

Relationship between mothers' narcissism and the temperament of their children

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ABSTRACT. It was aimed to evaluate the relationship between the narcissism of mothers and the temperament of children which is an important age for personality development. Sample consisted of mothers who wanted to participate in the study and could be reached by using social media (n =470). Young adult mothers with less education living in nuclear families appear to Pathological Narcissism Inventory score higher. The Temperament Scale for Children scores of mothers aged 26-35 years were found to be statistically significantly higher than other mothers. The relationship between mothers' narcissism and their children's temperament was found to be significant. It has been observed that there is a relationship between narcissism of mothers and temperaments of children.

Keywords: narcissism; temperament; children and mothers.

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Introduction

Every individual has their own characteristics, and it is seen in all the areas of development. In addition to natal factors, environmental factors also have effects on development of the individual. Knowing the characteristics of an individual would be helpful in practices for developmental support. Biological and genetic differences affect each individual's mood, performance and reactions (Zwir et al., 2020). Each child has their own genetic structure, and this structure affects their emotions, activity level and reactions. Temperament is an important parameter in child's personal development, academic success and social-emotional development. All these characteristics are named "temperament", and they Show up after the birth and become evident during course of life (Laukkanen, Ojansuu, Tolvanen, Alatupa, & Aunola, 2014).

There is a view suggesting that the temperament develops in the first years of the life and doesn't generally change during lifetime; but there are individual differences. The temperature is considered as a factor affecting child's behaviors. It is stated that there is a strong relationship between children's behaviors and the temperament (Kozlova, Slobodskaya, & Gartstein, 2020). Particularly, the temperament in early childhood is an individual difference having significant effects on academic success, adaptation in social relationships, parenting styles of mothers and fathers, problematic behaviors (Gartstein, Putnam, Aron, & Rothbart, 2016).

Some children may give their parents, teachers or those nursing them a rough time because of their temperament. Especially, some temperamental characteristics such as short temper, timidity, high activity level and low endeavoring may be really challenging. In such situations, parents and baby-sitters may need to get additional support and training (Sourander et al., 2018). Early temperament characteristics starting from the babyhood may affect children's development and may later lead to psychopathology during childhood or adolescence period (Sourander et al., 2018). Therefore, the relationship between the child and the mother is important. Many theoreticians, Freud being in the first place, state that the relationship between the mother and the infant in the early years of infant's life underlies the foundations of infant's healthy development. Freud's psychoanalytic, Ericson's psychosocial, Piaget's cognitive development theories, learning theories of Harlow and Zimmerman, Schaffer and Emerson and Bowlby's attachment theory consider early childhood as a vulnerable process in terms of formation or development of psychopathology processes and they take the relationship between mother and the infant that is formed during this period into consideration (Yavaş Celik & Yıldırım., 2018). During this period, the mother's narcissistic personality may

have affected the child's temperament. Freud (1914) emphasized that healthy development “consists in a departure from primary narcissism”, so the libidinal energy needs to be directed onto an external object, in other words, onto another person rather than the self/ the ego (Sahin & Karabekiroglu., 2018). Then, the libido defined as the “object libido”. When people invest their libidinal energy into each other this is called a healthy relationship. However, experiencing a loss of the libidinal object and/or unable to have mutual love cause individuals regress to secondary (or pathological) narcissism, in other words, to an unhealthy state of narcissism (Sahin & Karabekiroglu., 2018). Also, Narcissism is most often associated with arrogance and dominance, which may be captured by the term narcissistic grandiosity. Clinical descriptions of narcissistic grandiosity involves unlimited power, omnipotence, superiority, exhibitionism, aggression, lack of empathy, perfection, and inflated self-esteem (Sedikides, 2021). A mother with this type of personality cannot be expected to raise her child in a healthy way. Narcissistic mothers do not allow their children to be individualized and raise a child dependent on her. Children of narcissistic mothers cannot develop their own feelings and judgments and cannot trust themselves. Because they instinctively respond to external demands rather than internal demands. The key message they get from their parent 'mirror' is: you fail, you can't meet my needs, you're inadequate and you should try harder. This situation is extremely damaging to child development. The temperament of children raised in this way may be adversely affected by this situation. Therefore, in this study, it was aimed to evaluate the relationship between the narcissism of mothers and the temperament of children aged 4 to 8 which was an important age for personality development.

Question of research

1. What is the relationship between the narcissism of mothers and the temperament of their children aged 4 to 8?
2. What is the evaluation of socio-demographic data in terms of maternal narcissism and temperament of children?

