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A Comparative Analysis of Parenting Styles in Turkish and Syrian Cultures

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Abstract

The present study was conducted in a phenomenological research design to reveal Syrian and Turkish university students' perceptions regarding their families' parenting style. A questionnaire including open-ended questions was used to collect the study data, and the data were analyzed implementing the content analysis method. The study findings demonstrated that the perceptions of Syrian students on their families' parenting style were grounded on moral-religious rules and indifferent attitude of their parents. In contrast, the perceptions of Turkish students reflected the oppressive-violent and democratic attitudes. The least-mentioned parenting styles were oppressive-violent attitudes by the Syrian students, while the Turkish students least mentioned about the inconsistent and indifferent parenting styles. One of the noteworthy findings in the study was the Syrian students avoided to use derogative words for their families instead they expressed high gratitude to their families.

Key words: Parent Attitudes, Child Rearing, Intercultural Comparison, Syria, Turkey

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Introduction

Culture affects a child's development process through norms related to interactions between children, parents, and the community (Aukrust et al., 2003). The individual is not independent of social structures since he/she was born (Grusec and Davidov, 2007). The dominant culture, deleting one of the contexts of childhood (Holloway and Valentine, 2000), could influence individual behavior, including the way people walk on the street, knowledge about the world and expression of knowledge (Freire, 2016), and impose certain meanings on certain behaviors. Since individuals imagine these meanings in their minds, the same behavior can have different meanings in different cultures, and they individuals can also differ based on the minds of the people within the culture (Super and Harkness, 1986). In this composition, both the integration of the individual with all the dynamics of the society and his/her relationship with the immediate environment are compelling (Trawick-Smith, 2014). Parents play the most critical role in the immediate environmental context, and their primary concern is to reflect and adapt the cultural values of their children in the manner in which they have modeled their parents (Fuhrer, 2009; Kağıtçıbaşı, 2017).

The unique value judgments of societies lead to differentiation among these societies, reflected in parents' beliefs and practices regarding parenting roles and styles (Trawick-Smith, 2014). Each culture's distinct characteristics also affect family structure, and diverse values determine family structure. This could be observed between different regions of the same country, and differences in family values could be seen in rural and urban areas, even within two families in the same residential area (Shechory-Bitton, David and Sommerfeld, 2015; Baumrind, 1996). Despite the fact that parenting styles differ from family to family, these styles share some definite characteristics in a given society, and these similarities could provide an idea about traditional cultural patterns (İlbars, 1987).

The Baumrind (1971) approach, which combines the warmth, maturity demand, supervision and communication dimensions of parenting, has proven to be the most effective of the different parenting approaches. There are four types of parenting styles frequently mentioned in the literature. The first is the authoritarian parent, who enforces strict rules and controls but does not encourage the child to be verbal. The second is the authoritative parent, who encouraged the child to be independent while maintaining a supervised discipline. The third is the permissive parent, who shows high-level attention and affection but does not impose appropriate positive discipline (Baumrind, 1971). Recent studies have introduced another parenting style, called neglectful parent, which is indifferent to the child's experiences and provides little supervision (Steinberg, et al., 1994).

Each culture represents family structures, traditions, parenting values and parental attitudes that reflect its cultural identity, and these cannot achieve essence without considering their embedded contexts (Recepov, 2000; Rothbaum, et al., 2000). The concepts of individualism and collectivism in these contexts have long been used to explain cultural differences in human behavior (Triandis, 2001). Kağıtçıbaşı (1985, 1990), based on these concepts, introduced the Family Exchange Theory, concentrating on the development of autonomy and relatedness and referring to three family models. The dependent family model, which is predominantly preferred in collectivist cultures, emerges with an authoritarian parenting approach that emphasizes close family relationships. The independent family model frequently observed in individualistic societies consists of authoritative attitudes, including independence and self-esteem tendencies. The psychological dependence model is a synthesis

of the two abovementioned models. This model emphasizes dependence on parents, individual values and autonomy collectively (Akt. Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010). Strong family ties, interdependence, and valuing obedience are common aspects of collectivist cultures. In Asian cultures, which are grounded in collectivism, family values and family-oriented life are more prominent. While responsibilities toward family members, loyalty and group solidarity are essential, family members also share the child's happiness or sadness in a family. However, Western culture underlines values such as competition, autonomy, independence and self-esteem based on individualistic traits, and prefers an authoritative approach to support a child's individuality (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010; Yunus, 2005; Willgerodt and Killien, 2004). A review of studies investigating parental attitudes (Chao, 1994; Chao, 2000; Chao, 2001; Chen, et al., 2002; Von Der Lippe, 1999; Salari, Wells and Sarkadi, 2014) demonstrated that authoritarian attitudes, obedience to parents and protective behaviors are prominent in countries based on collectivist cultures such as China and Egypt; in contrast, egalitarian approaches and authoritative applications that prioritize children's rights are common in countries grounded in individualistic cultures such as Sweden and the USA.

