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Parents' Experiences and Emotion Regulation During the Pandemic Process: The Case of Bakırköy District

Pandemi Sürecinde Ebeveynlerin Deneyimleri ve Duygu Düzenleme Durumları: Bakırköy İlçesi Örneği

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to examine the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic process on parents and to evaluate the different situations experienced by parents living in Bakırköy, Istanbul. The research was planned in two stages. In the first stage, the general experiences of 2810 parents during the pandemic (feeling emotions, health and social life, communication with the environment) were examined. Out of 2,810 parents, 484 parents voluntarily participated in the second phase of the study on parents' emotion regulation. Analysis results show that during the pandemic process, parents are bored with information, news, and conversations about coronavirus; that most parents experience fear; shows that most parents think that their life activities are restricted and changed. In addition, during the pandemic process, parents tried to understand both their own and their children's feelings, they were more oriented towards children's emotions and tended to accept both their own and their children's negative emotions. It has also been found that parents try to avoid the child's emotions by holding more negative beliefs about the negative emotions of the children.

Keywords: COVID-19, Emotion Regulation, Parents, Pandemic

ÖZET

Bu araştırmanın amacı, COVID-19 pandemisi sürecinin, İstanbul Bakırköy'de yaşayan ebeveynlere olan etkisinin incelenmesi ve ebeveynlerin deneyimlediği farklı durumların değerlendirilmesidir. Araştırma iki aşamalı olarak planlanmıştır. İlk aşamada 2810 ebeveynin pandemi sürecindeki genel deneyimleri (hissedilen duygular, sağlık ve sosyal yaşam, çevreyle iletişim) incelenmiştir. 2810 ebeveyn arasından 484 ebeveyn, araştırmanın ebeveynlerin duygu düzenlemelerine ilişkin olan ikinci aşamasına gönüllü olarak dahil olmuştur. Analiz sonuçları, pandemi sürecinde, ebeveynlerin koronavirüs ile ilgili bilgi, haber ve konuşmalardan sıkıldığını; ebeveynlerin çoğunun korku yaşadığını; ebeveynlerin büyük çoğunluğunun yaşam faaliyetlerinin kısıtlanmış ve değişime uğramış olduğunu düşündüğünü göstermektedir. Ayrıca pandemi sürecinde, ebeveynler hem kendilerinin hem de çocuklarının duygularını anlamaya çabalamış, çocukların duygularına daha fazla yönelmiş ve hem kendilerinin hem de çocuklarının olumsuz duygularını kabul etme eğiliminde olmuşlardır. Aynı zamanda ebeveynlerin çocukların olumsuz duygularına ilişkin daha fazla olumsuz inanç taşıyarak çocuğun duygularından kaçınmaya çalıştığı da bulgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: COVID-19, Duygu Düzenleme, Ebeveyn, Pandemi

1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19, which affects the whole world in many areas, was caused by a new virus and first appeared in Wuhan, China in December 2019 (Lu et al., 2020). Due to the sudden spread of the virus to many countries, the World Health Organization called on all countries to cooperate to prevent the spread and declared the situation a pandemic on March 11, 2020. Pandemic is expressed as an epidemic spreading all over the world (Tuzgöl-Dost et al., 2021). At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries have decided to close schools. Schools in Turkey where 25 million students (UNESCO, 2020) attended face-to-face education were closed on March 16, 2020, and distance education activities started on March 23, 2020 (Ministry of National Education, 2020). The distance education period for parents and children has been a process they have experienced for the first time in their lives; Many positive and negative effects of this period on education and psycho-social life became possible.

The closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic made it necessary for children and parents to adapt to new problems (Kara, 2020; Pereira et al., 2021). The sudden closure of schools and the lack of technological infrastructure at the beginning of the process brought along difficulties in transition to distance education. With the closure of schools, problems such as how to switch to online learning, how to carry out home education activities, how to provide services to students who benefit from education institutions in terms of shelter and nutrition have come to the fore. The measures taken have affected individuals of all ages and walks of life, as well as deeply affecting children. Although the closure of schools and the increase in the time spent at home enabled children to establish a closer relationship with their parents and increase family relations (Demir- Öztürk et al., 2020), they

also brought negative consequences. Parents had to run their business from home, tried to have a better quality of life with their children, and became the most important teachers of children in distance education activities. However, parents' lack of knowledge and experience on this subject (Brom et al., 2020; Hughes, 2020; Russell et al., 2020), staying away from the workplace, problems in socialization, and scary news about the disease through the media increased their feelings of anxiety and fear. These negative emotional and behavioral characteristics of the parents themselves have also caused a deep impact on family life.

With this study, it is aimed to evaluate the effects of the pandemic process on parents, and it is thought that the measures that can be taken in parallel with the results to be obtained may be more effective. At the same time, studies on the emotional regulation status of parents in the pandemic process are limited, especially in the national literature. In addition, the number of longitudinal studies that can show the parent-child relationship of the pandemic process is also limited. Based on this idea, parents' experiences and emotion regulation in the COVID-19 pandemic were examined in this study.

2. METHOD

2.1. Model of the Research

This research was carried out according to the cross-section approach from scanning models.

2.2. Population and Sample of the Research

The universe of this research consists of parents residing in Istanbul Bakırköy. The sample consists of 2810 parents determined by convenience sampling method.

The research was planned in two stages. In the first stage, the general experiences of 2810 parents during the pandemic (feeling emotions, health and social life, communication with the environment) were examined. Out of 2,810 parents, 484 parents voluntarily participated in the second phase of the study on parents' emotion regulation. 484 parents completed the Emotion Regulation Scale both as a pre-test and post-test.

The reason why the research is divided into two stages is to determine the long-term effects of the pandemic process. The overall pandemic experience of parents has already been examined in the research. In addition, it was desired to determine the emotional regulation status of parents and the transformation of their relations with their children for one year.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

In the first stage of the study, the Personal Information Form created by the researcher, which determines the gender, age, and educational status of the students; The Pandemic-Related Experiences Form created by the researcher was used to determine the experiences, feelings and thoughts related to the pandemic, such as education, health, and social life. Parents who wanted to participate in the second stage of the study completed the Parent Emotion Regulation Scale in the form of a pre-test in addition to the specified forms. One year after this scale was filled, the parents who wanted to voluntarily participate in the second phase of the study completed the Parent Emotion Regulation Scale as a post-test. Thus, it was examined whether the pandemic process influenced the emotional regulation of parents.

Parental Emotion Regulation Scale, Pereira et al. (2017) to evaluate parents' ability to regulate negative emotions in their interactions with children. Turkish translation and adaptation of the scale was done by Gültekin-Ahçı et al. (2020) carried out by the Turkish version of the scale consists of 3 factors and 13 questions. These factors are the parent's orientation to the child's emotions, which is defined as the effort of the parents to understand both their own and their children's emotions; the parent's avoidance of child's emotions defined as the parent's negative beliefs about the child's negative emotions, and the parent's acceptance of both their own and their child's negative emotions.

2.4. Analysis of Data

After obtaining the necessary official permissions for the collection of the research data, the measurement tools were published in the school groups between 05.09.2021 and 15.09.2021 in the first stage through researchers, guidance and psychological counselors and teachers. In the second stage, the measurement tools were delivered to the participants between 01.09.2022 and 16.09.2022. SPSS 22.0 statistical package program was used in the analysis of the data.

2.5. Ethical Permissions of Research

In this study, all the rules specified to be followed within the scope of "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were complied with. None of the actions specified under the title of "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", which is the second part of the directive, were not carried out. Ethics committee approval of the study was obtained from Altınbaş University Scientific and Publication Ethics Committee.

