

## ARAŞTIRMA / RESEARCH

# Parents' Views of the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Generation Alpha: A Descriptive Study

## COVID-19 Pandemisinin Alfa Kuşağı Üzerindeki Etkisine İlişkin Ebeveyn Görüşleri: Tanımlayıcı Çalışma

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Geliş tarihi/Received: 19.09.2022

Kabul tarihi/Accepted: 30.01.2023

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### Abstract

**Objective:** The COVID-19 pandemic is a turning point for Generation Alpha. This study was conducted to determine parents' views of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their Generation Alpha children.

**Material and Method:** This descriptive, comparative, and cross-sectional study was conducted on 395 parents of Generation Alpha children between January 10 and March 10, 2021. Data were collected using a parent and child sociodemographic form and a questionnaire for generation alpha during the COVID-19 pandemic. Descriptive statistics and paired sample t-test were used for analysis. Effect size was calculated using Cohen's d method.

**Results:** Less than a quarter of the parents stated the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their children was "fear" (22.8%). Less than half the parents noted that the positive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their children was "togetherness" (39.5%). According to parents, their Generation Alpha children spent significantly more time on social media ( $t = -8.647, p < 0.001$ , effect size = 0.70) and watching TV ( $t = -9.324, p < 0.001$ , effect size = 0.70) during the pandemic than before the pandemic.

**Conclusion:** The COVID-19 pandemic will shape the life and transform the characteristics of the members of Generation Alpha. Authorities should provide parents with training and counseling about Generation Alpha. Moreover, professionals and educators should provide Generation Alpha children with education and career guidance to help them shape their own future.

**Keywords:** Child, COVID-19, generations, pandemic, parent.

### Öz

**Amaç:** COVID-19 pandemisi, alfa kuşağı için bir dönüm noktasıdır. Bu çalışma, ebeveynlerin COVID-19 pandemisinin alfa kuşağı çocukları üzerindeki etkisine ilişkin görüşlerini belirlemek için yapılmıştır.

**Gereç ve Yöntem:** Bu tanımlayıcı, karşılaştırmalı ve kesitsel araştırma, 10 Ocak- 10 Mart 2021 tarihleri arasında alfa kuşağı çocuğuna sahip 395 ebeveyn ile yürütülmüştür. Veriler, araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan "Ebeveyn ve Çocuk Sosyo-demografik Form" ve "COVID-19 Sürecinde Alfa Kuşağı Tanıtım Formu" ile toplanmıştır. Veri analizinde tanımlayıcı istatistikler ve eşleştirilmiş örneklem t testi kullanılmıştır. Etki büyüklüğü Cohen's d yöntemi ile hesaplanmıştır.

**Bulgular:** Ebeveynlerin dörtte birinden azı, COVID-19 pandemisinin çocukları üzerindeki olumsuz etkisini "korku" olduğunu belirtmiştir (%22,8). Ebeveynlerin yarisından azı, COVID-19 pandemisinin çocukları üzerindeki olumlu etkisini "beraberlik" (%39,5) olduğunu belirtmiştir. Ebeveynlerine göre alfa kuşağının COVID-19 pandemisi sırasında bir günde sosyal medyada ve televizyonda harcadıkları zaman ortalamalarının COVID-19 pandemisi öncesine göre daha yüksek olduğu ve aradaki farkın istatistiksel olarak anlamlı olduğu belirlenmiştir, sırasıyla ( $t = -8,647, p < 0,001$ , etki büyüklüğü = 0,70;  $t = -9,324, p < 0,001$ , etki büyüklüğü = 0,70).

**Sonuç:** COVID-19 sürecinin gelecekte alfa kuşağının yaşantısını şekillendireceği ve alfa kuşağının özelliklerini değiştirebileceği ifade edilebilir. Yetkililer, ebeveynlere alfa kuşağı hakkında eğitim ve danışmanlık sağlamalıdır. İlaveten, sağlık profesyonelleri ve eğitimciler, alfa kuşağı çocuklarına kendi geleceklerini şekillendirmelerine yardımcı olmak için eğitim ve kariyer rehberliği sağlamalıdır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çocuk, COVID-19, kuşaklar, pandemi, ebeveyn.

## 1. Introduction

Generation Alpha (2010-2025) is the demographic cohort succeeding Generation Z (1). Australian researcher Mark McCrindle coined the term "Generation Alpha" with a survey in 2005 (2). The generation is named after the first letter in the Greek alphabet (3). Stefanov et al. (4) refer to Generation Alpha as "homo tabletus." According to Tootell et al. (5), Generation Alpha is the intersection of generation Z with the digital age. Berkowitz considers Alphas as a creative generation (6). Toledo et al. stress that world dynamics will depend on Generation Alpha (7). More than 2.5 million Generation Alpha children are born every week around the world (8). Their numbers will increase to almost two billion by 2025 worldwide (1, 9). Generation Alpha consists of newborns, infants, and unborn babies. The majority of Generation Alpha are now preschoolers, while the oldest ones are middle school students (10). Generation Alpha will be the most educated, technology-savvy, and wealthy generation ever (8, 11).