However, the same parenting styles can vary across approaches in different cultures. For example, the meanings of the authoritative parenting style and authoritarian parenting style might differ among Asian, Caucasian, African, Latin and European American parents (Rothbaum and Trommsdorff, 2007; Aksoy, Kılıç and Gözün-Kahraman, 2009). While authoritarian parenting attitudes are perceived negatively in the Western literature considering the adverse consequences of the parent–-child relationship, Asian parents may consider authority as indistinguishable from parents' expression of affection, attention and loyalty to the child (Ang and Goh, 2006). Similarly, Kağıtçıbaşı (1970), in her study conducted with American and Turkish parents, demonstrated that American parents associated an authoritarian parenting style with control, while Turkish parents associated it with compassion as well as control.

Comparative research is important for theoretical development because it introduces diversity to the topic, facilitates the differentiation of biological and environmental factors, helps to formulate existing and new theories, provides comprehensive descriptions of psychological phenomena, increases cultural sensitivity, and provides more data and evidence to answer questions than historical research (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010). There are comparative studies in the literature that have focused on the differences and similarities between parenting styles in different cultures. It was ascertained that these studies compared Germany and America (Barber, Chadwick and Oerter, 1992); Caucasian, African-American, Spanish and Asian-American families (Julian, McKenry, and McKelvey, 1994); China and Canada (Chen, et al., 1998); Japan and the USA (Rothbaum, et al., 2000); China and the USA (Wang and Leichtman, 2000); Russia and the USA (Tudge, et al., 2000); Turkmenistan and Turkey (Recepov, 2000); Asian-Canadian families (Vietnam, Korea and East Indian) (Kwakk and Berry, 2001); Norway, the USA, Turkey and Korea (Aukrust, et al., 2003); China and India (Rao, Mchale and Pearson, 2003); China, Japan and India (Yunus, 2005); China, Ecuador, Turkey and the United States (Qiu, Schvanevelt and Sahin, 2014); Turkey and Germany (Mayer, Fuhrer and Uslucan, 2005; Jaekel ve Leyendecker, 2009; Leyendeckera, Jakel, Olcay-Kademoğlu and Yağmurlu, 2010); Arab countries (Algeria, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia) (Dwairy, et al., 2006); and Jews and Muslims who live in Israel or migrated to Israel (Shechory-Bitton, et al., 2015). Since there is no prior research comparing parenting attitudes between Turkey and Syria and intercultural studies are considered paramount, it is essential to conduct the present study to fill the literature gap.

Purpose of the Research

The main aim of the study was to determine the perceptions of Syrian and Turkish students of their parents' parenting styles. For this purpose, the following subobjectives were determined:

1. How did Syrian and Turkish students describe their parents' parenting styles?
2. Which analogies and explanations did Syrian and Turkish students express regarding their parents' parenting styles?

Method

The Research Design

In the present qualitative study, a phenomenological research design, which describes individuals' experiences with a particular phenomenon, was used. Phenomenological design's most vital characteristic is that it focuses on how individuals transform their individual experiences and shared experiences into awareness and how they perceive, feel, judge, and reminiscence an existing phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2014).