Material and method

Type of Study: The study is a descriptive study.

Population of Study: The universe of the study consisted of the mothers of preschool, primary school first and second grade students in a school located in the city center (N=630).

Sample of Study: The sample of the study consisted of mothers who use social media, do not have visual impairment, have the ability to fill in the shared questionnaire, volunteer to participate in the study, and can be reached via social media (n = 470). In order to determine the sample size of the study, a total of 411 people were calculated with $\alpha=0.05$, effect size=0.8 and 90% power using the G*Power (v3.1.9.7) program. However, considering that there may be data losses, a total of 470 people were included in the sample.

Sampling criteria:

Volunteering to participate in research
Have not a visual impairment
To have a suitable tool for social media use
Using social media

Non-sampling criteria:

Not using social media
Not having a tool suitable for social media usage
Have visual impairment

Application of study

The data were collected using Question Form Temperament Scale for Children and Pathological Narcissism Inventory sent to the participants on online platforms by the researchers. Also, data were collected between 01.04.2021 and 23.06.2021. Forms for data collection were made available for three months. The study was terminated when 75%(n=470) of the population was reached. Because people could no longer return

Data collection tools

Pathological Narcissism Inventory: Pathological Narcissism Inventory was developed by Pincus et al. (2009). The scale, consisting of 52 items in total, consists of narcissistic grandiosity and narcissistic

vulnerability dimensions. The reliability coefficients calculated for the subscales ranged from .78 to .93; this value has been reported to be .92 for the whole scale (Pincus et al., 2009). The adaptation study of the scale into Turkish was conducted. In the study, 12 items were removed from the original scale due to item correlations and factor loads, and the number of items was reduced to 40. The narcissistic vulnerability sub-dimension, which has 36 items in total, explains 45.27% of the variance and the narcissistic grandiosity sub-dimension consisting of only the exploitative sub-scale (items 7, 10, 16, and 26) explains 15.21% of the variance. Due to the fact that all subscales except exploitation are collected in the narcissistic vulnerability dimension, the Turkish form of the scale is predominantly seen as a tool to measure vulnerable narcissism. Vulnerably narcissistic individuals retrospectively report experiencing a number of adverse events in childhood, including parental abuse and maltreatment, which likely contributes to the attachment difficulties they report, as well as their general anxiety and suspiciousness of others with whom they interact. Understanding vulnerable narcissism through the lens of basic personality traits is consistent with a growing body of literature that demonstrates that such traits serve as organizing factors for important latent factors of psychopathology, such that disinhibition and antagonism underlie the externalizing disorders and neuroticism and introversion underlie many of the internalizing disorders (Miller et al., 2018). The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the narcissistic vulnerability dimension is 0.94. The Cronbach alpha value for this study was determined as 0.97.

Temperament Scale for Children: The scale consists of 7 sub-factors (Activity Level, Intimacy and Adaptability, Sensory Sensitivity, Responsiveness/Reactivity, Attention and Persistence, Rhythmicity). The Turkish adaptation of the scale was done by Oztürk et al. (2020) adapted to Turkish. The scale can be applied to mothers with children aged 4-8 years. Scale: "Never", "rarely", "sometimes", "often" and "always". It consists of questions that are evaluated between 1 and 5 points in the likert type, in which "never" statements are included. If the score obtained from the scale is high, the temperament characteristic of the child is defined as high. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient has been determined as 0.85 for the whole scale (Ozyürek, Kahraman, & Pekdoğan, 2020). The Cronbach alpha value for this study was determined as 0.91.

Question Form: This form consists of questions about the socio-demographic data (age, education, occupation, number of child, family type, Income status) of mothers and narcissism of mothers (important to be liked by someone, consider success and power important, feel bad when criticized, like to stand out as a personality of the mothers) (Laukkanen et al., 2014; Sedikides, 2021; Pincus et al., 2009).

Statistical analysis

The coding and evaluation of the data were done to using the SPSS 22 package program. In statistical analysis, the compliance of the data to the normal distribution was evaluated by Skewness (+1 and -1) and Kurtosis (+2 and -1) test. Mean and standard deviation, percentage and frequency measurements, independent sample t test, Oneway Anova, Kruskal Wallis are used in the evaluation of the data.

Ethical considerations

Ethics committee approval of the study was obtained from the ethics committee of a university. All participants who participated in the study were informed about the study and were included in the study in line with their own volunteers. The mothers completed the survey after being informed, verbally and in writing, about the purpose of the research. No identifying information was collected, which ensured the anonymity of the participants. They were also assured of the confidentiality of the data. In addition, the study was carried out in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration principles.