What differs Generation Alpha from other generations is that they are born into a digital world (5). Technology plays a key role in the way Generation Alpha children communicate with their parents and interact socially with others. According to Raja et al. (12), compared to previous generations, Generation Alpha is one of the least understood generations from a marketing standpoint because it was born at a time of technological advances. Considering that Generation Alpha will have the highest purchasing power in the consumer market in the 2050s, marketers should first devise strategies based on Generation Alpha's characteristics, needs and expectations. Generation Alpha is tech-savvy and highly influenced by technology (12). Generation Alpha prefers communication via images and voice control over typing and texting, and needs more attention from their parents (13). They are also the most technologically literate generation to date (13). The concept of "connection" is at the center of Generation Alpha, even more so than it was for generation Z (5). Bennett et al. define Generation Alpha as "digital natives...who are fluent in the digital language of computers, video games, and the Internet" (14). Generation Alpha appeared at the same time the iPad and Instagram were launched (10). Therefore, previous generations' fixed screen experience does not appeal to the members of Generation Alpha, who are accustomed to fluid mobile experiences. The members of Generation Alpha are also referred to as "screenagers," underlining their addiction to the touch screen world (10, 15). Kryvachuk (16) stated that for Generation Alpha, the screen is a natural form of spending leisure time, sustaining contacts, and acquiring knowledge. Rywczyńska and Jaroszewski (17) stated that Generation Alpha is more willing to use virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and augmented reality, which is directly related to the development of the internet of things and the internet of toys. The Polish-German project "Digital Kids - children's digital playground", which is initiated by the Goethe-Institute in Warsaw, has realized a children's digital playground for the needs of alpha generation children and the development of advanced digital skills. In this project, "applications, gaming offerings, VR games, specialized software used on desktop computers, consoles, or mobile devices" mobile interactive playrooms, equipped with sensory toys and computer hardware were formed for the technology needs of their children (18). With online learning, Generation Alpha starts their education at an

early age, learns longer despite close interaction, and will be the generation who will have received the most formal education (19). Because of all these features, the COVID-19 pandemic is predicted to have a greater impact on Generation Alpha (20).

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected millions of people physically, emotionally, mentally, and economically (21-23). Demir Acar and Ciftci Unal (24) stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the fear of transmission of COVID-19 and the news about coronavirus in the media cause intense anxiety in hospitalized children and their parents. Measures implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have led to the global adoption of distance education in almost all countries (25). In the distance education process, students and parents started to use mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops to access classroom information (26). Ziatdinov and Cilliers (27) reported that parents took more role in guiding the education of Generation Alpha children in the distance education process than in face-to-face classes. The ability of Generation Alpha children to continue distance education during the pandemic depends on the parental involvement (28). Rose and Thomas (29) reported that the COVID-19 pandemic poses a serious challenge for the parents to interact with the Alpha Generation. Alfianto and Jayanti (30) reported that parents are worried about their children, because children cannot be disciplined from time to time, they are addicted to gadgets and online games, and children cannot be given advice by parents. Dos Reis (1) reported that the intelligence of the Generation Alpha of children has a negative impact on parenting. Alfianto and Jayanti (30) developed the PISANG GEN ALFA mental health application, and reported that it is effective in reducing parenting stress for parents with Alpha Generation children.

The COVID-19 pandemic is also a turning point for Generation Alpha (20). Alfianto and Jayanti (30) stated that parental behaviors are important in preventing the Alpha Generation's addiction to technology. Therefore, this study addressed how parents thought the COVID-19 pandemic affected the lives of their Generation Alpha children. In addition, this study is important because there are few international and national studies that focus on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on parents and their Generation Alpha children.

## 2. Material and Methods

### 2.1. Research Type

This study adopted a cross-sectional, descriptive, and comparative design.

### 2.2. Population and Sample

The study was conducted between January 10 and March 10, 2021. The study population consisted of all parents of Generation Alpha children (aged 3-12). The study sample size was determined as 272 with G-power program by taking impact size 0.2,  $\alpha=0.05$ , power  $(1-\beta)=0.95$  at a confidence level of 95%. Aiming to reach a minimum of 272 parents, a sample of 395 parents with children aged 3-12 volunteered to participate in the research. The sample consisted of 395 parents recruited using convenience sampling, which is a purposive sampling method.

The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- Being literate in Turkish
- Volunteering to participate
- Having a child aged 3-12

The exclusion criteria were as follows:

- Not being literate in Turkish
- Declining to participate
- Having a child aged 0-2

### 2.3. Data Collection Tools

The data were collected using a parent and child sociodemographic form and a questionnaire for Generation Alpha during the COVID-19 pandemic developed by the researchers.