Participants

The criterion sampling technique, a purposive sampling method, was used to select the research participants (Patton, 2014). The criteria for selecting participants were Syrian students and Turkish students with similar traits. The study was conducted with 105 willing-to-participate Syrian students and 105 Turkish students attending the same classes. The demographic data of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Data for Syrian and Turkish Students

		Syrian Students		Turkish Students	
Property	Variable	f	%	f	%
Gender	Female	67	63.8	67	63.8
	Male	38	36.2	38	36.2
Age	18-19	23	21.9	35	33.3
	20	32	30.4	36	34.3
	21	31	29.5	22	20.9
	22-26	19	18.2	12	11.5

Residencial Place in Childhood	Village	29	27.6	21	20.0
	Town	24	22.9	18	17.1
	Province	35	33.3	41	39.1
	Metropolis	17	16.2	25	23.8
Mother's Living Status	Alive	72	68.5	99	94.3
	Dead	33	31.5	6	5.7
Father's Living Status	Alive	52	49.5	96	91.4
	Dead	53	50.5	9	8.6
Mother's Educational Status	Uneducated	12	11.5	9	8.6
	Primary school	32	30.5	27	25.7
	Middle School	30	28.6	31	29.5
	High School	16	15.2	21	20.0
	University	15	14.2	17	16.2
Father's educational status	Uneducated	11	10.5	5	4.5
	Primary school	21	20.0	19	18.3
	Middle School	14	13.4	21	20.0
	High School	29	27.6	33	31.5
	University	31	29.5	27	25.7
Total Number of Family Members	4 or less	3	2.8	14	13.4
	5 or 6	18	17.2	54	51.4
	7 or 8	36	34.3	31	29.5
	9 or more	48	45.7	6	5.7

Data Collection

Initially, official approval was obtained from the university where the research was conducted, and later, the names, surnames and department information of the students were obtained through official channels during the data collection process. The questionnaire used as the data collection instrument was developed by the authors and included two open-ended questions and demographic questions. These questions were as follows:

1. How would you briefly describe your family's parenting style?

2. Which analogy you would use to describe the parenting style of your family, and why?

It was decided to develop the questionnaire both in Arabic and Turkish to ensure that the students in both groups comprehended the questions. The questionnaire was developed in the Turkish language and translated into the Arabic language by a certified translator for Syrian students. The translated version was further reviewed for accuracy by another translator. A pilot study was conducted to check the comprehensibility of the questions; two Turkish and two Syrian students participated. By examining the completed questionnaire of the pilot study, it was discerned that the developed questionnaire needed no further change, and the study was initiated. The students were reached following their course schedule in the respective depart-

ments, the authors provided necessary information related to the study, and the questionnaire was sent to the students who showed interest in participating in the study. The Turkish and Arabic questionnaires were collected after one week. The data collected from Syrian students were translated into Turkish by a certified translator. The questionnaires were accepted as study documents, and the study data were collected.

Data Analysis

The study data were analyzed via the content analysis method. In content analysis, identifying repetitive meanings and data to determine consistency and meaning is imperative (Patton; 2014). In the analysis process, the questionnaires obtained from the students were initially reviewed and coded. After reviewing the reliability of the codes, the categories were developed by considering common code properties. The analytical induction method, a comparative analysis technique, was used to analyze the data (Patton, 2014). In the first phase, a total of nine categories regarding parenting styles were identified, including five categories commonly mentioned by both Syrian and Turkish participants (ethical rules, indifferent attitudes, reassuring attitudes, authoritative attitudes and oppressive/violent attitudes), and four categories that varied among the different groups (religious rules, meeting basic physical needs, excessive protective attitudes and inconsistent attitudes). It was decided to combine certain categories while discussing them with the second author. The reassuring attitude and authoritative attitude categories identified in both groups and the category of religious rules identified from the Syrian student group were combined with the category of ethical rules. Thus, various categories were determined. The existing terminology available in the literature was applied to define the parenting style categories.

Ethical Concerns

Determining different perspectives obtained during the analysis process (Creswell, 2014) and ensuring reliability by eliminating existing differences (Miles and Huberman, 2015) are ethical requirements of any research. Initially, the questionnaires of the students were reviewed, and different codes were assigned to each by the first author. An independent researcher also reviewed the coded data and marked the codes as agreed or disagreed. Then, the agreements and disagreements concerning the codes were compared. The reliability formula developed by Miles and Huberman (2015) was used, and the reliability was determined to be 81% [Reliability = Agreement/(Agreement + Disagreement)]. A reliability coefficient of 70% or higher was considered to indicate sufficient deletion.

To establish the validity of the study, necessary measures were taken to ensure that the participants expressed themselves comfortably. Although most Syrian participants in the study knew intermediate -level Turkish, the questionnaires were translated into Arabic, and participants were allowed to use any language (Arabic or Turkish) to express their answers comfortably when responding to the questions. Thus, the situation was overcome to prevent Syrian participants from experiencing difficulties finding similar Turkish words. Furthermore, all participants were allowed adequate time to complete the questionnaires within one week.

