



## Grandparent-Grandchild Relationships From The Perspectives Of Grandparents And Parents<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This survey-based study examines Turkish grandparents' relationships with their grandchildren, both from their [own] perspectives and from those of the children's parents. A 'Parent Question Form', 'Grandparent Question Form' and 'Personal Information Form' were used to collect data from 484 grandparents and 484 parents. The grandparents tended to agree with items suggesting 1) that grandparenting was like parenting; 2) that before having a grandchild, they had not imagined they would experience the feelings they were experiencing now; 3) that they loved their grandchildren more than anything in the world; and 4) that they enjoyed playing with their grandchildren and telling them fairy tales more than the children's parents agreed. They also were more likely than the sampled parents to agree with the statements that, nowadays, people decided to have children later in life, and that grandparents tolerated their grandchildren more than they did their [own] children. However, the parents were more likely than the grandparents to agree that parents spend an inadequate amount of time with their children. In the light of the findings, grandparent-education programs can be prepared. Preschool teachers could do more to engage with grandparents or even involve them in some classroom activities, according to guidelines that should be prepared to help parents and preschool teachers develop grandparent-grandchild relationships.

**Key Words:** Grandparents, Parents, Grandchildren, Relationship, Preschool Term.

### Introduction

The ancient and intercultural concept of family is defined in several ways in the literature. The classic definition by Burgess and Locke (1945; cited in Moore & Asay, 2007; p. 29) is "a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption; constituting a single household; interacting and communication with each other in their respective social roles; and creating and maintaining a common culture." For Stephens (1963), the family is a social arrangement in which a marriage contract determines the rights, duties, and mutual economic obligations of the parents, and the common living areas of parents and children. More recently, the family has

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been defined simply as the smallest unit of a society and therefore, a critical structure for its development (Enrique, Howk, & Huitt, 2007).

Strong family structures are very important to democratic societies because they are seen as forming such societies via active participation in various systems, which in turn help them to lead healthy and successful lives (Berger & Riojas-Cortez, 2016). The family is the primary locus of individuals' protection, care, and mutual sympathy: both introverted enough to protect them from external threats, and extroverted enough to support their movement through society (Schmid, 2018). Therefore, as Berger and Riojas-Cortez (2016) emphasize, the needs of the family must be met if it is to meet the needs of the children within it.

As well as being marked by positive communication, however, the family is a site of conflict. Family members argue as much as they wish, usually until a consensus is reached, without fear of suffering an unpredictable result; in other words, it is within the family that they learn how to live as social beings (Schmid, 2018). And within their family settings, children learn to perceive and experience a broad range of emotions (Berger & Riojas-Cortez, 2016; Bredekamp, 2015; Özpolat, 2010; Sak, Şahin Sak, Atli, & Şahin, 2015; Schmid, 2018; Şahin-Bayraktar & Seven, 2020; Tuncer, Sak, & Şahin Sak, 2016).

In recent decades, families in Turkey have been shrinking, as part of a shift away from traditional extended family structures and towards the nuclear family (Taylan, 2009). Nevertheless, grandparents remain closely associated with their grandchildren, often caring for them while their mothers are working outside the home (Tezel Şahin & Şahin, 2020). This means that grandparents are often as important as mothers in children's lives, and arguably more influential in many cases (Schmid, 2018).

Around the world, grandparents have special relationships with their grandchildren (Harwood, 2004; Thiele, & Whelan, 2006), usually affecting the latter positively in a range of ways (Hayslip, Fruhauf, & Dolbin-MacNab, 2017). Various relatively new freedoms experienced by parents appear to have had little influence on the relationships between their parents and their children – except to the extent that such relationships gain in importance when parental couples separate (Schmid, 2018).

