

**Multiple and Opposing Roles of Types of Maternal
Religiosity in Predicting Children's Aggressive
Behaviors**

by

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Multiple and Opposing Roles of Types of Maternal Religiosity in Predicting Children’s Aggressive Behaviors

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DEDICATION

To My Mother



STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

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ABSTRACT

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The present thesis investigated the association of maternal religiosity with power relations in the family and aggressive behaviors of children. In this thesis, a specific religious belief, fear of divine punishment, was considered and referred to as “belief in punishing God.” In doing so, the association of maternal religiosity, which included the subjective religiosity and religious practices of mothers, with power relations in the family and child aggression was simultaneously controlled. A 5-year longitudinal and nationally representative data from the Early Child Developmental Ecologies in Turkey (ECDDET) study (N = 1,050; 582 boys and 468 girls) was used. The sample was composed of children who were three years old in the first wave and their mothers. Results showed that maternal belief in punishing God, measured when children were at age 4, was positively associated with asymmetrical power relations between spouses favoring the husband and maternal power assertion at age 5, and aggressive behaviors of children at age 7, although the effect sizes were small. Asymmetrical power relations between spouses favoring the husband were positively associated with power assertive behaviors of mothers towards children, and maternal distress partially mediated this association. The results showed that maternal power assertion was the strongest factor positively associated with child aggression. However, maternal religiosity was the only factor negatively associated with child aggression. The findings underscored the importance of consideration of maternal religiosity as a multidimensional construct associated with power relations in the family.

Keywords: religiosity, belief in punishing God, power relations in the family, maternal power assertion, spousal relationships, aggressive behaviors

ÖZETÇE

Çocukların Saldırgan Davranışlarını Yordamada Anne Dini İnançlarının Çoklu ve

Karşıt Roller

Ebru Özbek

Psikoloji, Yüksek Lisans

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Bu tez annelerin dini inançlarının aile içi güç ilişkileri ve çocukların saldırgan davranışları ile olan ilişkisini incelemektedir. Bu tezde, belirli bir dini inanç olarak, ilahi cezalandırma korkusu göz önüne alınmış ve “cezalandırıcı Allah inancı” olarak adlandırılmıştır. Öznel dindarlık ve annelerin dini pratiklerini içeren anne dindarlığının aile içi güç ilişkileri ve çocukların saldırgan davranışları ile ilişkisi eş zamanlı olarak kontrol edilmiştir. Türkiye’de Erken Çocukluk Gelişim Ekolojileri (TEÇGE) çalışmasının beş yıllık boylamsal ve ulusal temsili örnekleme sahip olan veri seti (N = 1,050; 582 erkek ve 468 kız) kullanılmıştır. Örneklem birinci turda üç yaşında olan çocuklar ve annelerinden oluşmaktadır. Sonuçlar, düşük etki değerlerine rağmen, çocuklar 4 yaşındayken ölçülen annelerin cezalandırıcı Allah inancının, 5 yaşta ölçülen, annenin eşinin (baba) lehine olan eşler arasındaki asimetric güç ilişkileri ve annelerin çocuklarına güç gösterimi ve 7 yaşta ölçülen çocukların saldırgan davranışlarıyla olumlu olarak ilişkili olduğunu göstermiştir. Babaların lehine olan eşler arasındaki asimetric güç ilişkileri annelerin çocuklarına karşı güç gösterimi ile olumlu olarak ilişkilidir ve anne derin üzüntüsü bu ilişkiye kısmı olarak aracılık etmiştir. Sonuçlar, annelerin güç gösteriminin çocukların saldırgan davranışları ile ilişkili en güçlü faktör olduğunu göstermiştir. Bunun yanı sıra, anne dindarlığı çocukların saldırgan davranışları ile olumsuz yönde ilişkili olan tek faktördür. Bulgular anne dindarlığının aile içi güç ilişkileri ile ilişkili olan çok yönlü bir kavram olarak incelenmesinin önemini vurgulamıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: dindarlık, cezalandırıcı Allah inancı, aile içi güç ilişkileri, anne güç kullanımı, eş ilişkileri, saldırgan davranışlar

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Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, the number of research on the association of religiosity with family relations (Kumru et al., 2019; Mahoney et al., 2001; Mahoney et al., 2020) has increased (Abu Riaya et al., 2008). Previous studies mainly provided information on the beneficial effect of religiosity on family functioning and child development. For example, participation in religious service and religious practice had positive outcomes for spousal relationships (Mahoney et al., 2001; Mahoney, 2010), parent-child relationship (Jorgensen et al., 2016; Volling et al., 2009), and child development (Bartkowski et al., 2008). Sanctification of parenting was associated with positive family functioning (Mahoney et al., 2020) and parental warmth and involvement (Murray-Swank et al., 2006).