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Results

In the following section, the statements of Syrian and Turkish students on their parents' parenting styles are reviewed and categorized, and the analogies and their interpretations are described.

Table 2: The Statements and Analogies Mentioned by Syrian and Turkish Students Regarding Parenting Styles

Syrian Students			Turkish Students		
Parenting Styles	**Number**	**Used Analogies**	**Parenting Styles**	**Number**	**Used Analogies**
Ethical - Religious Rules	52	Stone (7), Flower-Rose (7), Stream-River-Water (6), Tree-Fruit Tree (5), Lord-Lady (3), Law (3), Soldier- Warden (3), Sugar (2), Man (2), Friend (2), Moon (2), Candle (2), Seed (1), Spring (1), Prayer Amen (1), Soap (1)	Ethical Rules	17	Flower-Rose (3), Tree- Shootr (3), Water (2), Man (2), Lion (2), Cat (1), Anatolian child (1), Ripe Fruit (1), Swan (1)
Indifferent Attitude	22	Cold (6), Ice (5), Warm Water (5), Bird (2), Rose (2), Lord (2)	Indifferent Attitude	8	Ice (2), Refrigerator (1), A Foreign Country (1), Cold Water (1), Son of Someone (1), Empty Box (1), Dead end (1)
Authoritative Attitude	14	Moon (2), Loving (2), Friend (1), Sun (1), Light (1), Robust Building (1), Path (1), White Cane (1), Full Score Test Paper (1)	Authoritative Attitude	24	Bird-Pigeon (5), Flower-Rose-Carnation (3), Princess (2), Water (2), Rainbow (2), Sun (2), Smiley emoji (1), Butterfly (1), Nursing Home (1), Mildly sweetened coffee (1), Baby (1), Cotton (1), Scales (1), Olive Branch (1)
Authoritarian - Violent Attitude	6	Dictator (1), Lion Tamer (1), Prison (1), Tree (1)	Authoritarian - Violent Attitude	34	Caged-Home bird (7), Soldier-Cop (6), Race Horse (4),

					Robot-Sculpture (3), Fire (3), Scorching Hot (2), Bitter Coffee (1), Child of Someone (1), Storm Cloud (1), Dark Chocolate (1), Lion Trained in a Cage (1), Court Wall (1)
Meeting Basic Physical Needs	11	Mountain (3), Tree Shade (2), Bird-Eagle (2), Body (1), Eyes (1), Cocoon (1), Warden (1)	Delete Overprotective Attitude	16	Spoiled Child (2), Glass (2), Lawyer (2), Blanket-Quilt (2), Baby (2), Puppet (1), Advice Book (1), Too Much Loved (1), Pupil (1), Fur (1), Orchide (1)
			Inconsistent Attitude	6	Lukewarm Water (2), Temperamental (1), Parrot (1), Flip-Flopping (1)

Syrian students' statements regarding their parenting styles concentrated on ethical-religious rules and indifferent attitudes, while Turkish students' statements concentrated on oppressive-violent and authoritative attitudes. While Syrian students' least mentioned parenting styles were authoritarian-violent attitudes, Turkish students' least common parenting styles were inconsistent and indifferent attitudes. During the analysis process, four common parenting styles were identified from both Syrian and Turkish participants, and three additional parenting styles were also identified from either Syrian or Turkish participants. These additional categories were meeting basic physical needs mentioned by Syrian participants, and the overprotective and inconsistent attitudes mentioned by the Turkish participants.

Fifty-two Syrian students stated that they were brought up based on ethical-religious rules, while 17 Turkish students mentioned that they were brought up based on moral rules. As observed in the following statement by a Syrian student, it was observed that parenting style emphasized both moral and religious rules: “My upbringing was perfect. They encouraged me to perform the salaat since I became seven years old. They told me to fast and help people. When my father came home in the evenings, he told us stories about the life of the Prophet and His Companions, mentioned their good morals and told us about heaven and hell” (Female-22). A Turkish student described the same as follows: “My parents advised me, regardless of being happy or being a good individual; I should never lie; should be compassionate, behave well and help people; always be moral and modest” (Female-20).