Results

In this study was determined that of mothers, 60.2% were between the ages of 26-35, 36.0% were secondary school and high school graduates, 36.0% were college and university graduates, 66.0% were housewives, 91.1% had a nuclear family, 57.9% have 1 or 2 children, 56.4% have balance with income, 60.2% consider it important to be liked by someone, 46.4% consider success and power important, 60.2% feel bad when criticized, 55.5% like to stand out as a personality (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of socio-demographic data.

Socio-Demographic Data	n=470	%=100
Age of mother		
16-25 age	59	12.6
26-35 age	283	60.2
35-52 age	128	27.2
Education of mother		
Literate/non-literate, primary school	126	26.8
Middle school and high school	172	36.0
College and university	172	36.0
Occupation		
Housewife	310	66.0
Working	160	34.0
Family type		
Nuclear family	428	91.1
Extended	42	08.9
Number of Children		
1-2 child	272	57.9
3-9 child	198	42.1
Income status		
Income more than expenses	94	20.0
Income equals expense	265	56.4
Income less than expenses	111	23.6
Is it important to be liked?		
Yes	283	60.2
No	187	39.8
Do success and power matter?		
Yes	218	46.4
No	96	20.4
Often	156	33.2
Do you feel bad when criticized?		
Yes	283	60.2
No	187	39.8
Are you someone who likes to stand out as a personality?		
Yes	261	55.5
No	209	44.5

Mothers of Temperament Scale For Children total point is 84.94 ± 45.29 . Mother of Pathological Narcissism Inventory total point is 116.85 ± 17.31 . The Temperament Scale for Children scores of mothers aged 26-35 years (118.47 ± 16.43) were found to be statistically significantly higher than those of mothers aged 36-52 years (114.23 ± 17.06) and 16-25 years (114.83 ± 20.99) ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). Significance was determined by mothers between the ages of 26-35. It was found that the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores of the mothers between the ages of 36-52 (74.10 ± 42.94) were found to be statistically significantly lower than the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores of the mothers between the ages of 16-25 (88.62 ± 51.80) and 26-35 years (89.87 ± 44.22) ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). In the advanced analysis (Post-Hoc), it was determined that the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (74.10 ± 42.94) of the mothers between the ages of 36-52 were significant. Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores of mothers who are illiterate and primary school graduates (107.07 ± 52.64), were found to be statistically significantly higher than mothers who are secondary and high school graduates (77.80 ± 39.99) and mothers who are college and university degrees (75.86 ± 38.80) Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). In the advanced analysis (Post-Hoc), it was determined that the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores of mothers who were illiterate and primary school graduates (107.07 ± 52.64) were significant. It was found that Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (90.09 ± 46.48) of mothers who were housewives were significantly higher than Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (74.96 ± 41.23) of working mothers ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). It was determined that the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (87.07 ± 45.06) of the mothers in the nuclear family were statistically significantly higher than the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (63.23 ± 42.20) of the mothers in the extended family ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). The Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (100.43 ± 55.40) of the mothers who expressed their economic status as income more than the expenditures were statistically significant higher according to the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores of the mothers who expressed their economic status less than expenses (73.26 ± 41.09) and income equal to expenses (84.33 ± 41.42) ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). In the

advanced analysis (Post-Hoc), it was determined significantly that the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (100.43 ± 55.40) of the mothers who expressed their economic status as more than their income were formed. It was determined that the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (91.28 ± 46.20) of the mothers who stated that they found it important to be liked by someone were statistically significantly higher than the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (75.33 ± 42.20) of the mothers who stated that they did not find it important to be liked by someone ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). The Temperament Scale for Children scores (119.16 ± 17.60) of the mothers who stated that success and power are important for them, were statistically significant compared to the mothers who stated that success and power were not important (116.42 ± 12.87) and often important (113.91 ± 18.85) ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). In the advanced analysis (Post-Hoc), it was determined that the Temperament Scale for Children scores (119.16 ± 17.60) were formed by the mothers who stated that success and power were important for them. Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (69.57 ± 40.69) of mothers who stated that success and power were not important for them were statistically significantly lower than mothers who stated that success and power were important for them (88.97 ± 47.87) and frequently (88.76 ± 42.42) ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). In the advanced analysis (Post-Hoc), it was determined that the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (69.57 ± 40.69) were formed by the mothers who stated that success and power were not important for them. It was determined that the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (90.52 ± 45.71) of the mothers who stated that they liked to come forward as a personality were statistically significantly higher than the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (77.96 ± 43.87) of the mothers who stated that they did not like to stand out as a personality ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of socio-demographical and mothers' personality data in terms of temperament scale for children and Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores.