Grandmothers, in particular, have had a longstanding supportive role in child-raising (Keller-Schafer, 2013; Schmid, 2018), and even today are more likely than grandfathers to care for their grandchildren (Horsfall & Dempsey, 2011), though some studies have emphasized the limits of the available information about grandfathers' caregiving roles (Keller-Schafer, 2013; Smith &

Hancock, 2010). Nevertheless, it is widely believed that grandfathers are readier for this task than ever before (Schmid, 2018). Nor should it be assumed that such interactions are only beneficial to the children (e.g., King & Elder, 1997; Shapiro, 2004). Rather, they have been found to improve grandparent-parent relationships (Breheny, Stephens, & Spilsbury, 2013; Friedman, Hechter, & Kreager, 2008), acceptance of grandparenting as societally valuable (Harwood, 2004), and opportunities for grandparents to participate actively in social life (Breheny et al., 2013). In other words, the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren influences grandparent-parent-child communication and interaction directly; and it was a desire to better understand the precise nature of these dynamics that inspired the present study.

Several studies are relevant to this effort. In the specific case of Turkey, some scholars have examined preschool children's views of their grandparents (Demiriz & Arpacı, 2016); grandparents' views of their relationships with their grandchildren (Arpacı & Tezel Şahin, 2015); and factors affecting adolescents' perceptions of the qualities of their grandparents (Hazer, 2012). Others have looked at specific changes in families' values across three generations (Kaya, 2013); how generational differences in child-raising values relate to social change and crises (Özen, 2015); commonalities in parenting behaviours between Turkey and the United States (US) (Salman Engin, 2014); and differences in the care for children up to age eight provided by fathers vs. grandfathers (Ünlü, 2010). A third group has studied specific impacts of such relationships, e.g., on children's language development (Çelimli, 2013) and emotional development (Kibar, 2008), and grandparents' depression and quality of life (Kartal, Turan, Kuzu-Kurban, & Zencir, 2010).

Elsewhere in the world, as well as grandparents' general perceptions related to their grandchildren (e.g., Smorti, Tschiesner, & Farneti, 2012), researchers have examined the health perceptions of grandparents who are the primary caregivers to their adolescent grandchildren (Peterson, 2017); grandparents' diaries of their conversations with their grandchildren (Forghani & Neustaedter, 2014); the influence of raising their grandchildren on people's occupational engagement and perceptions of health and wellbeing (Marken & Howard, 2014); the experiences of grandparents who have little or no contact with their grandchildren (Sims & Rofail, 2013); the experiences of grandparents who became primary caregivers to their grandchildren with no warning (Bundy-Fazioli, Fruhauf, & Miller, 2013); and the experience of grief among grandparents who are raising their grandchildren (Backhouse & Graham, 2011). Also, based on research in the US, Mansson (2015) created the Ideal Grandparent Scale.

Unlike previous research, the present study of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren includes the perspectives of the intervening generation. Specifically, it anticipates that good relationships between grandparents and grandchildren will positively affect the former's relations with their children, and thus contribute to the consolidation of family structures. As such, it is expected that this study will fill an important gap in the literature. It will be guided by the following four research questions:

RQ1. Do grandparents and parents have significantly different views about the former's feelings for their grandchildren?

RQ2. Do grandparents and parents have significantly different views about the former's activities with their grandchildren, and/or the amount of time available for such activities?

RQ3. Do grandparents and parents have significantly different views about the former's care for and education of their grandchildren?

RQ4. Do grandparents and parents have significantly different general views about grandparent-grandchild relationships?

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

Survey research, defined as 'the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions' (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 160), usually obtains information from a large sample of individuals as a means of capturing the characteristics of a large population via the examination of variables relevant to the main construct of interest (Ponto, 2015). It is often preferred in social and psychological research of this kind (Singleton & Straits, 2009).

### **Sample**

The sample for this study included 1) 484 parents whose children lived with them, were attending a preschool institution in the central districts of Ankara, and had living grandparents who were also willing to participate in the study; and 2) 484 of those grandparents. Thus, the final sample consisted of 968 adults, whose background characteristics are provided in Tables 1 and 2 below.

