chores and childcare. Regardless of the pandemic, the low paternal participation in this sample is striking. Mothers seem to shoulder the burden and responsibility of being the primary caregiver.

All participants stated that they lacked spousal support. The person who is primarily responsible for childcare and housework appears to be the mother in this sample. Changing living conditions and the active participation of women in business life necessitate rethinking this distribution of duties. The significant positive effects of father involvement for both children and spouses have been shown in many studies. The value of father involvement and the father figure interacting with their children increases (Hancock et al., 2013). Although the importance of father involvement is becoming more noticeable, much more work is needed on this subject. Father involvement is critical to the whole family system (Bocknek et al., 2014) because as father involvement increases, the supportive family atmosphere created by co-parenting also increases (Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011). The lack of support and resource-demand imbalance that mothers feel makes them vulnerable to parenting stress. The negative consequences of parenting stress have been shown in the literature. For this reason, it seems critical to focus on the family, which is the smallest part of the society, especially the women, and to increase the support that will reduce women's workload and increase father involvement.

4.5. CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study's findings revealed the necessity of online parent groups during stressful life events for families. Moreover, the father's involvement and spousal

support in parenting are important for mothers when raising their children. The participants expressed their difficulty in carrying out responsibilities such as housework and child care alone. The exhaustion was caused by the fact that some participants also continued their working life apart from these daily chores. Although both parents were working during the pandemic, the mothers responsibilities were higher than fathers.. The positive effects of father involvement on children and the family have already been shown in the literature. Therefore, it would essential to inform fathers about their critical importance for the family system. Another important finding is that the term parenting is understood as synonymous with motherhood, especially in a patriarchal society like Turkey. It is seen that this perception is widespread in our country. The study's findings emphasize the importance of disseminating the idea that parenting is the common duty of both parents in our country.

Another important outcome of the study is the effects of the pandemic on mothers. The results revealed that the participants were affected differently by the pandemic due to their belief in the existence of the pandemic. Some also had different severe life events in their own lives that worsen the effects of the pandemic. The pandemic has revealed feelings of exhaustion, anger, and inadequacy in many mothers. Some mothers expressed the relational difficulty that was caused by staying in the same house with their children for a long time. Some mothers stated that they turned this situation into an opportunity and had positive communication by spending more time with their children. Complex life events and traumatic experiences can disconnect individuals from the responsibilities of family life. Community mental health screenings will be essential to discriminate parents and children at risk. It would be necessary to provide the long-term psychological support for risky families.

The findings showed that online parenting groups are promising for all parents who have trouble adjusting to stressful life events. Moreover, online groups will prevent the difficulty of father involvement in parent groups. Therapists working with children, adolescents, and families should emphasize father involvement in their groups and individual sessions. Finally, supportive online parenting groups should be expanded all over the country.

4.6. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study examined the experiences of mothers who participated in online parenting groups during the pandemic. Thus, the results provided information about the parenting experiences of women in Turkey during the pandemic.

One limitation of this study is the small size of the sample. Nine participants were interviewed to capture women's parenting and online parenting group experiences during the pandemic. The small sample size could be a disadvantage for the generalization of findings. The findings are not statistically proven, therefore it may not be possible to generalize the results to a broader population (Atieno, 2009). However, generalizability is not a significant purpose of small-scale studies. The purpose of qualitative studies should be to provide a baseline for larger-scale studies or to gain an in-depth understanding of the quantitative studies' findings.

Another important limitation may be the participant heterogeneity. Parents in this group volunteered to participate, and they were very cooperative and open to share their ideas. In addition, participants' marriage status, Covid-19 experiences, and Covid-19-related losses also contribute to this sample heterogeneity.

Thematic analysis was used in the analysis of the data. The primary researcher did initial coding; then, the coding scheme was revised by the principal advisor of the study. Peer debriefing in the thematic analysis increases trustworthiness, so it is preferred to be done. However, this may be a limitation as peer debriefing could not be made in this study. In addition, the fact that the primary researcher was a leader in previous parenting groups may have caused her to be biased about the benefits of parenting groups during the interview, although maximum efforts were made to maintain neutrality.