3. RESULTS

3.1. General Descriptive Statistics of Parents Participating in the Study

During the data collection period, 3076 parents were reached. However, due to the lack of answers to some questions in the questionnaire and the lack of questions, 266 questionnaires were excluded from the study, so a total of 2810 parents were included in the first phase of the study.

The research was planned in two stages. In the first stage, the general experiences of 2810 parents during the pandemic (feeling emotions, health and social life, communication with the environment) were examined. Out of 2810 parents, 484 parents voluntarily participated in the second phase of the study on parents' emotion regulation.

Although the ages of 2810 parents in the first stage vary between 21 and 68, their average age is 41. Other data regarding the demographic information of the parents participating in the study are given in Table 1.

Although the ages of 484 parents in the second stage vary between 21 and 65, their average age is 41.05. Other data regarding the demographic information of the parents who participated in the 1st and 2nd stages of the study are given in Table 1.

Table 1. General Descriptive Statistics of Parents Attending Stages 1 and 2

N = 2810		n (%)	
First Stage	Gender	Woman	2491 (%89)
		Man	319 (%11)
	Education	Illiterate	5 (%0.1)
		Primary School	298 (%11)
		Middle School	313 (%11.6)
		High School	1130 (%40)
		University	1018 (%36)
		Master	34 (%1)
		PhD	5 (%0.1)
	Job/Occupation	Housewife	1170 (%41.6)
		Teacher	195 (%7)
		Textile	57 (%2)
		Self-employment	82 (%5)
		Accounting	125 (%4.5)
Nurse		58 (%2)	
Retired		57 (%2)	
Other		1066 (%37.9)	
N = 484			
Second Stage	Gender	Woman	293 (%60.5)
		Man	191 (%39.5)
	Education	Illiterate	2 (%0.4)
		Primary School	60 (%12.4)
		Middle School	59 (%12.2)
		High School	196 (%40.5)
		University	164 (%33.9)
		Master	3 (%0.6)
	Job/Occupation	Housewife	218 (%45.1)
		Self-employment	22 (%4.5)
		Teacher	24 (%5)
		Accounting	19 (%3.9)
		Other	201 (%41.5)

3.2. General Experiences Regarding the Pandemic Process

The responses of the parents to their experiences regarding the pandemic process are shown in Figure 1.

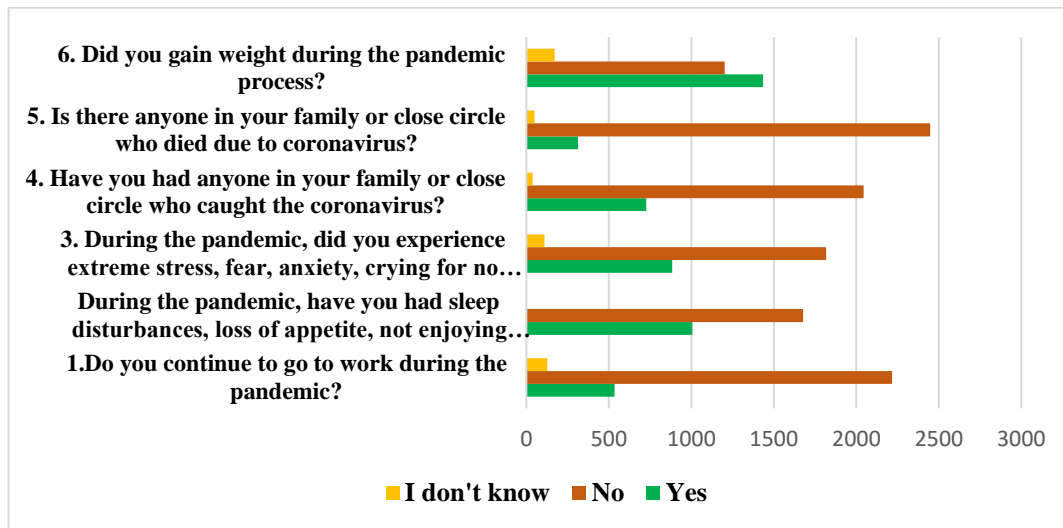


Figure 1. Experiences of the Pandemic

3.3. Emotions During the Pandemic Process

The answers given by the parents regarding the emotions they felt during the day during the pandemic process are shown in Figure 2. When Figure 2 is examined, it is seen that parents mostly feel sad and uneasy during the pandemic process.