**Table 1. Grandparents' background characteristics**

<b>Characteristics</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender	Female	242	50
	Male	242	50

Age	41-50	57	11.8
	51-60	219	45.2
	61-70	154	31.8
	71 or older	54	11.2
Highest educational level attained	Literate	182	37.6
	Primary school	156	32.2
	Middle school	47	9.7
	High school	69	14.3
	Undergraduate	30	6.2
Number of children	2	93	19.2
	3	131	27.1
	4 or more	260	53.7
Number of grandchildren	1	58	12.0
	2	82	17.0
	3	83	17.0
	4 or more	261	54.0
Age at birth of first child	20 or younger	156	32.2
	21-30	297	61.4
	31-40	31	6.4
Age at birth of first grandchild	40 or younger	71	14.7
	41-45	189	39.0
	46-50	132	27.3
	51-55	54	11.2
	56-60	38	7.8
Gender of focal grandchild	Female	260	53.7
	Male	224	46.3
Ages of grandchildren	3	64	13.2
	4	135	27.9
	5	179	37.0
	6	106	21.9
Grandparent cares for focal grandchild	Yes	262	54.1
	No	222	45.9
Relationship to the grandparent of the grandchildren's parent	Daughter	139	28.7
	Son	123	25.4
Is this care only short-term or for specific activities?	Yes	399	82.4
	No	85	17.6
If 'Yes', reason for short-term care or care during specific activities	Parents' holidays	6	1.2
	Parents' business trips	25	5.2
	Parents' illnesses	27	5.6
	Missing grandchildren	214	44.2
	Other	127	26.2

**Table 2. Parents' Background Characteristics**

Characteristics		N	%
Gender	Female	242	50
	Male	242	50
Age	21-30	186	38.4
	31-40	244	50.4
	41-45	54	11.2
Highest educational level attained	Literate	34	7.0
	Primary school	58	12.0

	Middle school	79	16.3
	High school	129	26.7
	Undergraduate	184	38.0
Number of children	1	152	31.4
	2	207	42.8
	3	90	18.6
	4 or more	35	7.2
Age at birth of first child	20 or younger	66	13.6
	21-30	365	75.4
	31-40	53	11.0

### **Data-Collection Tools**

#### ***The Grandparent Personal Information Form***

This form was prepared by the researchers to collect demographic and other background information from the sampled grandparents. It included questions related to their genders, ages, educational attainment, numbers of children and grandchildren, ages at the births of their first child and first grandchild, the genders of their children who were the focal grandchildren's parents, how much care they provided to their grandchildren and why, and the focal grandchildren's ages and genders.

#### ***The Grandparent Question Form***

Following a thorough literature review, this instrument was adopted by the researchers from a questionnaire originally developed by Smorti, Tschiesner and Farneti (2012) to determine whether grandmothers' and grandfathers' perceptions about their grandchildren varied according to the grandparents' gender, age and whether the grandchildren's parent was their son or daughter. After the necessary permissions were obtained, the questionnaire was translated into Turkish; some items in it were revised to better suit Turkey and Turkish culture; and some new items were added based on other relevant literature, i.e., Kibar (2008), Mansson (2015), Üstün (1994), and Vapur (2006). Two examples of newly added items are "I pay my grandchild's school fees" and "I think my grandchild is maturing faster than my children did".

The draft form's 62 items comprised four dimensions: Feelings of grandparents about their grandchildren (16 items); activities and time spent with grandchildren (17 items); views of grandparents on the care/education of their grandchildren (18 items); and general views (11 items). Each item had the same five Likert-scaled response options: 1=completely disagree, 2=disagree, 3=not sure, 4=agree, and 5=completely agree.

Five experts – one each from the fields of child development, early childhood education, psychology, social services, and educational sciences – were asked for their opinions of the

draft form. Based on their recommendations, the name of the first dimension was changed to Grandparents' views about their feelings about their grandchildren. The wording of one of its items and one of the fourth dimension's items were changed, and three items were moved from the third dimension to the second. A new item, regarding grandparents taking their grandchildren to school, was added to the second dimension. The third dimension's above-mentioned new item regarding the speed of children's maturation was removed, and two other new items were added to it: I take care of my grandchild when he/she has a health problem, and I believe it would be more beneficial for my grandchild to receive education with other children than to stay with us. After these revisions, the form was piloted with 10 grandmothers and 10 grandfathers of pre-schoolers, none of whom were included in the main study.

The final Grandparent Question Form, therefore, consisted of 65 items, with 18 in the (renamed) first dimension, 18 in the second, 16 in the third, and 13 in the fourth.

#### ***The Parent Personal Information Form***

This form included questions related to parents' genders, ages, educational attainment, numbers of children, and ages when their eldest children were born.