#### 2.3.1. Parent and Child Sociodemographic Form

The parent and child Sociodemographic form was based on a literature review conducted by the researchers (1, 2, 10, 31-35). The form consisted of eight questions (two open-ended and six closed-ended) on parent's gender, age, education, employment status, number of children, and child's age.

#### 2.3.2. Questionnaire for Generation Alpha During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The questionnaire for Generation Alpha during the COVID-19 pandemic was based on a literature review conducted by the researchers (1, 6, 10, 32-36). The questionnaire had three parts. The first part consisted of items on child's age, gender, chronic disease, parents' education and employment status, number of children, and parents' generation. The second part, Generation Alpha children had items evaluating activities before and during the pandemic. Parents answered those items with "Yes" or "No." The third part consists of 23 items on the characteristics of generation alpha children. The content validity index (CVI) of the items in this section was evaluated using the Davis technique (37, 38). A total of 5 experts in the field of Child Health and Diseases Nursing (3) guidance counseling (1) and psychology (1) were consulted to get their opinions on "the content, scope, relevance, clarity and question structure" of the section containing the features of the alpha generation. The questionnaire was evaluated by the experts as 1) not appropriate, (2) needs to be corrected, (3) appropriate but needs minor modification, and (4) very appropriate. Following the expert evaluations, "Item-based content validity index (I-CVI) was found to be between 0.80-1.00 and Scale-based content validity index (S-CVI) of 0.98. Both "I-CVI and S-CVI" above 0.80 were acceptable to ensure consensus among expert opinions (37, 38). Internal consistency of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire was determined as 0.83. Cronbach's alpha coefficient between 0.80 and 1 indicates that the questionnaire is highly reliable (37). The third part includes questions about how much the pandemic has affected their children. These questions were answered by the parents as "much less," "less," "no change," "more," and "much more." A pilot study was conducted with 14 parents to determine the intelligibility and applicability of the questionnaire. The participants of the pilot study were not included in the main study.

### 2.4. Data Collection

The data were collected between January 10 and March 10, 2021 using survey (Google Forms) method. The data were collected online due to the pandemic. Each parent filled out the survey once for each child. Parents were asked to read and agree to the Google's privacy policy 2021 (39). Parents were also asked to fill out a separate questionnaire for each child between the ages of 3-12.

### 2.5. Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Clinical Research Ethics Committee (Date=06.01.2021 No=2020/12) and the General Directorate of Health Services of the Ministry of Health (Date=21.12.2020). The study was conducted according to the ethical principles outlined by the World Medical Association's Declaration of Helsinki. Parents were informed about the research purpose and procedure. Informed consent was obtained from those who agreed to participate.

### 2.6. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS, v. 23). Frequency, mean, percentage, and standard deviation were used for descriptive data. "Kolmogorov-Smirnov test" was used to examine the normal distribution of the data. A paired sample t-test was used to evaluate the significance of the difference between the arithmetic means of two normally distributed related groups. Effect size is calculated as the size of the difference between the means of two phenomenon or groups (40). The effect size was calculated using Cohen's d method. Cohen et al. suggest that an effect size of  $\leq 0.20$ ,  $0.21-0.80$ , and  $> 0.81$  is small, moderate, and large, respectively (40).

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Comparison of Sociodemographic Characteristics and Average Time Spent on Social Media and Television by Alpha Generation Children

Table 1 shows the results of paired-sample t-tests. Parents and their children had a mean age of  $35.05 \pm 5.12$  and  $6.66 \pm 3.32$  years, respectively. Parents' Generation Alpha children had a mean age of  $6.15 \pm 2.16$  years. The majority of the parents were generation Y (89.9%). More than half the parents were mothers (66.3%). Less than half the mothers (40%) and fathers (39%) had a bachelor's or higher degree. More than half the mothers were unemployed (61.3%), while the majority of the fathers were employed (89.9%). Approximately half the parents had two children (50.4%). Approximately half the parents had a Generation Alpha daughter (51.4%). Thirty-six children had health problems (9.1%) (Table 1).

Sociodemographic characteristics with the average time spent per day by alpha generation children on social media and watching TV was significantly higher during the COVID-19 pandemic. The average time spent by alpha generation children on social media per day during the pandemic was higher compared to time spent before the pandemic. However, the degree education primary school mothers ( $t = -1.494$ ,  $p = 0.142$ ) and generation alpha child with health problems ( $t = -1.291$ ,  $p = 0.205$ ) no significant difference was found (Table 1).

**Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics with Comparison of the Average Time Spent by Generation Alpha<sup>a</sup> Children on Social Media and Television Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic (n=395)**

Sociodemographic Characteristics	n	%	Time Spent on Social Media Per Day			Time Spent Watching TV Per Day		
			Before <sup>b</sup>	During <sup>c</sup>	Test <sup>d</sup> /p	Before <sup>b</sup>	During <sup>c</sup>	Test <sup>d</sup> /p
			Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD		Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	
Generation (parent)								
X (1965-1979)	40	10.1	2.97±1.14	3.52±1.19	-2.676/ p <0.05	2.97±1.07	3.30±1.20	-2.314/p<0.05
Y (1980-1999)	355	89.9	2.80±1.09	3.28±1.22	-8.229 /<0.001	2.80±1.04	3.32±1.19	-9.040 /<0.001
Parent								
Mother	262	66.3	2.81±1.03	3.38±1.19	-7.606 /<0.001	2.84±0.96	3.37±1.16	-8.074 /<0.001
Father	133	33.7	2.84±1.22	3.15±1.26	-4.211 /<0.001	2.78±1.18	3.21±1.25	-4.723 /<0.001
Mother's education (degree)								
Primary school	46	11.6	3.06±1.28	3.28±1.22	-1.494 /0.142	2.93±1.28	3.21±1.28	-2.374 / p<0.05
Middle school	86	21.8	2.36±0.99	3.55±1.24	-8.005 /<0.001	2.56±0.86	3.43±1.26	-8.108 /<0.001
High school	105	26.6	2.71±1.23	2.90±1.22	-2.376 / p < 0.05	2.74±1.19	3.26±1.32	-4.437 /<0.001
Bachelor's or higher	158	40.0	3.07±0.89	3.44±1.15	-4.710 /<0.001	2.98±0.91	3.32±1.04	-4.262 /<0.001
Father's education (degree)								
Primary school	41	10.4	3.17±0.94	3.85±1.03	-4.128 /<0.001	3.19±0.78	4.02±1.03	-5.462 /<0.001
Middle school	97	24.5	2.65±1.06	3.31±1.22	-5.505 /<0.001	2.58±1.02	3.38±1.13	-6.477 /<0.001
High school	103	26.1	2.66±1.25	3.28±1.21	-5.290 /<0.001	2.77±1.13	3.20±1.21	-4.800 /<0.001
Bachelor's or higher	154	39.0	2.93±1.02	3.16±1.24	-2.914 / p < 0.05	2.90±1.01	3.17±1.20	-3.250 /0.001
Mother's employment status								
Employed	153	38.7	2.94±1.14	3.21±1.19	-3.325 / p < 0.05	2.94±1.08	3.32±1.24	-4.689 /<0.001
Unemployed	242	61.3	2.74±1.06	3.36±1.23	-8.348 /<0.001	2.75±1.01	3.32±1.16	-8.153 /<0.001
Father's employment status								
Employed	355	89.9	2.79±1.07	3.27±1.22	-8.062 /<0.001	2.80±1.02	3.29±1.20	-8.960 /<0.001
Unemployed	40	10.1	3.05±1.29	3.55±1.13	-3.204 / p < 0.05	3.02±1.20	3.52±1.08	-2.639 / p < 0.05
Number of children								
1	80	20.1	2.73±1.07	3.26±1.24	-4.175 /<0.001	2.73±0.97	3.18±1.15	-4.005 /<0.001
2	199	50.4	2.88±1.11	3.28±1.22	-5.241 /<0.001	2.87±1.06	3.37±1.20	-6.351 /<0.001
≥3	116	29.4	2.77±1.08	3.37±1.21	-5.573 /<0.001	2.80±1.05	3.32±1.21	-5.570 /<0.001
Gender (Generation Alpha) <sup>d</sup>								
Girl	205	51.9	2.90±0.99	3.52±1.16	-7.699 /<0.001	2.87±0.94	3.34±1.07	-6.494 /<0.001
Boy	190	48.1	2.73±1.19	3.07±1.23	-4.444 /<0.001	2.76±1.14	3.30±1.31	-6.681 /<0.001
Health problems (Generation Alpha) <sup>d</sup>								
Yes	36	9.1	2.72±1.13	2.88±1.14	-1.291 /0.205	2.80±1.06	3.52±1.10	-2.996 / p < 0.05
No	359	90.9	2.83±1.09	3.34±1.22	-8.598 /<0.001	2.82±1.04	3.30±1.20	-8.880 /<0.001

<sup>a</sup>Children aged 3-12 years, <sup>b</sup>Before the COVID-19 pandemic, <sup>c</sup>During the COVID-19 pandemic, <sup>d</sup>Paired t-test.

### 3.2. Activities of Alpha Generation Children and Their Parents Before and During COVID-19

Table 2 shows the activities performed by parents and their Generation Alpha children before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents stated that they did not read books (52.9%), watch TV/movies (60%), do homework (65.6%), draw pictures (68.1%), cook (88.6%), do sports (65.6%), take walks in nature (58.5%), feed animals (90.1%), grow plants (87.3%), and play chess (94.7%), brain training (56.7%), outdoor (60.3%), traditional (64.1%),

and online games (53.2%) with their children before the COVID-19 pandemic (Table 2).