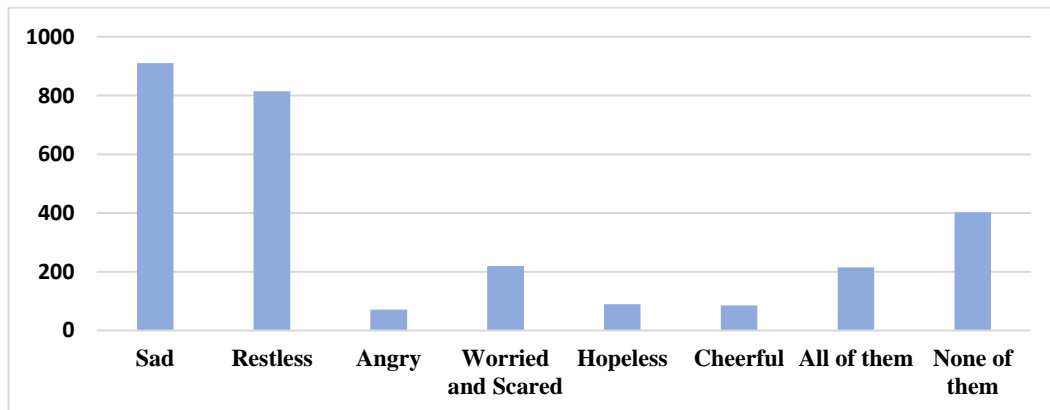


Figure 2. Parents' Emotions Regarding the Pandemic Process

3.4. Information on Health and Social Life in the Pandemic Process

The answers given by the parents to the questions about health and social life regarding the pandemic process are shown in Figure 3. When Figure 3 is examined, in the pandemic process of parents, mainly some obsessive behaviors (washing hands more than necessary, showering constantly, washing hands more than necessary) not communicating with anyone, etc.).