#### ***The Parent Question Form.***

Based on a review of the relevant literature, it was decided to adopt a questionnaire developed by Smorti, Tschiesner and Farneti (2012). After the necessary permissions were obtained, the questionnaire was translated into Turkish; some of its items were revised to better suit the Turkish study context; and some new items were added to it based on relevant prior literature (Kibar, 2008; Mansson, 2015; Üstün, 1994; Vapur, 2006). Two of these newly added items were My mother/father pays my child's school fees and My mother/father thinks my child is maturing faster than I did.

The draft form's 62 items were grouped into four dimensions: Feelings of grandparents about their grandchildren (16 items), Activities and time spent with children by their grandparents (17 items), Views of grandparents on the care/education of their grandchildren (18 items), and General views (11 items). The response options were identical to those on the Grandparent Question Form.

The opinions and recommendations about this form provided by the same five experts who had been consulted about the Grandparent Question Form were broadly similar and resulted in a final form with the same overall number of items, i.e., 65, with the same number in each dimension as noted above regarding the Grandparent Question Form. After the experts'

revisions were implemented, the form was piloted with 10 mothers and 10 fathers of pre-schoolers, none of whom were included in the main study.

### **Data-Collection Process**

After obtaining permission to commence data collection from the Ministry of National Education, one of the researchers visited schools and met with school administrators and preschool teachers to explain the aim of the study to them. She was then placed in contact with parents and grandparents of children who attended the target schools, lived with their parents, and had living grandparents. She sent these adults a printed document that explained the aim of the study, including information on how to contact her if more information about the study was required. Those who agreed to participate in the study were given the relevant pairs of question forms by one of the researchers. The completed forms were collected by the children's teachers. Of the approximately 1,200 question forms that were given out, 1,014 were returned, a response rate of 84.5%. However, 46 forms were not analyzed, either because they failed to answer one or more items, or because they selected more than one answer option for the same item.

### **Data Analysis**

The average score for a given item was deemed to completely agree if in the range of 4.20-5.00; agree, if 3.40-4.19; not sure, if 2.60-3.39; disagree, if 1.80-2.59; and completely disagree if 1.00-1.79. However, when assessing the strength of grandparents' and parents' views, the whole array of scores from which the average score for that item was computed were all considered.

When the normality of the data distribution was examined to decide which statistical tests would be appropriate for data analysis, the skewness and kurtosis values were between -1 and +1, and the histogram showed that the data was normally distributed. Also, the Kolmogorov Smirnow test showed that the scores obtained from the questionnaires were normally distributed ( $n=968$ ,  $p>.05$ ). In addition, since the sample size of the study ( $n=968$ ) was quite large, it was decided to use parametric tests for data analysis. In all statistical studies, H1 holds that there is a significant difference between the variables, and H0 that there is no significant difference between them. The level of significance was set at .05.

Descriptive statistics, such as the frequency and percentage distributions in the data obtained through the participants' Personal Information Forms, were calculated. For the Question Forms, frequency, percentage distribution, means and standard deviations for each item were



calculated. Finally, the two participant groups' results were compared against each other using independent samples t-tests.

### Findings

To answer RQ1, an independent-samples t-test was conducted on both groups' dimension 1 data. This found no significant difference between them for items 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 or 18 ( $p>.05$ ). However, there were significant differences between the means for items 1, 3, 8, 10, 11, and 17.