Parents noted that they read books (67.8%), watched TV/ movies (75.4%), did homework (77.7%), drew pictures (81.5%), and played brain training (58.2%) and online games (74.4%) with their children during the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, they remarked that they did not cook (54.7%), do sports (73.4%), take walks in nature (68.1%), grow plants (81.3%), feed animals (87.3%), and play chess (62.3%), outdoor games (62.5%), and traditional games (72.4%) with their children during the COVID-19 pandemic (Table 2).

### 3.3. Changes in the Way Generation Alpha Uses Mass Media and Communicates During COVID-19 According to Parents

Parents stated that their Generation Alpha children had been spending more time on social media (63.5%) and the Internet (72.2%) since the pandemic. In addition, more than half of the parents (58.2%) noted that their Generation Alpha children had been watching more TV since the pandemic. Again, more than half the parents remarked that they had been spending more time doing activities (66.1%) and talking with their Generation Alpha children (67.1%) since the pandemic. However, half the parent(50.9) stressed that their Generation Alpha children had been communicating less with their friends since the pandemic (Table 3).

### 3.4. The Time Alpha Generation Children Spends a Day on Social Media and Television According to Their Parents

Less than half the parents stated that their Generation Alpha children had spent 1-2 hours on social media (40.5%) before the pandemic, while a quarter of the parents noted that their Generation Alpha children had been spending 2-3 hours on social media (25.8%) since the pandemic. In addition, less than half the parents remarked that their Generation Alpha children had spent 1-2 hours watching TV (42.3%) before the pandemic, while a quarter of the parents expressed that their Generation Alpha children had been spending 2-3 hours watching TV (25.6%) since the pandemic. Parents' responses showed that their Generation Alpha children had been spending significantly more time on social media ( $t = -8.647, p < 0.001, \text{effect size} = 0.70$ ) and watching TV ( $t = -9.324, p < 0.001, \text{effect size} = 0.70$ ) since the pandemic than before the pandemic (Table 4).

**Table 2. Activities of Alpha Generation Children and Their Parents Before and During COVID-19 (n=395)**

Activity	Before COVID-19				During COVID-19			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Playing brain training games	171	43.3	224	56.7	230	58.2	165	41.8
Reading books	186	47.1	209	52.9	268	67.8	127	32.2
Watching TV/movies	158	40.0	237	60.0	298	75.4	97	24.6
Doing homework	136	34.4	259	65.6	307	77.7	88	22.3
Drawing pictures	126	31.9	269	68.1	322	81.5	73	18.5
Playing chess	21	5.3	374	94.7	149	37.7	246	62.3
Cooking	45	11.4	350	88.6	179	45.3	216	54.7
Doing sports	136	34.4	259	65.6	105	26.6	290	73.4
Taking walks in nature	164	41.5	231	58.5	126	31.9	269	68.1
Playing outdoor games	157	39.7	238	60.3	148	37.5	247	62.5
Playing traditional games	142	35.9	253	64.1	109	27.6	286	72.4
Growing plants	50	12.7	345	87.3	74	18.7	321	81.3
Feeding animals	39	9.9	356	90.1	50	12.7	345	87.3
Playing online games	185	46.8	210	53.2	294	74.4	101	25.6

**Table 3. Changes in the Way Generation Alpha Uses Mass Media and Communicates During COVID-19 According to Parents (n=395)**

	Less		No change		More	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Social media use per day	41	10.4	103	26.1	251	63.5
Internet use per day	45	11.4	65	16.5	285	72.2
TV viewing per day	60	15.2	105	26.6	230	58.2
Joint activities	28	7.1	106	26.8	261	66.1
Communication with parents	48	12.2	82	20.8	265	67.1
Communication with friends	201	50.9	114	28.9	80	20.3

**Table 4. Comparison of the Average Time Spent by Generation Alpha Children on Social Media and Television Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic According to Their Parents (n=395)**

Variables		Mean ± SD	t-test	p	Cohen's d effect size
Time spent on social media per day	Before the COVID-19 pandemic	2.82 ± 1.10	-8.647	<0.001	0.70
	During the COVID-19 pandemic	3.30 ± 1.22			
Time spent watching TV per day	Before the COVID-19 pandemic	2.82 ± 1.04	-9.324	<0.001	0.70
	During the COVID-19 pandemic	3.32 ± 1.19			

### 3.5. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Generation Alpha Children according to Their Parents

Less than half the parents (34.4%) noted that their Generation Alpha children had been spending much more time on social media platforms since the pandemic. More than a quarter of the parents (29.1%) stated that their Generation Alpha children had been much more influenced by them since the pandemic. More than a quarter of the parents (26.6%) remarked that their Generation Alpha children had been using technological devices for their own pleasure much more since the pandemic. More than a quarter of the parents (28.4%) stressed that their Generation Alpha children preferred to learn by watching videos much more than reading during the pandemic. Less than half the parents (43%) noted that their Generation Alpha children had been spending much more time on technological devices since the pandemic (Table 5).