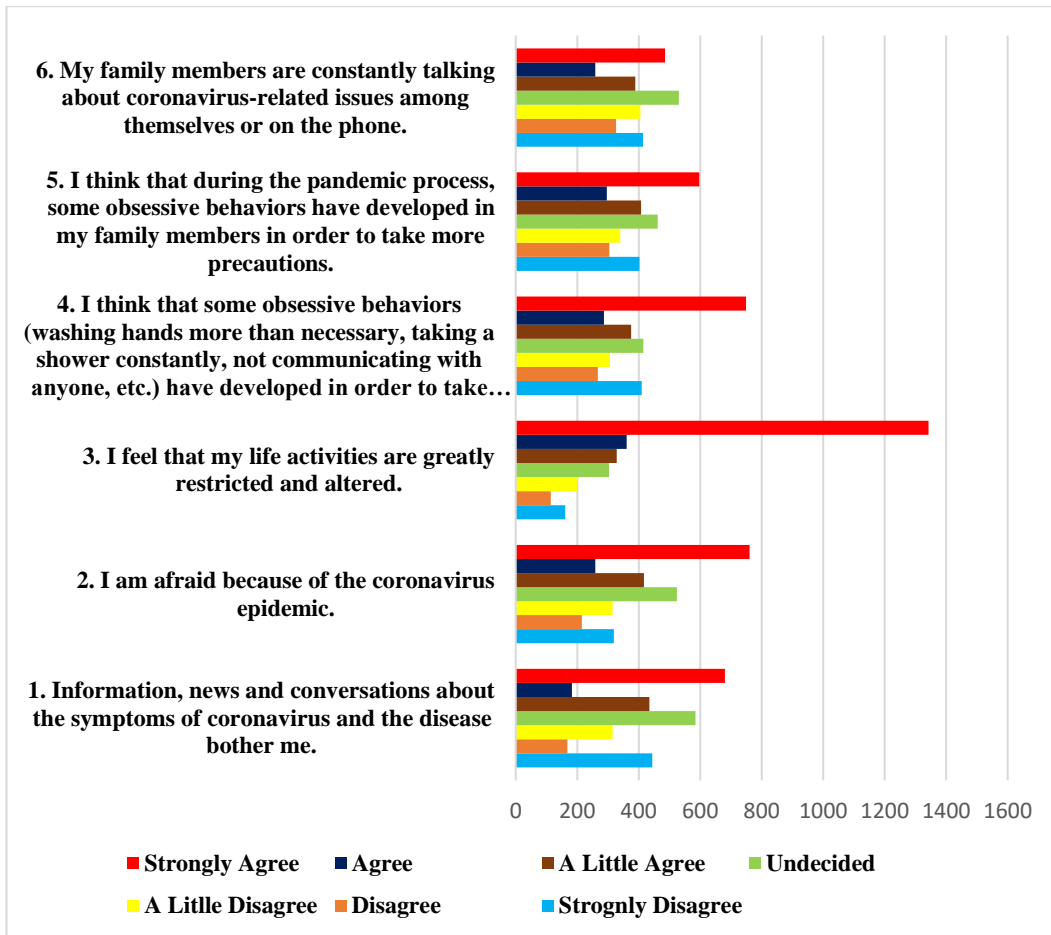


Figure 3. Parents' Experiences on Health and Social Life

3.5. Information on Parents' Whether to Communicate with Their Surroundings (relatives, neighbors and friends) during the Pandemic Process

The answers given by the parents to the questions about whether they communicate with their environment (relatives, neighbors, and friends) during the pandemic process are shown in Figure 4.

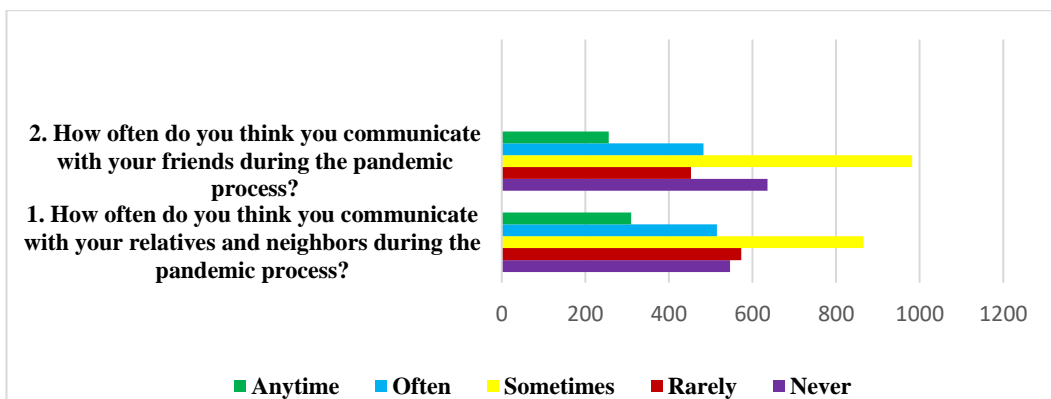


Figure 4. Communication of Parents with Their Environment

3.6. Analysis of Parents' Emotion Regulation Status

Emotion regulation status of parents who wanted to participate in the second stage of the study and filled the Parent Emotion Regulation Scale as a pre-test and post-test were examined. It was examined whether there was a significant difference between the emotional regulation score averages of the parents during the pandemic process. According to the results of the analysis, a significant difference was found between the emotional regulation mean scores of the parents (Table 2). This result shows that the pandemic process affects the emotional regulation of parents.