Religiosity could also have detrimental effects on family functioning and the development of behaviors of children (Bornstein et al., 2017; Pargament & Mahoney et al., 2013). Religious conservatism was associated with the enactment of traditional gender role behaviors in marriage (DeMaris et al., 2011; Ellison & Bartkowski, 2002). For example, Murray-Swank et al. (2006) found that Biblical conservatism was positively associated with the support for corporal punishment. Additionally, parental religiosity was associated with higher parental control and externalizing behaviors (Bornstein et al., 2017). These findings pointed out that religiosity was a multidimensional construct that needed to be investigated deeply to understand the mechanism behind the adverse and desirable outcomes.

This thesis aimed to examine the association of maternal religiosity with power relations in the family and aggressive behaviors of children in Turkey. In order to investigate power relations in the family, the attention of this thesis was limited to a particular type of religious belief which included religious aspects of acceptance of the authority of God and fear of divine punishment. By using the concepts of God (e.g., De Roos et al., 2004; Johnson et al., 2013), I referred to this form of religious belief as "belief in punishing God."

In the present thesis, power was defined as the ability to control, change, and influence behaviors, thoughts, and decisions of other members of the family and the

control of resources that other members of the family can access (Connell, 2013; Therborn, 2004). In line with this definition, power relations in the family were characterized by asymmetrical power relations among the members of a relationship. Child aggression was construed as an outcome of the asymmetrical power relations in the family and defined as the behaviors intended to harm or injure other people (Harre & Lamb, 1983 as cited in Coyne et al., 2011).

In order to examine the association of power relations in the family with aggressive behaviors of children, I focused on the macro-level factors of religious beliefs and patriarchal ideology and micro-level factors of expression of power in spousal and parent-child relationships. As previously stated that the existing literature offers multifaceted findings for the association of parental religiosity with family relations and child development (e.g., Bartkowski et al., 2008; Bornstein et al., 2017; Murray-Swank, 2006). Therefore, in order to distinguish the specific role of belief in punishing God with power relations in the family and aggressive behaviors of children, the role of maternal religiosity in power relations in the family and child aggression was examined.

In the social context of the sample of this thesis, cultural norms and gender role attitudes of individuals and family prototypes vary widely due to the social and historical conditions of Turkey (Ataca et al., 2005). Turkey experienced a rapid economic transformation from an agricultural to industrial society (Ataca et al., 2005). Accompanying this change, a social transformation from a traditional to a modern society occurred within a short period between 1950-1990.

Despite the rapid socio-political changes and modernization, the changes in cultural norms and gender roles of individuals lagged behind the socio-political changes and resulted in differences in attitudes and norms (Sunar & Fisek, 2005). For example, intergenerational hierarchy, which includes parental control and obedience demanding from children (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2007), and gender hierarchy, which is the authority of fathers over mothers and children, are still the salient characteristics of families in modern Turkey (Ataca et al., 2005). Additionally, patriarchal gender role behaviors are dominant in spousal relationships. Women are primarily responsible for household labor and raising children, while men are primary breadwinners (Sunar & Fisek, 2005).

In the Value of Children II study, Kağıtçıbaşı and Ataca (2003) showed that obedience expectation by the parents decreased with the modernization of Turkey

(Kağıtçıbaşı, 2011). Autonomy and self-reliance outside of the family have become desirable characteristics of children that families from middle and high socioeconomic status have expected (Kağıtçıbaşı & Ataca, 2005). Along with the urbanization of Turkey, raising autonomous children who can protect themselves and be self-reliant outside of the family has emerged as a parenting goal. Therefore, although they seemed as contrary, the results indicated that both the obedience to parents and autonomy/self-reliance were the desired characteristics of children that were supported by the participants of the study (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010).

Even though Muslims constitute the second largest population in the world (Pew Research Center, 2020a), the research on the association of religiosity with family relations and child development was conducted predominantly with Christian samples (Abu Riaya et al., 2008; Pargament et al., 2013). The majority of the people in Turkey identified themselves as Muslim, and 70% of the people stated that religion is “very important” in their lives (Pew Research Center, 2020b). With a longitudinal and nationally representative sample from Turkey, this thesis provided comprehensive findings on the association of maternal religiosity with the power relations in the family and aggressive behaviors of children for a Muslim population. Unlike previous studies in which religiosity was conceptualized as a unidimensional construct based on subjective religiosity and measured with one or two items, this thesis provided a rich conceptualization for parental religiosity by focusing on belief in punishing God and different aspects of maternal religiosity. It addressed the limitations of previous studies by considering the family as a whole system. Additionally, it focused on the association of belief in punishing God with child aggression and mediating role of power differential in spousal relations favoring the husband and power assertive and obedience demanding behaviors of mothers towards children on this association.