Due to the pandemic, interviews were held on the online platform. A study found that participants' familiarity with the online platform and internet quality impacted the interview process (Hamilton & Bowers, 2006). In addition, the body language of the participants cannot be observed sufficiently on the screen by the researcher (Cater, 2011). Internet connection disruptions during the interviews may have affected the flow of some interviews. In future studies, it would be important to ensure better internet connections during the interviews.

In addition, most of the participants had to finish the interview while their children were at home. Some of the participants took a break from time to time during the interview and attended to the needs of their children. Even if they stated that they felt comfortable during the interview, this could be a distraction. Sharing their parenting experiences from the same home with their children may have been a challenging factor for them. In the future, interviews should be done when children are with other adults or when they are sleep.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the online group parenting experiences of mothers during the pandemic. The focus of this study was to detail mothers' experiences during the pandemic, what they observed about their children and spouses during this process and their experiences with the online parenting group they attended. The study also aimed to contribute to the future parenting group designs with the mothers' suggestions. Interviews were conducted online with nine mothers who participated in the parenting group. Although there are some limited qualitative studies on the parenting experience of parents during the pandemic in the literature, there are no studies on the online parenting group experiences of mothers living in Turkey. Therefore, with the results of this study, it is hoped that the awareness of the importance of online parent groups will increase. The findings showed the critical role of co-parenting and father involvement in child care, therefore this information should be shared with all parents. In this study, mothers who participated in the online parenting group during the pandemic stated that they have lacked the support of their spouses and that the father involvement was insufficient in factors such as child care and caring for the child outside the pandemic.

In general, in line with previous findings in the literature, mothers stated that they felt exhausted and angry due to the necessity of doing many things simultaneously during the pandemic. Anxiety, another important emotion experienced by mothers in this process, was also compatible with the literature. The anxiety, exhaustion, and potential parenting stress caused by doing various things simultaneously can pose a risk to the family system. For this reason, it is always important to carry out studies that support parents for the well-being of the family system from a broad perspective. Still, it seems essential to carry out these studies during the pandemic where social support has decreased.

Another important finding of the study, albeit from the perspective of mothers, was the experiences of children and adolescents during the pandemic. The important findings observed in children during the pandemic were the increase in anger in children, the increase in the use of technological devices, and daily screen

time. There were major changes in daily routines, the longing for school and missing real communication with friends. Parents complained about the change in their children's eating patterns and weight gain. In addition, mothers also stated that they observed burnout in their spouses due to the change in daily life practices and the transition to remote working. Fathers spent time in the same environment with their children for such a long time for the first time due to the pandemic. However, mothers complained about the quality of this time with their children. The change in relationships during the pandemic also included important findings of the research. While some participants stated that family interaction and communication increased due to the pandemic, other participants reported that mother-child and sibling relationships deteriorated due to long hours spent in the same environment created by the pandemic conditions.

The participants said that it was good for them to come together in parenting groups on the same day and time every week. They also stated that they felt that they were not alone by understanding that the problems were common. In addition, recommendations of books and sharing experiences were found to be supportive in difficult times for parents. The online parenting group enabled participants from different cities to join the group. This situation overcame the problems such as transportation and timing that were evident in face-to-face groups. Also, with the help of the online format, parenting groups were more likely to be accessible to everyone.

The results showed the excessive workload of mothers during the pandemic, the necessity of raising awareness about the importance of father involvement in childcare, and the importance of running online parenting groups for families.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Bilgilendirilmiş Onam Formu

Sayın Katılımcı;

Bu çalışma, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Klinik Psikoloji Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi olan Eda Erdivanlı tarafından Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Elif Akdağ Göçek ve Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yudum Söylemez'in danışmanlığında, Covid-19 pandemi sürecinde çevrimiçi ebeveynlik grubuna katılan katılımcıların ebeveynlik ve grup çalışması deneyimlerini anlamlandırmak amacıyla yüksek lisans tezi kapsamında yürütülmektedir. Bu çalışma, pandemi sürecinde ebeveynlerin ebeveynlik deneyimlerini ve çevrimiçi ebeveynlik grubu deneyimlerini daha iyi anlamak ve deneyimlerin detaylı incelenmesi ile çevrimiçi grup çalışmalarının zenginleştirilmesine katkı sağlamak istemektedir.