Table 2. Paired Sample t-test Results on Parents' Emotion Regulation Status

Subscale/Variable	Pretest	Posttest
Orientation the child's emotions	12.63±1.96	18.36±1.14
Avoidance child's emotions	11.76±1.79	14.25±1.06
Acceptance of child's and parents' emotions	9.40±1.78	13.73±1.04

Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to test whether there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the parents in the scores obtained from the Parent Emotion Regulation Scale. As a result of the analysis, significant differences were found between the mean scores of the subscales (Table 3). In other words, during the pandemic process, parents tried to understand both their own and their children's feelings, they were more oriented towards children's emotions, and they tended to accept both their own and their children's negative emotions. It has also been found that parents try to avoid the child's emotions by holding more negative beliefs about the negative emotions of the children.

Table 3. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Parents' Emotion Regulation

	Ranks	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
Orientation the child's emotions Pretest-Posttest	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-19.002	.000*
	Positive Ranks	479	240.00	114960.00		
	Ties	5				
	Total	484				
Avoidance child's emotions Pretest-Posttest	Negative Ranks	18	64.44	1160.00	-18.019	.000*
	Positive Ranks	430	231.20	99416.00		
	Ties	36				
	Total	484				
Acceptance of child's and parents' emotions Pretest-Posttest	Negative Ranks	479	240.88	115380.50	-19.020	.000*
	Positive Ranks	1	59.50	59.50		
	Ties	4				
	Total	484				

*p<.001

4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research is to examine the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic process on parents and to evaluate the different situations experienced by parents. The sample of the study consists of 2810 parents who continue their education in Istanbul Bakırköy district. The research was planned in two stages. In the first stage, the general experiences of 2810 parents during the pandemic (feeling emotions, health and social life, communication with the environment) were examined. Out of 2810 parents, 484 parents voluntarily participated in the second phase of the study on parents' emotion regulation.

Analysis results show that parents are very or somewhat bored with information, news, and conversations about the coronavirus. In addition, the results show that most of the parents experienced fear during the coronavirus pandemic and mandatory isolation. As a matter of fact, the feelings that parents felt the most during the pandemic and isolation process were sadness and restlessness. Experiences gained in previous worldwide epidemics or pandemic have led to the development of some depressive symptoms, varying degrees of anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress disorders, not only in people with anxiety disorders and panic attacks, but also in individuals who have never had such complaints, due to some traumatic effects of such events. (Avan et al., 2021; Doğan and Düzel, 2020; Khan et al., 2020; Maziti and Mujuru, 2020; Prikhidko et al., 2020; Yılmaz et al., 2020). Because the virus outbreak can be considered both a difficult life process and a trauma. The reason why it is a difficult life process is that people worry about both their physical and mental health and go into isolation; the main reason why it is seen as a trauma is the disruption of daily life routine and the sudden and unexpected interruption of the continuity of life. In general, people may experience negative situations such as pessimism, unhappiness, helplessness, and sadness, as well as some symptoms based on surprise/shock, then anxiety, anger, fear, and stress in such difficult life processes (Çırakoğlu, 2011; Jeong et al., 2016).

During the pandemic and isolation period, 72% of parents in total think that their life activities are restricted and changed, albeit at different levels. These results also significantly overlap with the percentages of parents who felt some negative emotions and feared getting sick due to the pandemic. It is normal for a person whose communication with other people is limited, who feels threatened or blocked, to experience different levels of stress, anxiety, fear, and other emotions (Mukhtar, 2020; Lee, 2020; Loveday, 2020). Because the individual's

feeling, thought, behavior and physiological reactions function in establishing healthy and balanced relationships in their daily life. Disruption of this integrity due to different reasons poses a threat to the human being in search and need of balance and harmony as a social being.

The rate of parents who believe that some obsessive behaviors (washing their hands more than necessary, taking a shower, not communicating with anyone, etc.) have developed during the pandemic process is 50%. This result suggests that some obsessive behaviors (such as washing hands more than necessary, taking a shower constantly, not communicating with anyone) may have developed while trying to take precautions against the risk of transmission in approximately one of every two parents during the coronavirus and isolation process. It is seen that approximately 46% of parents think that some obsessive behaviors (such as washing hands more than necessary, taking a shower constantly, not communicating with anyone, etc.) have developed at different frequencies in some of my family members other than themselves to take precautions during the pandemic and isolation process. These results seem to be compatible with the literature (Abba-Aji et al., 2020; Meşterelu et al., 2021).