The categories used were implied, as they included truthful and reliable human beings (stones, trees, flowers, masters, candles, cores, swans, Anatolian children), others (fruit trees, ripe fruits), love and guidance provided by parents and (candy, springs, water, friends, moons) through analogies. Stone-rock and warden were the different analogies stated by Syrian

students compared to the Turkish students' mentioned analogies. One of the students who used the metaphor "like stone" stated the following: "If my parents should not have been tough while teaching me how to be a good person, I would not be a good person. They were tough just like a stone." The student who used the analogy "gatekeeper" explained that "they needed to act like a gatekeeper to determine whether I was following the rules they taught."

Twenty-two Syrian students stated that they were brought up based on indifferent attitudes, and eight Turkish participants mentioned the same. The indifferent attitude was one of the most frequently mentioned parenting styles by Syrian participants, while it was one of the least mentioned parental styles by Turkish participants. Another captivating issue was that, in general, Syrian participants expressed gratitude to their parents and refrained from using any negative expressions when mentioning their parents' indifferent attitude compared to Turkish participants. A Syrian participants mentioned the following statements: "No one can argue that their families' parenting style was wrong for them, or else it would be ungrateful. We are a very crowded family. I am the eldest child. My mother had to take care of my younger brothers' and sisters' feedings. My father had many children, so he did not have time for me. We were separated during the war. We not even see each other" (Male-22). A Turkish participant stated the following: "If being a parent means to buy dress and feed your children, then I am brought up. However, I never experienced attention or love from my parents. My father had always worked hard, would not want to see us and could not even bear to hear our voices. My mom also worked outside and after coming home got busy with the household chores. I am the eldest of my siblings; since I have never received love, I tried to love my siblings, but how can a person love somebody else when she was not ever loved?" (Female-20).

While explaining families' indifferent attitudes to participants, Syrian participants used analogies such as cold, ice, and warm water; in contrast, Turkish participants used analogies such as ice, refrigerants, a foreign country, cold water, and the son of someone else. Turkish students mentioned two unusual analogies in this category: an empty box and a dead end. They used these analogies in the following sentences: "My parents were like an empty box, and never could find what I was looking for" and "We do not choose our parents. I was born in that family, which was my dead-end street."

The majority of the students who mentioned being brought up under authoritative attitudes were found to have parents with high education and high socioeconomic status. Fourteen Syrian students mentioned that they were raised in an authoritative parenting environment that supported them. A student whose parents were doctors stated the following: "My parents supported me immensely in my education. In particular, although I am not very clever, my father always encouraged me by saying that I am smart. I have always felt their ethical and material support" (Female-22). Among the Turkish participants, twenty-four stated that they were raised under authoritative attitudes. A Turkish student whose father is a school principal and whose mother is a teacher mentioned the following: "My family raised me as an exemplary individual of my speech, education, and lifestyle. They respect me and my decisions" (Male-21).

Participants described that they were taking good care of (loving, sun, flower-rose-nation, princess, baby, cotton), that their ideas were considered (friend, olive branch), and that their parents provided guidance (moon, light, path, white cane) while explaining authoritative parenting styles. The student who used the analogy of "full score test paper" explained the analogy as follows: "They are like a perfect exam paper. I can solve any problem under their great support." The students who used the analogy "bird" explained that their parents give them freedom.

Six Syrian participants mentioned that they were exposed to oppressive and violent parenting, while thirty-four Turkish participants reported the same. All six of the Syrian participants in this group mentioned being exposed to physical violence: "I was the girl with three brothers. My mother and brothers were very dominant on me. I would do household chores, and my mom would get angry with me if she did not like them. My brothers would not let me go out. When I went out without permission, they would beat me up after returning. Sometimes I think they were right, and sometimes I think it was unnecessary" (Female-19). Among the Turkish participants exposed to the oppressive-violent parenting style, twenty-seven experienced oppressive attitudes, and seven experienced oppressive-violent attitudes: "My parents always displayed an oppressive attitude toward me. I always had to obey them, and never fulfilled my own desires. I have always been compared to others. All these matured me, and it feels like I am 50 years old now" (Female-19).

The participants who used the following analogies were included: caged- bird, soldier-cop, robot- sculpture, lion trained in a cage, and prison, and they described their parents as restrictive. The participants who used the following analogies were included: dictator, lion tamer, fire, scorching hot, and bitter coffee, reflecting the violent behavior of their parents. The participants who used the following analogies: race horse or children of other people explained that they were always compared to other children. Another participant, who used the analogy dark chocolate, stated the following: "They are sour, but indispensable."