**Table 3. Results of T-Tests, Grandparents' and Parents' Views About Grandparents' Feelings About Their Grandchildren**

Item		n	$\bar{x}$	SD	t	p
1	Grandparents	484	3.57	1.211	2.619	.009*
	Parents	484	3.36	1.243		
2	Grandparents	484	4.07	.957	1.426	.154
	Parents	484	3.98	.936		
3	Grandparents	484	3.97	.984	3.291	.001*
	Parents	484	3.76	.970		
4	Grandparents	484	4.11	.960	1.200	.230
	Parents	484	4.03	1.021		
5	Grandparents	484	4.01	.881	.608	.543
	Parents	484	3.98	1.016		
6	Grandparents	484	4.01	1.040	1.466	.143
	Parents	484	3.91	1.108		
7	Grandparents	484	2.49	1.397	.232	.816
	Parents	484	2.46	1.371		
8	Grandparents	484	4.11	.999	4.226	.000*
	Parents	484	3.82	1.113		
9	Grandparents	484	4.36	.889	1.644	.101
	Parents	484	4.26	.948		
10	Grandparents	484	4.18	.934	2.383	.017*
	Parents	484	4.03	1.058		
11	Grandparents	484	4.05	1.016	2.591	.010*
	Parents	484	3.87	1.091		
12	Grandparents	484	4.33	.852	.881	.379
	Parents	484	4.28	.900		
13	Grandparents	484	4.30	.827	1.582	.114
	Parents	484	4.21	.918		
14	Grandparents	484	4.18	.882	1.799	.072
	Parents	484	4.07	.939		
15	Grandparents	484	4.26	.830	1.984	.068
	Parents	484	4.17	.917		
16	Grandparents	484	4.35	.822	1.434	.152
	Parents	484	4.27	.924		
17	Grandparents	484	4.34	.854	2.833	.005*
	Parents	484	4.17	.958		
18	Grandparents	484	4.18	1.007	1.804	.072

Parents	484	4.06	1.094
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Specifically, for item 1, grandparenting is like parenting ( $t_{966}=2.619$ ,  $p<.05$ ), the means of the grandparents' answers ( $\bar{x}=3.57$ ) were significantly higher than those of the parents ( $\bar{x}=3.36$ ). This was also the case with Item 3 before they had grandchildren, grandparents could not imagine some of the feelings they would have about with them ( $t_{966}=3.291$ ,  $p<.05$ ; grandparents,  $\bar{x}=3.97$ ; parents,  $\bar{x}=3.76$ ); Item 8, grandparents love their grandchildren more than everything in the world ( $t_{966}=4.226$ ,  $p<.05$ ; grandparents,  $\bar{x}=4.11$ , parents,  $\bar{x}=3.82$ ); Item 10, grandparents love playing with their grandchildren ( $t_{966}=2.383$ ,  $p<.05$ ; grandparents,  $\bar{x}=4.18$ ; parents,  $\bar{x}=4.03$ ). The same general relationship also held for item 11, grandparents love telling fairy tales to their grandchildren ( $t_{966}=2.591$ ,  $p<.05$ ; grandparents,  $\bar{x}=4.05$ ; parents,  $\bar{x}=3.87$ ); and Item 17, grandparents are proud of their grandchildren when they go out with them ( $t_{966}=2.833$ ,  $p<.05$ ; grandparents,  $\bar{x}=4.34$ ; parents,  $\bar{x}=4.17$ ). Therefore, it can be said that grandparents agreed with all six of these items more than parents did.

**Table 4. Results of T-Tests, Grandparents' and Parents' Views About Grandparents' Activities with Their Grandchildren**

Item		n	$\bar{x}$	SD	t	p
19	Grandparents	484	3.79	1.146	-1.660	.097
	Parents	484	3.67	1.216		
20	Grandparents	484	3.67	1.153	-1.923	.065
	Parents	484	3.62	1.187		
21	Grandparents	484	3.86	1.045	.437	.662
	Parents	484	3.83	1.015		
22	Grandparents	484	2.52	1.253	-1.268	.205
	Parents	484	2.42	1.280		
23	Grandparents	484	3.61	1.127	-1.440	.150
	Parents	484	3.50	1.194		
24	Grandparents	484	3.64	1.129	-1.621	.105
	Parents	484	3.52	1.132		
25	Grandparents	484	3.64	1.183	-1.642	.101
	Parents	484	3.51	1.166		
26	Grandparents	484	3.64	1.261	-1.741	.082
	Parents	484	3.50	1.286		
27	Grandparents	484	3.40	1.372	-.912	.362
	Parents	484	3.33	1.306		
28	Grandparents	484	4.10	.993	-1.666	.096
	Parents	484	3.99	1.051		
29	Grandparents	484	3.07	1.346	-1.514	.130
	Parents	484	2.94	1.328		
30	Grandparents	484	3.33	1.321	-.372	.710
	Parents	484	3.30	1.267		
31	Grandparents	484	3.39	1.290	-2.921	.004*
	Parents	484	3.15	1.263		
32	Grandparents	484	3.67	1.170	.436	.663