Araştırmaya katılım gönüllülük temeline dayanmaktadır. Çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz sizinle çevrimiçi olarak bir görüşme gerçekleştirilecektir. Görüşmenin yaklaşık 1,5 saat sürmesi beklenmektedir. Görüşmeler esnasında izniniz doğrultusunda ses kaydı alınacak ve araştırmacı not tutacaktır. Tutulan kayıtlara ve notlara sadece araştırmayı yapan kişi ve araştırmacının danışmanları ulaşabilecektir.

Henüz Türkiye'de Covid-19 pandemi sürecinde ebeveynlik grup çalışmasına katılan ebeveynlerin deneyimlerini anlamaya yönelik herhangi bir bilimsel çalışma yapılmamıştır. Araştırmaya katılımınız sizinle benzer deneyimleri yaşayan ebeveynlerin deneyimlerini daha iyi anlamak, derinlemesine incelemeler doğrultusunda çevrimiçi ebeveynlik gruplarının içeriklerini zenginleştirmek ve özellikle pandemi gibi yüz yüze iletişimin kesildiği ya da oldukça sınırlandırıldığı dönemlerde ebeveynleri destekleyici grup çalışmalarının yapılandırılmasına katkı sağlamak adına oldukça değerlidir.

Görüşmede sorulacak sorular sizin ebeveynliğinize dair düşünmenizi ve pandemi süreci üzerine konuşmanızı gerektireceği için sizi kötü hissettirebilir. Kendinizi rahatsız hissettiğiniz takdirde araştırmanın herhangi bir aşamasında araştırmadan çekilebilirsiniz. Görüşme esnasında ihtiyaç duyduğunuzda ara vermek isteyebilirsiniz. Görüşme sırasında dilediğiniz zaman kaydı durdurulmasını isteyebilirsiniz. Görüşme başlamadan önce, görüşme sırasında veya sonrasında, istediğiniz takdirde soru sorabilirsiniz.

Araştırmacı araştırmanın sonunda tüm katılımcılarla yapılan görüşmelerden çıkan ortak temaları sizinle paylaşacak ve sizden temalara dair onay isteyecektir. Araştırmacı istediğiniz takdirde araştırma sonuçlarını sizinle paylaşacaktır.

Bu formda yazılanları onaylayarak araştırmaya katılım için onay vermiş olacaksınız. Bununla birlikte kimlik bilgileriniz çalışmanın herhangi bir aşamasında açıkça kullanılmayacaktır ve gizli tutulacaktır. Görüşmelerde verdiğiniz bilgiler ses kayıt cihazı ile kayda alınacaktır. Görüşmede verdiğiniz cevaplar ve araştırma süresince edinilen her türlü bilgi yalnızca araştırma kapsamında bilimsel yayın amacıyla kullanılacak, başka hiçbir amaç için kullanılmayacaktır.

Eğer bu araştırmaya katılmak istiyorsanız bu formun size iletiildiği e-postaya cevaben **“Ekte gönderilen Bilgilendirilmiş Onam Formunu okudum ve anladım. Çalışmaya katılmayı ve ses kaydımın alınmasını kabul ediyorum.”** cümlesini ve **adınızı-soyadınızı** yazmanız gerekmektedir.

Araştırmaya verdiğiniz değerli katkılarınız için teşekkür ederiz.

Çalışma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak için Bilgi Üniversitesi Klinik Psikoloji Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Eda Erdivanlı veya Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Elif Akdağ Göçek ve Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yudum Söylemez ile iletişim kurabilirsiniz.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

Salgın Sırasında Ebeveynlik: Online Paylaşım Grupları

Katılımcı Bilgi Formu

Çalışmanın Seminer veya Eğitim değil Bir Paylaşım Grubu olması uygun mu?