1.1 Background Information for the Definition of Belief in Punishing God

This thesis focused on the association of maternal religiosity with power relations in the family and child aggression. Therefore, a specific conceptualization of religiosity was needed to investigate the association of religiosity with the production and maintenance of power relations in the family. Although there were various categorizations as representation and image of God, different types of belief in God

were also categorized into concepts of God (Hall & Fujikawa, 2013). Johnson et al. (2015) state that an anthropomorphized image of God is forbidden in Islam, and the concept of God comprises a cognitive and religious representation of God (Hall & Fujikawa, 2013). Therefore, in this thesis concept of God was used as a baseline term.

The concepts of God influence how religion is practiced, personal faith is shaped (Hyde 1990, as cited in De Roos et al., 2004), and how much power is valued by individuals. Authoritarian and benevolent God are two concepts of God associated with religiosity, behaviors, and relations of individuals (Johnson et al., 2015). The authoritarian concept of God was associated with aggressive behaviors, whereas the benevolent concept of God was associated with prosocial behaviors (Johnson et al., 2015). The authoritarian concept of God consisted of punishing God, and punishing God referred to one of the types of belief in God (e.g., Johnson et al., 2013, 2015; Pargament et al., 2000). Therefore, in order to examine the association of a religious belief that might influence the power differential in a family, I used the punishing God concept and defined a specific religious belief which is the belief in punishing God.

In order to define belief in punishing God, I also focused on the faith of individuals that delineates acceptance of the ultimate authority of God, which generally accompanies the belief in the inerrancy of religious scripts (Altemeyer, 2003). In this belief, questioning God's words and authority result in divine punishment (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004). In line with the synthesis of the punishing God concept and acceptance of the ultimate authority of God, I defined belief in punishing God as a belief that is based on the acceptance of God's ultimate authority and driven by a fear of divine punishment.

1.2 Power Relations in the Family

The enactment of patriarchal power relations in the family is explained in various theories. Unlike the theories that explain the power differential in family relations based on offered financial resources to the family (Blood & Wolf, 1960), Therborn (2004) emphasizes that power relations in the family are based on a patriarchal system. The father is more powerful than his children because of his generational status and asserts more power than his wife because of his gender in a patriarchal system. In this system, power relations in the family can be characterized by the rights and obligations of

family members, and duties and obligations are assigned to the less powerful person while the more powerful person has a right to control resources (Therborn, 2004).

Connell (2013) has a similar perspective on the power differential among family members. He emphasizes the role of patriarchy in power relations and decision-making processes in a family. In these hierarchical relations, the responsibilities of family members, whether they take care of the household and show obedience or are responsible for establishing rules and protecting the family, are specified according to their status in the social hierarchy (Boratav et al., 2017).

As Connell (2013) and Therborn (2004) explain, addressing the patriarchal system to explain the power relations in the family is important. This is because, despite the rise of participation of women in the paid labor force and increased participation of men in domestic work, segregated gender role behaviors for men and women are still salient in societies (Ellison & Bartkowski, 2002; Fuwa, 2004).

1.3 Association of Religiosity with Power Relations in the Family

Despite the scarcity of research focused on the association of religiosity with power relations in the family, previous studies offered some guiding findings for the present thesis. In a previous study, Ellison and Bradshaw (2009) found that support for corporal punishment was associated with conservative Protestantism, the hierarchical image of God, and being punished afterlife because of disobedience to scripture. Ellison and Bartkowski (1997) expressed that support for corporal punishment was justified with the “justice of God” in the Christian perspective.

Considering the role of power in Islam, Ji and Ibrahim (2007) highlighted that Islamic religiosity requires full obedience to the authority of God, and questioning religious scripture was prohibited. They found that Islamic religiosity was associated with activating pro-authoritarian attitudes (Ji & Ibrahim, 2007). Additionally, in Quran, what was good and permitted and what was bad and prohibited to Muslims were declared (Qureshi & Rehman, 2015). The results of the compliance or disobedience to these statements were informed to the believers (El-Azayem & Hedayat-Diba, 1994).

1.4 The Association of Belief in Punishing God with Asymmetrical Power Relations Between Spouses and Maternal Power Assertion Towards Children

1.4.1 Asymmetrical Power Relations Between Spouses

In order to investigate the association of belief in punishing God with spousal power relations, gender role attitudes were aligned with religious and cultural values, and gender role behaviors were aligned with gender role attitudes. Gender role attitudes were parental ideological factors associated with power relations in the family and identified from traditional gender role attitudes to egalitarian gender role attitudes (Katz-Wise, Priess & Hyde, 2010). Some of the dimensions of gender role attitudes were perspectives of the individuals toward (i) the primacy of breadwinner role, (ii) belief in a gender-segregated social sphere, (iii) employment of women, (iv) motherhood, (v) division of domestic labor between spouses, and (vi) acceptance of male privilege (Davis & Greenstein, 2009). In line with this definition, patriarchal gender roles were characterized as supportive attitudes of individuals toward the superior role of men in society and spousal relationships.