	Parents	484	3.64	1.192		
33	Grandparents	484	3.32	1.308		
	Parents	484	3.27	1.220	-.585	.559
34	Grandparents	484	3.66	1.175		
	Parents	484	3.75	1.122	-1.147	.251
35	Grandparents	484	3.29	1.283		
	Parents	484	3.27	1.294	-.249	.803
36	Grandparents	484	3.21	1.282		
	Parents	484	3.12	1.284	-1.052	.293

The independent-samples t-tests conducted on the Dimension 2 data to answer RQ2 found no significant differences between the means of the two groups except in the case of item 31, grandparents and their grandchildren listen to music together ( $t_{966}=2.921, p<.05$ ). Again, the sampled grandparents ( $\bar{x}=3.39$ ) were more likely than the sampled parents ( $\bar{x}=3.15$ ) to agree with this item.

**Table 5. Results of T-Tests, Grandparents’ and Parents’ Views About Grandparents’ Care for And Education of Their Grandchildren**

Item		n	$\bar{x}$	SD	t	p
37	Grandparents	484	4.09	1.028		
	Parents	484	4.07	1.109	-.391	.696
38	Grandparents	484	2.64	1.293		
	Parents	484	2.51	1.276	-1.626	.104
39	Grandparents	484	2.69	1.232		
	Parents	484	2.47	1.152	-2.911	.004*
40	Grandparents	484	4.13	.961		
	Parents	484	4.10	.908	-.516	.606
41	Grandparents	484	3.36	1.220		
	Parents	484	3.37	1.168	-.108	.914
42	Grandparents	484	3.39	1.198		
	Parents	484	3.52	1.179	-1.650	.099
43	Grandparents	484	3.63	1.100		
	Parents	484	3.44	1.104	-2.741	.006*
44	Grandparents	484	3.87	1.047		
	Parents	484	3.73	1.144	-1.993	.047*
45	Grandparents	484	3.92	.976		
	Parents	484	3.96	.923	-.643	.520
46	Grandparents	484	4.11	.976		
	Parents	484	3.98	1.061	-2.018	.044*
47	Grandparents	484	2.60	1.287		
	Parents	484	2.63	1.220	-.359	.720
48	Grandparents	484	2.69	1.287		
	Parents	484	2.60	1.183	-1.144	.253
49	Grandparents	484	3.88	1.040		
	Parents	484	3.63	1.063	-3.575	.000*
50	Grandparents	484	4.07	.943		
	Parents	484	3.89	1.097	-2.734	.006*
51	Grandparents	484	4.18	.968		
	Parents	484	4.15	.880	-.452	.652

52	Grandparents	484	4.03	1.028	-.315	.753
	Parents	484	4.01	1.012		

The independent-samples t-tests conducted to answer RQ3 based on the dimension 3 data revealed no significant differences between the two sampled groups' answers for items 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 45, 47, 48, 51, or 52 ( $p > .05$ ). However, there were significant differences between the means for their answers for items 39, 43, 44, 46, 49, and 50.

For item 39, it is preferable for a child to stay with his/her grandparents instead of being with other children at least until age five or six, the means of the grandparents' answers ( $\bar{x}=2.69$ ) were significantly higher than those of the parents ( $\bar{x}=2.47$ ). Broadly similar results were found for item 43, grandparents have time to devote themselves to their grandchildren ( $t_{966}=2.741$ ,  $p < .05$ ; grandparents,  $\bar{x}=3.63$ ; parents,  $\bar{x}=3.44$ ); Item 44, in the past, grandparents were less interested in their grandchildren than they are now ( $t_{966}=1.993$ ,  $p < .05$ ; grandparents,  $\bar{x}=3.87$ ; parents,  $\bar{x}=3.73$ ); item 46, children today are luckier than their peers in previous times ( $t_{966}=2.018$ ,  $p < .05$ ; grandparents,  $\bar{x}=4.11$ ; parents,  $\bar{x}=3.98$ ); item 49, grandparents support the implementation at the home of the rules learned by their grandchildren in pre-school education ( $t_{966}=3.575$ ,  $p < .05$ ; grandparents,  $\bar{x}=3.88$ ; parents,  $\bar{x}=3.63$ ); and item 50, grandparents buy gifts for their grandchildren for their birthdays ( $t_{966}=2.734$ ,  $p < .05$ ; grandparents,  $\bar{x}=4.07$ ; parents,  $\bar{x}=3.89$ ).