A parenting style mentioned by eleven Syrian students, which their Turkish peers did not refer to, concentrated on providing only the children's basic physical needs, such as food, shelter, and dress. One statement related to this category is the following: "My parents sent me to school, bought me dresses, and fed me. Thank God, I never slept hungry. They gave me allowances when they had money. No one can say that my parents raised me under bad circumstances" (Male-24).

Those who used the following analogies regarding parenting style, mountain, tree shade, body, eyes, and gatekeeper, based on providing their child's basic physical needs, explained that their parents protected them. Another participant used the analogy "cocoon" and stated the following: "I am the butterfly of my parents, and they are my cocoon. They gave me everything I needed to get out of that cocoon."

Two other parenting styles, such as overprotective attitudes and inconsistent attitudes, were mentioned by sixteen and six Turkish participants, respectively, that their Syrian peers did not mention. One participant raised under overprotective parenting described the following: "When I was younger, my mother would always keep me by her side. She said I could only be safe with her. I never went out by myself. I thought maybe I could be on my own when I started college, but my family moved to this city, just because I admitted here" (Female-19). Another participant who mentioned her parents' inconsistent attitudes reported the following: "My parents' behaviors toward me were always inconsistent. Sometimes they were very oppressive, and sometimes they did not even care me. When they had problems with each other, they displayed hostile behavior toward me. Every move, every behavior of mine would bother them. However, when they were OK, they did not even care about me or my behavior" (Female-19).

The Turkish participants exposed to the overprotective parenting style described that their parents wanted to keep them under control all the time using the following analogies: spoiled child, glass, blanket-quilt, too much loved, a pupil of the eye, fur, and orchid. Other participants who mentioned analogies, such as lawyers and puppets, described that their parents make all their decisions. A participant who used the analogy "book" stated the following: "They always have advice about everything and raised me with this advice." Another partici-

pant stated that he was raised with inconsistent attitudes and explained it using the analogy "lukewarm water"; "They are neither cold nor hot, like a lukewarm water that flows between them." The analogies used by the two other participants were temperamental and flip-flopping, consistent with the prior parenting style category. A participant mentioned his/her perceived inconsistent parenting attitudes as follows: "They never made clear decisions that I had to follow. Sometimes it was my mom's duty to control me; sometimes it was my father's. I seldom came across a single decision about me that they both agreed. In addition, that decision was usually about studying."

Discussion and Conclusion

According to Chao (1994), parenting is shaped by cultural values. Most Syrian students were brought up based on ethical and religious values, indicating the significance of these values in Syrian culture. Religious rules are religiously derived codes that are determined by divine power. Ethical rules include principles that regulate individuals' behavior and relations with others in society, and in the absence of these rules, they lead to social exclusion. Religious rules are followed only by those who believe in a particular religion, while ethical rules are needed to earn a society's membership and be socially accepted (Erdem, 2003; Eren, 2007). In Middle Eastern countries, social ethics are regulated by Sharia law. Thus, religion and ethics are intertwined with each other (Gilsenan, 2000). Religious conduct underlies Syria's social ethics, which provides the groundwork for Syrian students to make such statements. In contrast, Turkish participants assert ethical rules more than religious codes when giving statements. With the Republic's proclamation in Turkey, religion's and the state's functions were disassociated, impacting the separation of society's moral and religious rules. While ethical codes persist in social adaptation, religious rules become more personal (Mardin, 2016). This also reflected on the Turkish participants' family structure over time and implied that Turkish parents valued moral rules more than did religious codes when raising their children compared to Syrian parents. Furthermore, these findings also support Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which states that not only the family but also the school, social structure, local government and even historical events significantly influence a child's development and education (Chibucos, Leitte and Weis, 2005; Roysircar and Pignatiello, 2011).

Indifferent attitudes were the most frequently mentioned parenting style by Syrian participants. The ultimate goal of Muslim parents is to propagate their community through marriage and give birth to children. Thus, family planning is not common in some Islamic countries. In these societies, family planning is not a religious order but rather a social norm (Bowen and Early, 2002). Based on the findings of this study and the current literature, it can be suggested that indifferent attitudes are the most common parental style among Syrian participants, as families have more children, resulting in the allocation of limited time and financial resources for each child. According to social exchange theory, parents may experience a predicament between the number of children they have and investments in their children, even in families with high socioeconomic status. Distributing resources equally to individuals results in healthy relationships among family members (Lawson and Mace, 2009). An increase in a child's number in a family reduces the attention, time, and financial resources allocated to an individual child (Hofer, 2002). Prior studies have shown that indifferent parenting is more prevalent in families with many children (Black, Devereux and Salvanes, 2005; Demirel, Üner and Kırmi, 2011).