The major religions in the world are not constructed only with an abstract belief system. Gender roles of men and women in a spousal relationship are defined in a hierarchical system (Mohammed, 2006; Sherkat, 2000; Wilcox, 2004), and family is constituted as a sanctified social construct (Mahoney et al., 2003). Christianity and Islam similarly depict gender role attitudes of men and women (Read, 2003). In Christianity, women have a submissive status and domestic role in carrying out husbands' decisions, who are identified as the head of the family (Bartkowski & Read, 2003). Additionally, in Islam (Tuğrul, 2018) and evangelical Protestantism (Ellision & Bartkowski, 2002), women are characterized as sensitive, vulnerable, merciful, and self-sacrificial. The words of the Quran that "Men are in charge of women, because God has given preference to the one over the other, and because (men) provide support for (women) from their means. Therefore, righteous women are obedient." (Quran 4:34, as cited in Smith, 1979) underscores the religious sanctification of power of men over women and the obedience of women to men.

These perspectives of religions legitimize inegalitarian gender role attitudes in society (Tuğrul, 2018). Read (2003) found that women affiliated with conservative

religiosity had more traditional gender role attitudes than non-religious or less religious women, and they behaved according to the biblical gender role edicts (Bartkowski & Read, 2003). However, in order to predict gender role attitudes of women, the importance of the type of religiosity, along with the religious edicts, was emphasized (Sherkat, 2000).

The sanctification of motherhood (Volling et al., 2009) is another factor that accounted for the effect of religiosity on the gender roles of individuals. For example, motherhood is the primary role assigned to women (Mohammed, 2006). In the study conducted with the 2000's national data, Read (2003) found that religious Catholic and Muslim women who lived in the U.S. were more likely to drop out of the labor force if a preschool child was at home (Read, 2003). Due to the burden of ambivalence between their religious beliefs and traditional gender roles, in order to fulfill the requirements of traditional gender roles and religious edicts, evangelical women spend a "second shift" for domestic work and childcare during the evenings and weekends (Ellison & Bartkowski, 2002).

A similar pattern was also observed in women in Turkey. In a previous study, Tuğrul (2018) found that due to the sanctification of motherhood, women who refused to have a child or were unable to have a child had an inferior status and suffered negative consequences (Tuğrul, 2018). Additionally, many women preferred to leave their jobs and become full-time mothers (Tuğrul, 2018) because of the internalization of traditional gender roles in line with the sanctification of parenting (Kumru et al., 2019).

1.4.2 Maternal Power Assertion Towards Children

The role of parental religiosity in parent-child relationships has been studied in the last decades (e.g., Alsarhi et al., 2019; Bartkowski et al., 2008; Ellison & Bradshaw, 2009; Mahoney et al., 2003). Previous studies on the association of parental religious belief with parent-child relationships mainly were conducted with Christian families (e.g., De Roos et al., 2004; Ellison & Bradshaw, 2009) and mostly relied on the measures of subjective religiosity and frequency of religious practice (Hill, 2013; Mahoney, 2001; Murray-Swank et al., 2006).

The results of previous studies provided information on both positive and negative effects of parental religiosity on the parent-child relationship. For example, Bornstein et

al. (2017) conducted a 3-year longitudinal study with 1,198 children and families affiliated with Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Buddhism and unaffiliated with any religion. In the results of this study, they found that parental religiousness was positively associated with both parental efficacy and parental control. One of the earliest studies on the role of religiosity with parenting behaviors showed that maternal religiosity was positively associated with positive parenting behaviors (Strayhorn et al., 1990). Additionally, Murray-Swank et al. (2006) found that sanctification of parenting was negatively associated with verbal aggression towards children and endorsed positive parent-child relationships.

Despite the depicted positive association of religiosity with parent-child relationships, parental religiosity was also associated with power assertive parenting practices. Commitment and obedience to parents were endorsed in both Christianity (Ellison & Bartkowski, 1997) and Islam (Kumru et al., 2019), yet corporal punishment was suggested in Protestantism (Bartkowski et al., 2008). Mahoney et al. (2001) found that conservative Protestant families were more obedience demanding and prone to use corporal punishment than non-religious and other religious-affiliated parents. Hoffman et al. (2017) conducted a study to examine the change of support for corporal punishment in the American population. They found that conservative Protestants were still highly supportive of corporal punishment despite a significant decline in the American population.