**Table 6. Results of T-Tests, General Views on The Relationships of Grandparents to Their Grandchildren**

Item		n	$\bar{x}$	SD	t	p
53	Grandparents	484	4.07	.989	-2.433	.015*
	Parents	484	3.90	1.095		
54	Grandparents	484	3.35	1.254	-.436	.663
	Parents	484	3.31	1.252		
55	Grandparents	484	2.57	1.267	-.825	.409
	Parents	484	2.50	1.145		
56	Grandparents	484	3.58	1.007	-4.235	.000*
	Parents	484	3.31	.950		
57	Grandparents	484	3.07	1.151	-2.623	.009*
	Parents	484	3.26	1.104		
58	Grandparents	484	3.31	1.169	-1.828	.068
	Parents	484	3.17	1.152		
59	Grandparents	484	3.91	.965	-3.302	.001*
	Parents	484	3.70	1.019		
60	Grandparents	484	3.54	1.190	-.962	.336
	Parents	484	3.47	1.148		
61	Grandparents	484	3.68	1.023	-.631	.528
	Parents	484	3.72	1.016		
62	Grandparents	484	2.69	1.211	-1.627	.104
	Parents	484	2.56	1.159		
63	Grandparents	484	3.79	1.030	1.503	.133

	Parents	484	3.69	1.065		
64	Grandparents	484	4.16	.855	-2.307	.021*
	Parents	484	4.03	.953		
65	Grandparents	484	4.03	1.052	-1.231	.219
	Parents	484	3.94	1.037		

The independent-samples t-tests conducted on the dimension 4 data to answer RQ4 found no significant difference between the two sampled groups for items 54, 55, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, or 65 ( $p > .05$ ). However, there were significant differences between the groups' means for five items: 53, 56, 57, 59, and 64.

Exceptionally, in the case of item 57, the time parents allocate to their children is insufficient ( $t_{966}=4.235$ ,  $p < .05$ ), the parents' level of agreement ( $\bar{x}=3.26$ ) was significantly higher than that of the grandparents ( $\bar{x}=3.07$ ).

However, in the case of item 53, grandparents had less time to play with them while their children (grandchildren's parents) were young ( $t_{966}=2.433$ ,  $p < .05$ ), the mean of the grandparents' responses ( $\bar{x}=4.07$ ) was significantly higher than parents' ( $\bar{x}=3.90$ ). This usual pattern was repeated through all the other items in dimension 4 for which significant differences were identified: that is, item 56, grandparents think that their children are perfect parents ( $t_{966}=4.235$ ,  $p < .05$ ; grandparents,  $\bar{x}=3.58$ ; parents,  $\bar{x}=3.31$ ); item 59, today, young people decide to have a child too late ( $t_{966}=3.302$ ,  $p < .05$ ; grandparents,  $\bar{x}=3.91$ ; parents,  $\bar{x}=3.70$ ); and item 64, grandparents are more tolerant of their grandchildren than were of their children ( $t_{966}=2.307$ ,  $p < .05$ ; grandparents,  $\bar{x}=4.16$ ; parents,  $\bar{x}=4.03$ ).

## Discussion

Comparison of the sampled grandparents' and parents' respective views about grandparents' feelings about their grandchildren was compared, the former were uniformly more likely than the latter to report that grandparenting is similar to parenting; that the grandparents could not have predicted their feelings about their grandchildren; and that grandparents love their grandchildren more than anything in the world, love playing with them and telling them fairy tales; and are proud of them when out in public. Based on their responses, it can be said that these Turkish grandparents evaluated their feelings more positively than their children did.

Turning now to specific grandparental activities, the finding that grandparents' self-reported level of listening to music with their grandchildren was higher than the parents' estimate may be related to the latter group's expectation that there would be an inter-generational gulf in musical taste. That being said, however, the item in question did not specify a particular style

of music, and thus should not necessarily have been taken to mean that grandparents and their grandchildren shared similar music preferences.