Less than half the parents (35.4%) stated that their Generation Alpha children had been less social since the pandemic. More than a quarter of the parents (26.8%) noted that their Generation Alpha children had been less active since the pandemic. More than a quarter of the parents (32.2%) remarked that their Generation Alpha children had been less engaged in activities they enjoyed doing repeatedly since the pandemic. More than a quarter of the parents (31.9%) expressed that their Generation Alpha children lived in the moment less since the pandemic. More than a quarter of the parents (26.8%) reported that their Generation Alpha children had been less creative since the pandemic.

Less than half the parents (36.5%) remarked that their Generation Alpha children had been much less involved in face-to-face communication since the pandemic. More than a quarter of the parents (28.9%) noted that their Generation Alpha children had been much less entrepreneurial since the pandemic. More than a quarter of the parents (29.6%) remarked that their Generation Alpha children had been much less self-centered since the pandemic (Table 5).

### 3.6. Parents' and Their Generation Alpha Children's Thoughts about and Experiences with the COVID-19 Pandemic

Less than a quarter of the parents had a family member who had tested positive for COVID-19 (19.2%). Thirty-five parents had tested positive for COVID-19 (8.9%). Twenty-seven parents had a spouse who had tested positive for COVID-19 (6.8%). Fourteen parents had a child who had tested positive for COVID-19 (3.5%). More than half the parents had a relative or a friend who had tested positive for COVID-19 (66.3%). Parents described the adverse impacts of the pandemic on their Generation Alpha children with the metaphors of fear (22.8%), depression (21%), darkness (11.6%), a bad dream (9.9%), night (8.6%), a prisoner (8.4%), loneliness (7.1%), uncertainty (5.8%), and cloud (4.8%). Their metaphors for the positive impacts of the pandemic on their Generation Alpha children were togetherness (39.5%), luck (21.3%), precious moment (21%), and long time (18.2%).

**Table 5. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Generation Alpha Children According to Their Parents (n=395)**

	Much less		Less		No change		More		Much more	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Using social media platforms	20	5.1	15	3.8	120	30.4	104	26.3	136	34.4
Shopping online	80	20.3	32	8.1	151	38.2	47	11.9	85	21.5
Establishing social relationships	70	17.7	140	35.4	110	27.8	20	5.1	55	13.9
Having face-to-face communication	144	36.5	106	26.8	83	21.0	36	9.1	26	6.6
Being influenced by parents	61	15.4	76	19.2	61	15.4	82	20.8	115	29.1
Liking to share	60	15.2	56	14.2	82	20.8	95	24.1	102	25.8
Being very active in daily life	94	23.8	106	26.8	94	23.8	52	13.2	49	12.4
Being disobedient	96	24.3	106	26.8	83	21.0	57	14.4	53	13.4
Hating to be limited	61	15.4	91	23.0	93	23.5	49	12.4	101	25.6
Consuming daily and organic dairy products	62	15.7	72	18.2	145	36.7	71	18.0	45	11.4
Loving to consume carbohydrates and becoming addicted to pasta	58	14.7	73	18.5	133	33.7	72	18.2	59	14.9
Wanting to be in religious communities	28	7.1	68	17.2	224	56.7	34	8.6	41	10.4
Using technological devices for their own pleasure	35	8.9	57	14.4	97	24.6	101	25.6	105	26.6
Being involved in activities they enjoy doing	70	17.7	127	32.2	104	26.3	51	12.9	43	10.9
Living in the moment	58	14.7	126	31.9	98	24.8	66	16.7	47	11.9
Creativity	93	23.5	106	26.8	83	21.0	71	18.0	42	10.6
Being in constant change	107	27.1	95	24.1	54	13.7	65	16.5	74	18.7
Being egocentric	117	29.6	98	24.8	61	15.4	72	18.2	47	11.9
Being entrepreneurial	114	28.9	74	18.7	97	24.6	68	17.2	42	10.6
Doing research	46	11.6	74	18.7	93	23.5	108	27.3	74	18.7
Preferring video learning to reading	44	11.1	63	15.9	83	21.0	93	23.5	112	28.4
Using emojis	94	23.8	90	22.8	62	15.7	51	12.9	98	24.8
Spending most of the day on technological devices	26	6.6	32	8.1	38	9.6	129	32.7	170	43.0

#### 4. Discussion

Generation Alpha (2010-2025) is the most technologically aware, globally connected, and influential generation ever (9). Every generation has witnessed its share of calamities that have shaped the course of history. It has been the COVID-19 pandemic for Generation Alpha (20). Therefore, this study focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the characteristics, habits, and interactions of Generation Alpha. To our knowledge, this is the first study to consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the characteristics, habits and interactions of Generation Alpha, and to evaluate Generation Alpha - media use.