In a longitudinal study, Bornstein et al. (2017) measured parental religiosity with two items based on the importance of religiosity in individual life and parenting behaviors. They found that parental religiosity was positively associated with child report parental control and rejection and parent report parental control with the effect sizes of .19, .30, and .14, respectively. Although there were some nuanced differences, they stated that these results were similar for the participants from Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, Buddhism, and non-affiliated families.

Ellison and Bradshaw (2009) investigated the reasons for support for corporal punishment in a study conducted with 647 adults from the U.S. They found that besides the denominational affiliation, the belief in a hierarchical construal of God and belief in the existence of Hell were associated with the approval of corporal punishment (Ellison & Bradshaw, 2009). A study conducted with Christian mothers and their preschool

children showed that strict God concepts of mothers were positively associated with strict parenting practices (De Roos et al., 2004). Additionally, Alsarhi et al. (2019) stated that in order to raise obedient children, Muslim mothers in Yemen used harsh parenting behaviors as suggested in their religious beliefs. The findings of previous studies provided information for our conceptualization of belief in punishing God and emphasized the importance of focusing on the type of religiosity to examine the association of religiosity with the parent-child relationship along with subjective religiosity and religious practice.

1.5 Association of Gender Role Attitudes with Power Relations Between Spouses

In this thesis, the association of gender role attitudes with power relations between spouses was reviewed through the lens of spousal relationships and parenting. In a review, Davis and Greenstein (2009) stated that starting from the decision of marriage (Cunningham et al., 2005) and wedding plans, the gender role ideology of individuals affected spousal relationships. In order to meet the social expectations, parents tried to enact expected gender roles for parenting (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004), and the strength of traditional gender role attitudes of men and women increased after parenting (Katz-Wise et al., 2010).

A qualitative study was conducted with male and female youth to examine the association of gender ideology and power assertion in partner relationships (Totten, 2003). In the results of the study, Totten (2003) found that male adolescents use traditional gender ideology to justify their violent behaviors in relationships. Male adolescents expressed that if they feel embarrassed because of their girlfriend in public in order to teach the place of their girlfriends, they use violence “as a man” (Totten, 2003). These results addressed the association of traditional gender role attitudes in the power differential favoring the men in a dyadic relationship.

The families in Turkey mostly have patriarchal characteristics (Ataca et al., 2005). In the Gender Inequality Index (GII) of The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2019), Turkey ranked 68th out of 162 countries. This index measured gender inequality in countries based on women's reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status. Another index that quantified gender equality was the Global Gender Gap Report (2021) of the World Economic Forum. The gender-based gap was measured

based on “economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.” In this report, Turkey was the 133rd country out of 156 countries.

Sunar and Fişek (2005) exemplified the distinctions for gender role expectations from men and women as the principal responsibility of women was childcare, and men were responsible for breadwinning. As such, most of the men, especially men who had low education, were against their wives' participation in the labor force (Sancar, 2009). In this study, Bolak-Boratav (2010) stated that if men allowed their wives to participate in the labor force, they specified some conditions, such as the maintenance of the caregiving and domestic responsibilities of their wives (Bolak-Boratav, 2010). Traditional gender roles promoted the continuation and legitimization of men's power in order to control their wives (Knudson-Martin, 2011). These findings show that traditional gender role attitudes engender power differential favoring the husband in spousal relationships because, in patriarchal families, men have a right to restrict women's daily activities.

1.6 The Role of Maternal Distress on the Association of Power Relations Between Spouses with Maternal Power Assertion

Previous studies offered findings on the association of marital quality with the psychological well-being of individuals (e.g., Coyne et al., 2002; Papp et al., 2004; Proulx et al., 2007). The association of marital functioning with parental symptomology, measured by using depression, anxiety, and hostility levels of mothers, was investigated by Papp et al. (2004). They found that marital distress was positively associated with maternal symptomology with an effect size of .45. In a meta-analysis conducted with 93 research, Proulx et al. (2007) indicated that marital quality was associated with psychological well-being, including depression symptoms and cognitions of individuals, in cross-sectional ($r = .37$) and longitudinal ($r = .25$) studies. In another study conducted with 724 married individuals, Li et al. (2016) found that marital adjustment was associated with the psychological well-being of Japanese individuals in both positive and negative sides. The findings of these studies revealed that the quality of a spousal relationship was associated with psychological well-being, specifically the psychological distress of individuals.

Deater-Deckard (2005) stated that parenting stress consisted of the subjective responses to a stressful situation such as pain or anxiety. They found that chronic stress had a detrimental effect on the cognitions of mothers about their children and parenting behaviors (Crnic & Low, 2002). Previous studies showed that parental stress was associated with authoritarian parenting and maternal power assertion (Belsky et al., 1996; Colder et al., 2000). Additionally, Barry et al. (2009) found that maternal distress was positively associated with the inconsistent discipline of mothers. These results demonstrated a positive association of maternal distress with negative parenting behaviors of mothers.