On the subject of grandparents' care and education for their grandchildren, the means of the grandparents' responses were again consistently higher than those of the parents. That is, they were more likely to express a belief that children should stay with their grandparents rather than attending preschool or daycare; that the grandparents of today are more dedicated to and more interested in their grandchildren than previous generations of grandparents were; that children today are luckier than those in former times; that rules learned in preschool should also be followed at home; and that they remember to buy gifts for their grandchildren's birthdays. As well as reflecting the sampled grandparents' relatively more traditional views, these findings have arisen from prevailing cultural structures. That is, in some other societies, grandparents consistently want to spend time by themselves, and emphasize that caring for their grandchildren would negatively impact their other preferred activities (McGowen & Ladd, 2006; Woods, 2015); but in Turkish society, the family structure takes the form of an intertwined relationship network that extends from the closest family members to very distant relatives (Eyce, 1994). This means that Turkish grandmothers are generally the first people to provide childcare when mothers work outside the home, or need extra help for any other reason. This is not merely due to societal expectations around the grandparental role, but also to grandparents' plans for their old age. Therefore, the grandparents sampled in this study may have emphasized how much time they had to take care of their grandchildren, and that they wanted to be entrusted with them. Moreover, Turkish grandparenting can be thought of as a confessional process, whereby individuals can atone for the time they were not able to spend with their children, and the activities they were unable to do with them.

Lastly, when general views on the grandparent-grandchild relationship were compared, it was found that the mean values of the grandparents' responses were, with one important exception, again higher than those of the parents. That is, former were more likely than the latter to report that grandparents had less time to play with them while their children (grandchildren's parents) were young; to think that their grandchildren's parents are perfect parents; that people today start their families too late; and that grandparents are more tolerant of their grandchildren than they were of their own children. These responses reflect that in Turkey today, young people do have children later in life due to spending longer embarking on their careers, and that grandparents are aware of this; and that, while the sampled grandparents clearly appreciate their children's efforts as parents, the parents in question were much harder on themselves – and

perhaps even unable to objectively assess how much time they were spending with their children. Also, as Stelle (2010) emphasized, many variables and variations should be taken into account when seeking to understand the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren: with experiences, changes, and attachment styles in family life being especially important. In other words, today's grandparent-grandchild relationships are undoubtedly impacted by many factors including the increased incidence and intensity of mothers' work outside the home; the transition from an extended family structure to a nuclear one; and the improvement of the grandparents' own social security and general economic conditions. And again, grandparents' awareness of the time they were unable to spare for their children could be compensating for that dynamic, by expressing a desire to spend more time with their grandchildren; and this could also be related to their higher self-reported levels of tolerance towards them. Tezel Şahin and Şahin (2018) reported that Turkish grandmothers exhibited different child-raising practices as parents vs. as grandparents, and the current study tends to support that finding.

The one item on which the mean value of the parents' responses was higher than those of the grandparents stated that the time allocated by parents to their children is insufficient. That, however, was consistent with the finding that the sampled grandparents rated their children as perfect parents more often than the children in question considered themselves as perfect parents.

### **Conclusion**

In the light of the above findings, which have highlighted various real-life phenomena that tend to add distance and obstacles to grandparents' relationships with their grandchildren, grandparent-education programs can be prepared. The results could also usefully inform projects aimed at eliminating these roadblocks and bringing grandparents and their grandchildren closer together. Specifically, the findings of the frequency with which grandparents took their grandchildren to or from school imply that teachers could do more to engage with them, or even involve them in some classroom activities, according to guidelines that should be prepared to help parents and preschool teachers develop grandparent-grandchild relationships.

This study was conducted only with the parents and grandparents of children attending preschool institutions supervised by the Ministry of National Education in Ankara. In future research of this kind, participants should be recruited from a broader range of school types, age groups, and geographic areas, including the countryside, as this would facilitate a more comprehensive exploration of Turkish sociocultural structures. Additionally, future studies'

inclusion criteria should probably be expanded to include families in which the parents are divorced or widowed, and/or that live at a great distance from the children's grandparents. Scholarly understanding of the complex relationships between grandchildren and grandparents could also be enhanced through the use of qualitative or mixed-methods study designs. Lastly, building on the present work, it should be possible to develop a quantitative instrument for directly measuring the closeness and health of grandparent-grandchild relationships.

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