The COVID-19 pandemic will play a key role in Generation Alpha children's lives (20). More than a quarter of the parents (22.8%) described the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their Generation Alpha children as "fear" while less than half the parents (39.5%) described the positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their Generation Alpha children as "togetherness". McCrindle and Fell found that the majority of adults (84%) believed that COVID-19 would play a significant role in shaping the children of today and that more than half the adults (65%) thought that the COVID-19 pandemic would have an adverse impact on the mental health of Generation Alpha (20). We do not know how the positive and negative impacts of the pandemic will shape Generation Alpha in the future. Undoubtedly, Generation Alpha will remember the pandemic. These results suggest that COVID-19 will shape the lives and change the characteristics of the members of Generation Alpha.

The members of Generation Alpha are born into technology, such as computers, tablets, smartphones, and the Internet (10). Therefore, their pacifiers are not a rattle but a smartphone or tablet device (9). Twenge (41) reported that for Generation Alpha, digital formats will gain importance, interactive books, hybrid books, books with QR code and augmented reality elements. In the present study, less than half the parents had watched TV/movies (40%), and played outdoor (39.7%) and online games (46.8%) with their children before the pandemic. More than half the parents have been watching TV/movies (75.4%) and playing online games (74.4%), but less than half the parents (37.5%) have been playing outdoor games with their children since the pandemic. Mart and Kesicioğlu determined that parents had been playing more semi-structured, attention, brain training, board, and virtual games but less outdoor games with their children since the pandemic than before (33). This is probably because children of a certain age were not allowed to go out during the pandemic. The members of Generation Alpha spend most of their time online (9, 20). Although dos Reis reported that the majority of Generation Alpha children (74.7%) did not have a social media account (1), parents in our study stated that their children had social media accounts, and more than half the parents (63.5%) noted that their children had been spending much more time online since the pandemic. It is quite concerning that the members of Generation Alpha have social media accounts and spend much time online.

The members of Generation Alpha are sometimes referred to as "screenagers" or "generation glass" because they are constantly exposed to digital screens (9, 10). Dos Reis determined that half the Generation Alpha children (55%) had an electronic device, which they used 30-60 minutes (59%), 2-3 hours (30%), or more than four hours (11%) (1). Mart and Kesicioğlu also found that children had spent much more time playing online games since the pandemic (33). Less than half the parents (40.5%) stated that their Generation Alpha children had spent 1-2 hours online before the pandemic, while a quarter of the parents (25.8%) noted that their Generation Alpha children had been spending 2-3 hours online since the pandemic. In addition, less than half the parents (42.3%) reported that their Generation Alpha children had spent 1-2 hours watching TV before the pandemic, while a quarter of the parents (25.6%) stated that their Generation Alpha children had been spending 2-3 hours watching TV since the pandemic. In addition, more than half the parents (72.2%) remarked that their Generation Alpha children had been online more since the pandemic. More than half the parents (58.2%) noted that their Generation Alpha children had been watching more TV since the pandemic began. This is probably because those children have engaged in distance learning and spent most of their time at home due to lockdowns and school closures since the onset of the pandemic. What is more, they have faced social isolation and uncontrollable changes in their lifestyles during this process. All these factors have made them interact with technology more frequently and have more screen time.

Family matters the most to Generation Alpha (42). Therefore, Generation Alpha children need much more attention from their parents (13). In addition, Generation Alpha is influenced and spoiled very much by their generation X and Y parents (11). More than half the parents reported increased quality time (66.1%) and communication (67.1%) with their Generation Alpha children since the pandemic began. Half the parents (50.9%) remarked that their Generation Alpha children had been communicating less with their friends since the pandemic began. Children have been indoors without much contact with their friends. They have had to deal with social isolation, lockdowns, and quarantine. Moreover, they have spent much more time and performed activities with their parents working from home. Alfianto and Jayanti (30) stated that the mental health of families with Generation Alpha children is affected when caring for their children. Chitra (43) stated that the Generation Alpha kids, whose parents have low socio-economic status, are not good in emotional intelligence. Also, parents' economic inability causes Generation Alpha kids to feel inferior, which prevents them from interacting with others and may increase their life stress (43). All these factors may affect the way Generation Alpha children's communication with their parents and friends.

The majority of the parents do not know much about Generation Alpha (1). Generation Alpha is a tech-savvy generation that is open to innovation, new experiences, and authenticity because they have access to everything anytime, anywhere (44). According to Apaydin and Kaya (36), Generation Alpha is an emotional, careful, detail-oriented, creative, curious, and determined generation with a high level of perception and a broad perspective.