The widely studied association of intimate partner aggression with parents and children indicated that more than half of the intimate partner aggression cooccurred with the maternal power assertion (Taylor et al., 2010). A previous meta-analysis conducted with 68 studies found a modest positive effect between marital relations and parent-child relationships (Erel & Burman, 1995). Another meta-analysis conducted with 39 studies showed that parental acceptance and harsh parenting were the behaviors affected by the marital conflict (Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). The results of a study conducted with 810 women from Turkey who had children between the ages of two and eight supported the findings of the previous studies. Akçınar (2017) found that if women had traditional gender role attitudes and were exposed to physical and emotional violence of their husbands, they were more likely to show punitive parenting behaviors.

1.7 The Association of Power Relations Between Spouses with Aggressive Behaviors in Children

The intergenerational transmission of aggression from spousal relations to aggressive behaviors of children was previously studied (e.g., Marcus et al., 2001; Widom & Wilson, 2015). In a mediational study, Marcus et al. (2001) investigated the role of interparental conflict in child aggression based on the social learning theory. They found that interparental conflict was associated with both mother and teacher reports of child aggression. Additionally, cognitions of children about the use of aggression mediated the association of interparental conflict with teacher-rated child aggression. The results were supported by Graham-Berman and Brescoll's (2000) study, and it was shown that repeated exposure to power assertive behaviors in the

environment was associated with the legitimization of aggression by children as a tool for problem-solving.

In a review, Coyne et al. (2011) indicated that aggressive behaviors of boys were more accepted and encouraged at some level than aggressive behaviors of girls during the socialization process. A study conducted to investigate the same-sex parenting hypothesis with children who were nine years old and from the U.S. Underwood et al. (2008) found that girls showed more aggressive behaviors when exposed to mothers' destructive conflict solution strategies. On the other hand, Duman and Margolin (2007) found that children used aggressive problem-solving strategies in line with the same-sex parent's aggressive strategies in a marriage. The results of previous studies provided multiple scenarios for the association of power differential in a spousal relationship with child aggression.

1.8 The Association of Maternal Power Assertion with Aggressive Behaviors of Children

Previous studies provided validated findings for the association of maternal power assertion with behavior problems of children (e.g., Akçınar & Baydar, 2016; Akçınar & Özbek, 2021; Baydar & Akcinar, 2018; Gerard et al., 2006; Sheehan & Watson, 2008). In a study conducted with 102 families who had 3-7 years old children, Simon and Wurtele (2010) found that physical punishment endorsed children's acceptance of aggressive behaviors to solve interpersonal problems (Simons & Wurtele, 2010). Additionally, corporal punishment and control-oriented behaviors of the mothers were associated with an increase in aggressive behaviors in children because control-oriented behaviors of mothers were associated with underdeveloped self-control (Gershoff, 2002) and a high level of arousal in children (Hoffman, 2000). The results of a meta-analysis supported the findings. Gershoff and Grogan-Kaylor (2016) found that physical punishment was associated with aggressive behaviors, externalizing problems, lower moral internalization, and lower quality for parent-child relationships.

Gerard et al. (2006) conducted a mediational study to investigate the role of maternal harsh discipline in the association of spousal power relations with externalizing behaviors of children. The study was conducted with 551 married families and children who were 5 to 11 years old when the study was started. Gerard et al.