Temperament Scale for Children	Pathological Narcissism Inventory	
	r	p
Activity Level	-0.19	0.02
Intimacy and Adaptability	0.07	0.12
Sensory Sensitivity	0.16	0.001
Responsiveness/Reactivity	0.14	0.003
Attention and Persistence	-0.04	0.37
Rhythmicity	0.13	0.007
Emotional Sensitivity	0.12	0.005
Temperament Scale for Children	0.09	0.04
Pathological Narcissism Inventory	Temperament Scale for Children	
	r	p
Vulnerable	0.08	0.05
Exploitativeness	0.13	0.003
Pathological Narcissism Inventory	0.09	0.04

Pathological Narcissism Inventory has low a significant relationship with sub-factors (Activity Level, Sensory Sensitivity, Responsiveness/Reactivity, Rhythmicity) of Temperament Scale for Children. Temperament Scale for Children has low a significant relationship with sub-factor (Exploitativeness) of Pathological Narcissism Inventory (Table 3).

Table 3. The relationship between the temperament scale for children and the Pathological Narcissism Inventory

Sosyo-Demografik Veriler	Temperament Scale for Children Ort.±S.D	Significant	Pathological Narcissism Inventory Ort.±S.D	Significant
		Age of mother		
16-25 age	114.83±20.99	F=3.12*	88.62±51.80	F=5.12*
26-35 age	118.47±16.43	p=0.04	89.87±44.22	p=0.006
35-52 age	114.23±17.06		74.10±42.94	
		Education of mother		
Literate/non-literate, primary school	117.29±18.13	X ² =2.55**	107.07±52.64	X ² =27.72**
Middle school and high school	116.23±15.82	p=0.27	77.80±39.99	p=0.001
College and university	117.16±18.19		75.86±38.80	
		Occupation		
Housewife	116.73±18.01	U=24749.0***	90.09±46.48	U=20457.0***
Working	117.10±15.93	p=0.97	74.96±41.23	p=0.002

		Family type		
Nuclear family	117.03±17.32	U=8406.0***	87.07±45.06	U=5951.0***
Extended	115.07±17.29	p=0.48	63.23±42.20	p=0.001
		Number of Children		
1-2 child	116.99±17.43	U=25989.0***	86.40±47.43	U=26411.0***
3-9 child	116.67±17.19	p=0.51	82.93±42.21	p=0.72
		Income status		
Income more than expenses	116.80±21.11	X2=1.41**	100.43±55.40	X2=14.19**
Income equals expense	118.04±15.69	p=0.49	84.33±41.42	p=0.001
Income less than expenses	114.07±17.29		73.26±41.09	
		Is it important to be liked?		
Yes	117.50±17.86	U=25622.50***	91.28±46.20	U=21121.50***
No	115.87±16.45	p=0.56	75.33±42.20	p=0.001
		Do success and power matter?		
Yes	119.16±17.60	X2=7.16**	88.97±47.87	X2=14.48**
No	116.42±12.87	p=0.02	69.57±40.69	p=0.001
Often	113.91±18.85		88.76±42.42	
		Do you feel bad when criticized?		
Yes	117.40±16.62	U=24888.0***	87.74±49.41	U=25135.50***
No	116.03±18.32	p=0.27	80.70±37.94	p=0.35
Are you someone who likes to stand out as a personality?				
Yes	115.94±17.18	U=25654.0***	90.52±45.71	U=22831.50***
No	118.00±17.45	p=0.26	77.96±43.87	p=0.002
Temperament Scale For Children total point		84.94±45.29		
Pathological Narcissism Inventory total point		116.85±17.31		