Evet/Hayır

Düzenli Katılım Gösterebilir mi? Evet/Hayır

Adınız Soyadınız:

Yaşınız:

Eğitim Durumunuz:

Mesleğiniz:

Medeni Haliniz:

Telefon Numaranız:

E posta Adresiniz:

Açık Ev Adresiniz:

Çocuğun diğer ebeveyni ile evliler mi? Evet/Hayır

Hayırsa- Acil İletişim Numarası:

Çocuğun diğer ebeveyni çalışmaya katılacak mı? Evet/Hayır

Adı Soyadı:

Yaşı:

Eğitim Durumu:

Mesleği:

Medeni Hali:

Çocuklarla ilişkisi (Anne / Baba):

Telefon Numarası:

1. Çocuk

- Adı:
- Yaşı:
- Kaçınıcı sınıfa gidiyor:

2. Çocuk

- Adı:
- Yaşı:

- Kaçınıcı sınıfa gidiyor:

3. Çocuk

- Adı:
- Yaşı:
- Kaçınıcı sınıfa gidiyor:

Kısa Risk Değerlendirmesi

- Evde psikiyatrik bir tanısı olan ve ilaç tedavisi gören bir birey var mı? Evet / Hayır
 - Açıklama:
- Evde intihar girişimi olan veya intihar etme planları olan bir birey var mı? Evet / Hayır
 - Açıklama:
- Evde başka birine zarar verme girişimi olan veya planları olan bir birey var mı? Evet / Hayır
 - Açıklama:
- Evde alkol veya madde bağımlılığı olan bir birey var mı? Evet / Hayır
 - Açıklama:
- Evde şiddet var mı? Evet / Hayır
 - Açıklama:

Araştırma Onayı:

- Danışan Araştırmaya onay verdi mi?: Evet / Hayır

APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Görüşme Soruları

Merhaba, öncelikle ebeveynlik üzerine olan araştırmamıza katıldığınız için teşekkür ederim. Bu araştırma sonuçları bize online ebeveynlik grupları üzerine önemli bilgiler sağlayacaktır. Bugün size pandemi sürecindeki ebeveynlik deneyimleriniz ve üniversitemizde katıldığınız online ebeveynlik grubuyla ilgili düşünce ve deneyimlerinize dair bazı sorular soracağım. Size sorduğum soruların doğru ya da yanlış bir cevabı bulunmamaktadır sadece sizin deneyimlerinizi merak ediyorum.

Tanışma

1.Öncelikle kısaca sizi tanımak isterim. Şu anda çalışıyor musunuz? Eğer çalışıyorsanız pandemi sürecinde iş düzeniniz nasıl?

2.Şimdi ailenizden bahsederek devam edelim... Evde kimlerle yaşıyorsunuz? Eşinizin eğitim durumu nedir? Eşiniz çalışıyor mu? Çalışıyor ise mesleği nedir? Pandemi sürecinde eşinizin iş düzeni nasıl? Ailenizin gelir düzeyini nasıl tanımlarsınız?

3.Kaç çocuğunuz var ve kaç yaşlarındalar? Hangi çocuğunuz için grup çalışmasına katıldınız?

4.Ailenizde sağlık problemi olan bireyler var mı? Var ise bunu açıklayınız. Bu süreçte Covid-19 tanısı aldınız mı ya da ailenizde/yakın çevrenizde bu tanıyı alan kişi(ler) oldu mu? Bu süreçte bir yakınınızı kaybettiniz mi? - (kayıp varsa) Bu sizi ve ailenizi nasıl etkiledi? Bu süreçte Covid-19 dışında önemli olarak tanımlayacağınız başka bir hayat olayı yaşadınız mı?

5.Kaç yaşında anne oldunuz? Eşiniz kaç yaşında baba oldu?

6.Şu anda kendinizi nasıl bir ebeveyn olarak tanımlıyorsunuz? Şu andaki ebeveynliğinizi yansıtan/ anlatan 3 sıfat söyler misiniz? Bunu örneklendirebilecek bir durum anlatabilir misiniz?

7.Pandemi süresince bir ebeveyn olarak deneyimlerinizi anlatır mısınız? Biraz daha açıklar mısınız...-(eğer çalışıyorsa) Pandemi süresince ebeveynlik ve çalışma hayatını bir arada yürütmekle ilgili deneyimlerinizi paylaşır mısınız?

8.Şimdi bu süreçte eşinizin ebeveynliğini düşünmenizi isteyeceğim... Şu anda eşinizin ebeveynliğini yansıtan/ anlatan 3 sıfat söyler misiniz? Bunu örneklendirebilecek bir durum anlatabilir misiniz?