While oppressive-violent attitudes are the least common parenting styles among Syrian students, they are among the most common parenting styles among Turkish participants. Kağıtçıbaşı (2010) mentioned that an oppressive attitude is a conventional parenting style in Turkish families. In addition, overprotective and inconsistent attitudes are prevalent in Turkish participants' perceived experiences, while these attitudes were not observed in Syrian students' perceived experiences. An overprotective parenting attitude includes higher levels of social control (Fuhrer, 2009). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Country Report (1999) suggested that emotions such as love and affection, rooted in traditional Turkish family culture, underlie protective attitudes toward children as a social instruction method. A study of the parenting attitudes of German and Turkish families conducted by Leyendeckera, et al. (2010) also indicated that Turkish parents have inconsistent and strict discipline practices (Mayer, et al., 2005; Jaekel and Leyendecker, 2009; Leyendeckera, et al., 2010). The constant statements of the Turkish participants concerning parenting attitudes supported the abovementioned findings. Furthermore, prior studies (Chao, 2000; Chao, 2001; Ang and Goh, 2006) demonstrated that overprotective attitudes in Asian culture led to authoritarian attitudes, oppression and restriction. An authoritarian parenting style is associated with a positive parenting style in collectivist cultures, while it pertains to a negative parenting style in individualistic cultures (Sorkhabi, 2005). Another study of American and Turkish parents conducted by Kağıtçıbaşı (1970) suggested that the authoritarian parenting attitudes of American parents were linked to lack of affection and sense of control, while they were related to control and affection in Turkish families. Turkish participants' statements concerning oppressive and overprotective attitudes ratified that their parents often preferred an authoritarian attitude to protect them.

Authoritative attitudes were also the most mentioned parenting style after oppressive attitudes among the Turkish participants. According to the family exchange theory introduced by Kağıtçıbaşı (1996), urbanization and industrialization resulted in the revolution of the socioeconomic structure, which led to changes in family values. The author indicated that the changing structures upheld parenting styles from authoritarian to authoritative in Turkish society over time. The study participants were between the ages of 18 and 26 years, which could explain the prevalence of both the oppressive and authoritative attitudes attributed to Turkish parents in the present study. Additionally, Dwairy et al. (2006) suggested that social policies influence the parenting styles of a community; parents in liberal societies are most likely to have authoritative attitudes, while parents living in occupied territories practice stringent control attitudes. Thus, Turkish students perceived their parents as more authoritative than Syrian students did because they were brought up in an authoritative ambiance. Another significant piece of evidence was that most participants from both groups who mentioned that they were brought up under authoritative attitudes were individuals whose parents had a high education level. According to symbolic interaction theory, parents' high education level and cognitive structure cause them to display more authoritative attitudes toward their children (Hofer, 2002; LaRossa and Reitzes, 2009). Earlier studies on parental attitudes (Von Der Lippe, 1999; Sanli and Ozturk, 2012) supported the premise that parents' authoritative attitudes improve with their educational level.

The findings also demonstrated that Syrian participants expressed their gratitude to their parents, who provided for their basic physical needs. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1995) Article 27 states that every child should have access to food, clothing and housing, and parents should be responsible for providing these. Violating fundamental human rights attitudes cannot be attributed to any culture or religion (Newel, 2002). Syrian

participants' statements might suggest that they did not have adequate knowledge regarding children's basic rights. Another remarkable finding was that Syrian students expressed their gratitude and refrained from using any negative statements about their parents while reporting their parents' indifferent attitudes compared with Turkish participants. Despite these cultural differences, respecting parents is unconditional and is one of the most fundamental values in Asian countries (Willgerodt and Killien, 2004). Another study by Balaguru (2004), conducted on Asian and Indian immigrant parents regarding the association between culture and childrearing practices, demonstrated that respect, unity and interpersonal relations are the most imperative notions. The unconditional gratitude given to parents expressed by the Syrian participants also suggested that they still committed to these values. Similarly, the different analogies used by Syrian and Turkish participants in similar categories could be attributed to this aspect. While most Syrian participants converse about their parents with respect, Turkish participants generally displayed a more subjective attitude toward their parents in a similar category.