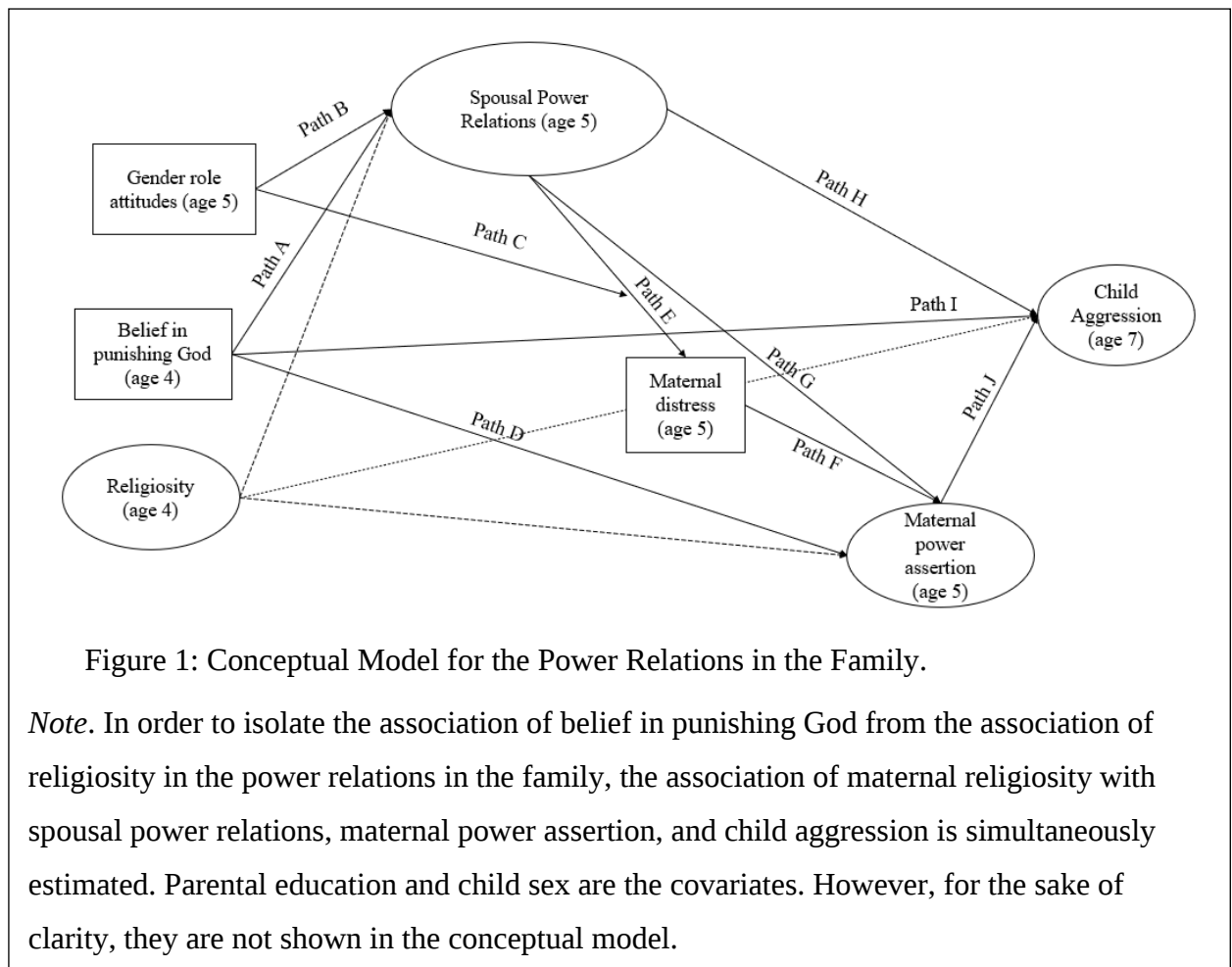
(2006) found that the association of asymmetrical power relations between spouses with externalizing behaviors was fully mediated by harsh discipline cross-sectionally and partially mediated five years later.

The studies conducted by using a sample from Turkey supported previous findings. In a study conducted by using ECDET data, Akçınar and Baydar (2016) found that the physical harsh punishment of mothers at ages 3 and 4 predicted the externalizing behaviors of children in the following ages (at ages 4 and 5). Additionally, Baydar and Akçınar (2018) investigated the association of power assertive maternal behaviors with aggressive behaviors of children. They found that maternal power assertion at age three predicted the trajectories of aggressive behaviors of children in the following four years. Additionally, Gülseven et al. (2018) found that the physical harsh punishment of mothers at age four was positively associated with aggressive behaviors of children at age seven. These studies highlighted that maternal power assertion predicts behavior problems of children not only cross-sectionally but also longitudinally.

1.9 The Present Study, Hypotheses, and the Conceptual Framework

In this thesis, I focus on the maternal ideological factors of belief in punishing God and patriarchal gender role attitudes, maternal behavioral factors of the asymmetrical power relations between spouses and power assertive parenting behaviors of mothers towards children. In order to examine the associations of maternal ideological factors with maternal behavioral factors and child aggression, a conceptual framework (Figure 1) is developed. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bioecological systems theory provides a framework for the associations of belief in punishing God with the asymmetrical power relations between spouses and mothers and children. The theory also allows the examination of the associations of these two proximal processes with aggressive behaviors in children.

According to the bioecological systems theory, development is stimulated by the reciprocal interaction of individuals with persons, objects, and symbols in their immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). The "fairly regular" and reciprocal interactions of individuals with significant others, objects, and symbols "over an extended period of time" are labeled proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In this study, asymmetrical power relations between spouses favoring husbands and power



assertive behaviors of mothers towards children are examined as the proximal processes between the spouses and mothers and children.