9.Eşinizin pandemi öncesindeki ebeveynliğini düşünmenizi isteyeceğim... Sizce eşiniz nasıl bir ebeveydi? Eşinizin pandemi öncesindeki ebeveynliğini yansıtan/ anlatan 3 sıfat söyler misiniz? Eşinizin böyle bir ebeveyn olduğuna örnek olabilecek bir durum anlatabilir misiniz?- (eşi çalışıyorsa) Eşinizin bu süreçteki ebeveynlik ve çalışma hayatını bir arada yürütme deneyimi nasıldı?

10.Pandemi öncesinde nasıl bir çocuğunuz vardı? Pandemi süresi çocuğunuzu sizce nasıl etkiledi? Çocuğunuzun davranışlarında ne gibi değişimler oldu?

11.Şimdi katılmış olduğunuz online ebeveynlik grubuna yönelik sohbet edelim istiyorum... Online ebeveynlik grubu sizin için nasıl bir deneyimdi?

12.Bu grupta edinmiş olduğunuz bilgileri veya deneyimleri eşiniz ve/veya yakın çevrenizle paylaştınız mı? Paylaştıysanız neleri paylaştınız?

13.Grup içerisinde başka ebeveynlerle bir arada olmak sizin için nasıldı?

14.Online ebeveynlik grubuna katılmanızdaki sebepler nelerdi? Biraz daha açıklar mısınız...

15.Ebeveynlik grubundan beklentileriniz nelerdi?

16.Grup süresince ne gibi şeylerden faydalandınız? Bunların nasıl bir faydası oldu?

17.Grup süresince neler faydalı olmadı? Sizce bunların faydalı olmamasının sebebi neydi? Bunun yerine ne olmasını tercih ederdiniz?

18.Grup süresince ebeveynliğinizle ilgili neler gözlemlediniz?

- Değişime yönelik söylem var ise- Bu değişime bir örnek verebilir misiniz?
- Değişime yönelik söylem yok ise- Sizce bu değişimin olmamasının nedeni ne?
- -Grup süresince günlük rutinlerinizde neler gözlemlediniz?
- Değişime yönelik söylem var ise- Bu değişime bir örnek verebilir misiniz?
- Değişime yönelik söylem yok ise- Sizce bu değişimin olmamasının nedeni ne?
- -Grup süresince ailenizdeki iletişimde neler gözlemlediniz?
- Değişime yönelik söylem var ise- Bu değişime bir örnek verebilir misiniz?

- Değişime yönelik söylem yok ise- Sizce bu değişimin olmamasının nedeni ne?
- -Grup süresince çocuğunuz ile olan iletişiminizde neler gözlemlediniz?
- Değişime yönelik söylem var ise- Bu değişime bir örnek verebilir misiniz?
- Değişime yönelik söylem yok ise- Sizce bu değişimin olmamasının nedeni ne?
- -Grup süresince çocuğunuz ile olan etkileşiminizde neler gözlemlediniz?
- Değişime yönelik söylem var ise- Bu değişime bir örnek verebilir misiniz?
- Değişime yönelik söylem yok ise- Sizce bu değişimin olmamasının nedeni ne?
- -Grup süresince disiplin anlayışınızda neler gözlemlediniz?
- Değişime yönelik söylem var ise- Bu değişime bir örnek verebilir misiniz?
- Değişime yönelik söylem yok ise- Sizce bu değişimin olmamasının nedeni ne?
- -Grup süresince çocuğunuzun oyunuyla ilgili neler gözlemlediniz?
- Değişime yönelik söylem var ise- Bu değişime bir örnek verebilir misiniz?
- Değişime yönelik söylem yok ise- Sizce bu değişimin olmamasının nedeni ne?

19. Bu grup çalışmasında bazı şeyleri değiştirebilecek olsanız neleri değiştirdiniz?

20. Grup çalışmasının geliştirilmesi için başka ne gibi önerileriniz olabilir?

21. Benim sormadığım ama önemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz ve sizin eklemek istediğiniz şeyler var mı? Sormak istediğiniz bir şey var mı?

22. Bugün burada konuşmak, bu görüşmeye katılmak size nasıl geldi?

ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL

Ethics Board Approval is available in the printed version of this dissertation.