Cross-cultural comparative studies usually concentrate on distinctness. However, one of the significant aspects of comparative research is emphasizing similarities as well as divergences (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010). In the present study, four similar categories were derived from the statements of Syrian and Turkish participants concerning parenting styles. Although parents have distinct parenting attitudes in diverse cultures, divergent cultures may develop the same attitudes based on their living conditions, economic levels and life goals (Leyendecker, et al., 2005; Hofer, 2002). Additionally, there may be certain similarities between the parenting cultures of these two countries, as they are geographically adjacent.

In the present study, specific categories were developed based on the participants' statements; however, it might be inappropriate to consider that each family practiced the same parenting style. One of the feminist family theorists underlines this fact. No family has a valid and unique parenting style; different parenting styles can be observed based on changes in the same family (Baumrind, 1996; Chibucos, et al., 2005), as reported in previous studies (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1970; Choa, 1994; Dwairy, et al., 2006). Thus, the abovementioned parenting styles in the present study may indicate that the dominant parenting style was perceived by the children since the data were collected based on the information provided by the participants.

Except for the analogies of a dictator, a lion tamer, and a prison used by three students stating that they were exposed to violence by their parents, none of the other Syrian participants mentioned any negative attributes concerning their perceived parenting styles. Although the Syrian students, who mentioned that they grew up with indifferent and moral-religious-based parenting approaches, used analogies (law, stone, rock, and warden) similar to Turkish participants' perceived oppressive attitudes, explained that their parents needed to adopt these attitudes. Holt (2000), in the book Escape from Childhood, mentioned that certain children are forced to live their childhood as prisoners since their parents consider their children weak, and small, and should be protected from the risks of the outside world. Accordingly, participants who used these analogies spent their childhood as prisoners, although they perceived this as a requirement. Studies regarding the parenting styles of Arab societies (Al-Khawaja, 1999; Achoui, 2003) have demonstrated that children are contented with the authoritarian parenting style. In addition, analysis of the demographic information demonstrated that most of the participants who used these analogies lost their parents. While Kağıtçıbaşı (2010) linked differences to culture, and similarities to biological factors, they also mentioned the third aspect as a psychological factor that needed to be considered in both cases. This raised the question of whether the cultural reasons underlie the Syrian participants' responses or whether the parti-

cipants were grateful to their lost parents. In Asian culture, positive attributes such as parents' attention and affection toward the child could manifest as an authoritarian parenting style (Ang and Goh, 2006). If the Syrian students did not use their analogies because of their parents' loss, it could be suggested that their perceived parenting styles are related to culture and reflect their parents' compassion through hostile analogies.

Strengths and Limitations

The culture we experience could be determined by the time we were born. Global events, social trends, economic changes, the impact of popular developments on behavior patterns and ways of life change culture (Twenge, 2009). In the present study, Syrian students experienced a conflicting war. Individuals' cultural worlds are presented based on their cognitive level (Freire, 2016). The strength of the present study was that it revealed the reflections of individuals' negative experiences regarding their culture. However, not reflecting that Syrian students experienced war in the findings was one of the limitations of the present study. Thus, when repeating the present study as a cultural comparison, it could be suggested that individuals who were not exposed to severe violence be included in the study to eliminate this limitation.

Syrian nationals tend to ignore or suppress their parents' negative aspects while describing and using analogies regarding their perceived parenting styles. Although we attempted to explain these findings with the data available in prior studies, focus group interviews could be conducted, particularly with these students, in the next stage to reveal the underlying factors. The present study could be developed into a theoretical study by conducting further studies with individuals of origins other than Turkish and Syrian.

The findings of the present study imply that authoritative attitudes and oppressive attitudes are more prevalent in Turkish families. Although an oppressive attitude includes protective behavior in Turkish society, it can be concluded that parents still lack knowledge regarding supportive parenting styles in Turkey. Additional training programmes, seminars, and conferences on the subject could be suggested for parents to achieve the needed knowledge concerning supportive parenting styles. The categories, such as indifferent attitudes and fulfilling basic physical needs among Syrian students, suggested that they did not have sufficient knowledge of children's rights. Considering the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey during recent years, we have the opportunity to reach both parents and children. Thus, knowledge of children's rights among Syrian parents and children could be promoted.

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