Its members use numbers effectively, communicate well, and do visual research. However, Apaydin and Kaya, also argue that Generation Alpha is a self-centered, stubborn, moody, impatient, unhappy, unsatisfied, withdrawn, easily distracted, and tech-addicted generation that has a tendency to violence. They have limited social communication, do not follow the rules, lack problem-solving skills, have poor language development, and read little (36). Less than half the Generation Alpha children are creative (39%) and have leadership qualities (34%) (1). Family is the most important thing for Generation Alpha children. Friends and social media platforms affect the purchasing behavior of Generation Alpha (42). Rose and Thomas (29) informed that COVID-19 pandemic prompted purchases of mobile phones, computers and laptops, video games, toys, and television/home theatre systems. Generation Alpha is more open to learning, understands better, makes more difference through their games, and has higher numerical but more limited verbal skills than Generation Z (36). Generation Alpha is more curious, moody, stubborn, angry, introverted, active, disrespectful, selfish, and disobedient than generation Z (36). Preventive measures in response to COVID-19 have profoundly affected Generation Alpha children's lives. In the present study, parents stated that their Generation Alpha children had been less social (35.4%), less active (26.8%), less creative (26.8%), less engaged in activities they enjoyed doing repeatedly (32.2%), and lived in the moment less (31.9%) since the pandemic. They also noted that their Generation Alpha children had been much less entrepreneur (28.9%), much less self-centered (29.6%), and much less involved in face-to-face communication (36.5%). According to McCrindle and Fell (20), Generation Alpha children will have a more technology-integrated life (90%), demand more flexible working options (86%), become more resilient (78%), present their education more online (82%), prefer online interaction to face-to-face communication more (69%), and have a higher desire to travel and explore the world (62%). Apaydin Cirik and Aksoy (45), in their study on generations, nurses referred that Generation Alpha as 39.2% tech-addicted, 26% having face-to-face communication less, 14.9% egocentric, 21.5% using technological devices for their own pleasure, 19.9% live in the moment, and 10.5% innovative. McCrindle and Fell (20), also argue that the COVID-19 pandemic will play a significant role in Generation Alpha children's lives and adversely affect their mental health. Thomas and George (29) informed that Generation Alpha social marker is the impact of the COVID-19 process and disruption in education systems. Fisk (46) stated that the COVID-19 pandemic inevitably shapes the children at home, and this situation will also be reflected in their work and what they will do next. Based on these results, we can conclude that the COVID-19 pandemic will shape Generation Alpha children's lives and characteristics.

#### 4.1. Limitations

The strength of the study is that it provided data on parents' the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Generation Alpha. However, this study has three limitations. First, although our research was compared to pre- COVID-19 samples, the study design was not longitudinal and the data were cross-sectional. Second, the data were collected from parents who have access

to the internet and whose online survey link could be accessed. Therefore, the results of the study could not be generalized to all parents in Turkey. Third given the conditions of anonymity, this study did not assess potential differences based on how many families participated, where parents provided information about more than one child, and data collection on the same child from both parents.

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has and will have a tremendous impact on Generation Alpha children's lives, characteristics, and interactions according to their parents. Less than a quarter of the parents associated the COVID-19 pandemic with "fear" (22.8%), while less than half the parents associated it with "togetherness (39.5%)". We should find ways to prevent the pandemic from adversely affecting the members of Generation Alpha. To that end, parents and their children should be provided with counseling and empowerment programs to minimize the adverse impacts of the pandemic.

Authorities should provide parents with training and counseling to raise their awareness of Generation Alpha. They should also provide Generation Alpha children with education and career programs to make sure they can shape their future during the pandemic.

#### 6. Contribution to the Field

COVID-19 pandemic is a turning point for Generation Alpha. Determining the effects of the COVID-19 process of the generation alpha children is very important for their future. To reduce the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Alpha Generation, children should be provided with counseling and empowerment programs.

#### Ethical Aspect of the Research

The study was approved by the Clinical Research Ethics Committee (Date=06.01.2021 No=2020/12) and the General Directorate of Health Services of the Ministry of Health (Date=21.12.2020). The study was conducted according to the ethical principles outlined by the World Medical Association's Declaration of Helsinki. Parents were informed about the research purpose and procedure. Informed consent was obtained from those who agreed to participate.

#### Conflict of Interest

This article did not receive any financial fund. There is no conflict of interest regarding any person and/or institution.

#### Acknowledgements

The authors are very grateful to the parents where the research was conducted, who participated in the study for their patience and cooperation in this study.

#### Authorship Contribution

**Concept:** VAC, BA; **Design:** VAC, BA; **Supervision:** VAC, BA; **Funding:** None; **Materials:** None; **Data Collection/Processing:** VAC, BA; **Analysis/Interpretation:** VAC, BA; **Literature Review:** VAC, BA; **Manuscript Writing:** VAC, BA; **Critical Review:** VAC, BA.



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