It is seen that the rate of parents who stated that their family members talked to each other or on the phone about coronavirus-related issues at different frequencies during the pandemic and isolation period is 40%. It is possible that these results may be one of the reasons why some parents and some children feel different intensities of stress, anxiety, fear, sadness, and anger. When faced with difficult life events such as epidemics or pandemics, it fulfills a psycho-social strengthening function in terms of people's continuing to maintain their social relationships and to do some daily routines, and to cope with some problems and difficulties experienced. When the answers given within the scope of the research are examined, it is seen that 60.1% of the parents are in contact with their relatives and neighbors at different intervals (always, frequently or occasionally) during the pandemic and isolation process. These results seem to be consistent with research showing that adults' social relationships weaken during the pandemic (O'Sullivan et al., 2021; Santini et al., 2020; Weaver and Swank, 2020).

According to the results of the analysis of the second phase of the research, during the pandemic process, parents tried to understand both their own and their children's feelings. When the literature is examined, it is seen that parents develop a process to understand their children's emotions, and efforts are made to prevent the problems that may arise due to the pandemic or to solve the existing problems (Coyne et al., 2020; Demir-Öztürk, 2020; Dilber, 2020; Ren. et al., 2020). It is thought that the isolation brought about by the pandemic process makes it possible for individuals to return to their inner world, listen to themselves and try to understand. Parents were more oriented towards their children's emotions and tended to accept both their own and their children's negative emotions. It is thought that the fact that parents tend to children's emotions more is a result of the fact that parents and children can spend more time together during the pandemic process, and these results seem to be compatible with the literature (Patrick et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020). It has also been found that parents try to avoid the child's emotions by holding more negative beliefs about the negative emotions of the children. This result is thought to reflect the "compulsory coexistence" brought about by the pandemic process.

In the research, it can be said that the experiences of parents (feeling fear and anxiety, restriction of life activities, disruption of communication with the social environment) during the pandemic process go parallel with their emotional regulation. Parents had mostly negative experiences during the pandemic process, and these experiences were accompanied by parents' efforts to understand their children's feelings, tending to children's emotions more, and accepting negative emotions. Restriction of social life can be seen as a reflection of the fact that the time spent with family members - therefore with children - increases in the home environment, and this situation is a reflection of parents' directing towards children's emotions and their efforts to understand children's emotions.

5. CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected people of all ages spiritually. For this reason, as in the epidemic process, there is a need to improve the mental health of children and parents, as well as for every person after the slowdown and end of the pandemic. The results of the questionnaires applied to the parents selected as the sample clearly show this.

In the post-pandemic period, when the new normal returns, it is thought that it will be necessary to consider, plan and implement supportive and empowering psycho-social studies for parents as well. It is thought that avoiding social contact for a long time due to the pandemic process and measures to be social distance may have caused many people to be emotionally distant during this process. It is thought that social and emotional support will be important in reducing the stress and anxiety experienced by parents due to a difficult life event such as the COVID-19 pandemic, protecting their psychological health and well-being, and increasing their psychological resilience. Because people's just expressing themselves does not reduce the stress and anxiety they experience. In this context, parents should be informed that each person and family can attribute a different meaning to the pandemic process,

and therefore the emotional intensities of each parent and child may naturally be different, so that the feelings and thoughts of another person should never be underestimated or questioned. Carrying out studies with the participation of each family member to ensure that family members use a constructive, sincere, and supportive language towards each other; that is, their children's mental states are closely related to their parents' emotional states, and therefore it is important to control parents' own anxiety and stress, and to implement follow-up and monitoring processes.

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