Discussion

There is a reciprocal relationship between the temperament of the child and the parenting style. The harmony between the child's temperament and the caregiver's parenting style is very important in this process. The attitude of the family towards the child and the cooperation of the environment with the child's temperament are among the determining factors in the development of the child. Therefore; The relationship that the child establishes with his mother during the formation of temperament has a very important place, and narcissism in the mother can negatively affect the development of the child's temperament (Micalizzi, Wang, & Saudino, 2015; Hipson & Séguin, 2017). According to these information A healthy development of the temperament of a child raised by a narcissistic mother cannot be expected. Moreover, parenting styles vary also in healthy individuals, contributing to nourishing as well as detrimental growth environments (Pinquart, 2017). Therefore, in this study, it is aimed to examine this relationship. The results in this direction are as follows. A low-level significant relationship was determined between Pathological Narcissism and the temperament of children. Regarding this situation; In the study, the total score of the Children's Temperament Scale was found to be 84.94±45.29. The maximum total score that can be obtained from the Temperament Scale for Children is 165, and as the score obtained from the scale increases, it is concluded that the child has a positive temperament (Özyürek et al. 2020). According to this information; It can be said that this value in the study (84.94±45.29) is a positive value. In addition, the total score of the Maternal Pathological Narcissism Scale was found to be 116.85±17.31. The maximum score that can be obtained from the Pathological Narcissism Inventory is 200. As the Pathological Narcissism Inventory score increases, narcissism increases. According to this information; Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores of the mothers (116.85±17.31) were considered to be moderate. Since the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores of the mothers participating in the study were not very high, it can be said that there was a weak relationship between the Pathological Narcissism Inventory and the Temperament Scale For Childeren. In summary, we can say that there was no problem in the temperament of the children due to the low narcissistic characteristics of the mothers participating in the study.

The Temperament Scale for Children scores of mothers aged 26-35 years (118.47 ± 16.43) were found to be statistically significantly higher than those of mothers aged 36-52 years (114.23 ± 17.06) and 16-25 years (114.83 ± 20.99) ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). In the parent-child dynamic, the impressive role of the child becomes evident as the age progresses (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2017). So, we may have reached this conclusion.

The Temperament Scale for Children scores (119.16 ± 17.60) of mothers who stated that success and power were important for them in the study were statistically significant compared to mothers who stated that success and power were not important (116.42 ± 12.87) and were often important (113.91 ± 18.85) ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). The family, which exists in a certain culture, maintains its own identity within the family structure. Each culture has its own structures that direct the behaviors according to the developmental stages of the child (Bredekamp, 2015). It has been determined as a very normal result that the temperament of a child who grows up in a culture where success and power are important is shaped accordingly.

Apart from these results, many results related to narcissism were reached in the study. These are as follows. Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (74.10 ± 42.94) of mothers in the 36-52 age range were found to be statistically significantly lower than the Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores of mothers in the 16-25 age group (88.62 ± 51.80) and 26-35 age group (89.87 ± 44.22) ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). In studies examining the relationship between age and narcissism, different results were obtained. In a study conducted with nursing students, it was found that there was a positive correlation between the age of the students and their narcissism scores (Pitt, Powis, Tracy, & Hunter, 2014). Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores of mothers who are illiterate and primary school graduates (107.07 ± 52.64) are statistically significantly higher than mothers of Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores with secondary and high school graduates (77.80 ± 39.99) and with college and university degrees (75.86 ± 38.80) ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2).

Also, It was found that Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (90.09 ± 46.48) of mothers who were housewives were significantly higher than Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (74.96 ± 41.23) of working mothers ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). Work is an important power for women. The working woman is constantly busy and her social status is satisfactory. For this reason, he does not need to prove himself or take a grandiose attitude. The high Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores of housewives can be attributed to this reason.

A wide range of narcissistic characteristics such as feelings of superiority in the parent, exhibitionism, exploitative behaviors in interpersonal relationships, entitlement, unlimited power, fantasies about success or attractiveness, and lack of empathy also negatively affect the parent-child relationship (Wetzel & Robins, 2016). The results of the study reflect this situation. In this study, The Temperament Scale for Children scores (119.16 ± 17.60) of the mothers who stated that success and power are important for them, were determined higher statistically significant compared to the mothers who stated that success and power were not important (116.42 ± 12.87) and often important (113.91 ± 18.85). ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). Also, Pathological Narcissism Inventory scores (69.57 ± 40.69) of mothers who stated that success and power were not important for them were statistically significantly lower than mothers who stated that success and power were important for them (88.97 ± 47.87) and frequently (88.76 ± 42.42). ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). Some studies based on clinical observations suggest that children growing up with parents with high levels of narcissism are self-blaming (Rappoport, 2005). For this reason, in order to prevent this deficiency and ensure the healthy progression of temperament development in children, these mothers of infants in early childhood should be directed to psychoeducation programs, developmental, psychodynamic and cognitive behavioral intervention programs.

Conclusion

Temperament is effective in many developmental areas such as children's academic and social skills and language development. Understanding the child's temperament helps the family or those around them understand how to interact and relate to their environment in the child's later stages. For this reason, the mental problems experienced by mothers who have an important role in the development of children's temperament should be taken into consideration. In addition, evaluating the relationship between narcissism in mothers and temperament development in children is useful for child development. Healthy mothers are needed for healthy child temperament.

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