In order to identify the asymmetrical power relations between spouses, I focus on the patriarchal gender role behaviors in spousal relationships and maltreatment behaviors by the husband. Islamic religiosity requires full obedience to authority (Ji & Ibrahim, 2007). Men are endowed with the authority to control women (Mohammed et al., 2017). Hence, patriarchal power is considered as the divine will. This ideology may influence the patriarchal gender role attitudes and gender role behaviors of individuals (DeMaris et al., 2011). Therefore, in this thesis, I posit that maternal belief in punishing God endorses a belief that a man, who is the head of the family by religious edict, has the power to control other members of the family. This is because this status is awarded by God, therefore, not to be questioned. As a result, belief in punishing God is expected to be associated with an endorsement of hierarchical relations in the family that supports a power differential favoring the husband over the wife (Figure 1, Path A).

Gender role attitudes of individuals are positively associated with gender role behaviors (Davis & Greenstein, 2009), although the association is weak in patriarchal countries (Fuwa, 2004). I posit that holding patriarchal gender role attitudes are associated with the enactment of patriarchal power relations in the spousal power relations (Figure 1, Path B).

In order to characterize the proximal processes in parent-child relationships, I focus on obedience demanding and power assertive parenting behaviors of mothers. These behaviors are the possible reflections of power differential favoring mothers over children. In religious doctrines, parenting is sanctified (Mahoney et al., 2003; Mahoney et al., 2020; Murray-Swank et al., 2006). Hence, religious parents perceive parenting as a divine duty to be fulfilled according to religious edicts (Mahoney et al., 2003). For example, in Judeo-Christian religions (Mahoney et al., 2003) and Islamic belief, mothers are responsible for raising obedient children (Alsarhi et al., 2019; Kumru et al., 2019). In line with previous studies, I posit that the sanctification of parenting in religious doctrines results in a power differential favoring parents over children, and religious edicts about raising obedient children support obedience-oriented parenting. I propose that mothers who believe in punishing God pertained to acceptance of the authority of God and fear of divine punishment are likely to use power assertive parenting behaviors (Figure 1, Path D).

To my knowledge, there is a lack of research that examined the association of power differential in spousal relations with maternal distress. Therefore, in order to understand the dynamics of this association, I utilized the empirical studies that investigated the association of marital quality or marital conflict with psychological distress. Responses of individuals such as pain, anxiety, and depression to a stressful situation are included in parenting stress (Deater-Deckard, 2005). Therefore, I expect that power differential favoring the husband as a stress component for mothers predicts maternal distress. Based on the findings of Barry et al. (2009), I anticipate that power differential favoring the husbands is positively associated with maternal distress (Figure 1, Path E).

Krishnakumar and Buehler (2000) stated that according to social learning theory, marital conflict affects mothers' inheritance of social skills, and if mothers are exposed to marital conflict, they inherit the use of power to discipline children. Particularly, it is

stated that parents reflect control behaviors in spousal relations to parent-child relationships (Emde & Easterbrooks, 1985, as cited in Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). The meta-analysis of Erel and Burman (1995) supported these findings. Therefore, in line with the social learning theory, I propose that power differential favoring the husband in the proximal processes of spouses predict maternal power assertion towards children (Figure 1, Path G)

Deater-Deckard (2005) emphasizes that maternal cognitions are essential components in appraising stressors (Lazarus, 1999) and perceiving children (Lazarus, 1993; Deater-Deckard et al., 2005). Maternal distress may lead to negative attributions to the behaviors of their children (Deater-Deckard et al., 2005). Therefore, I hypothesize that maternal distress predicts mothers' obedience demanding and power assertive behaviors towards children (Figure 1, Path F).

I also expect that the gender role attitudes of mothers moderate the association of power relations between spouses with maternal distress (Figure 1, Path C). Specifically, I hypothesize that a mother who has egalitarian gender role attitudes is more likely to evaluate her situation as stressful when exposed to a power differential favoring her husband (Davis & Greenstein, 2009; Güvenç, 2014).

In order to explain the association of asymmetrical spousal relations and maternal power assertion with aggressive behaviors of children, social cognitive learning and social learning theories and deficits in self-regulation of children are used. According to social cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 2001), children are active agents. In other words, they evaluate the interactions in the family and their consequences, and in order to solve interpersonal problems, they try to use similar tactics (Bandura, 1959). As such, when they are exposed to asymmetrical power relations between their parents and power assertive parenting behaviors, they retain information that using power in interpersonal relationships enables controlling others. In a context that almost all relations are constructed hierarchically, children retain the information that is acceptance of power to control others and act upon this information when needed (Dishion & Patterson, 2015). Bronfenbrenner (1989) emphasizes that development occurs with the learning processes provided by the social context. Therefore, I hypothesize that children are likely to behave aggressively in families where relationships are constructed hierarchically. In other words, children who are exposed to

the power differential between their parents and maternal power assertion are likely to show aggressive behaviors (Figure 1, Paths H and J, respectively).

I propose that maternal power assertion prevents the development of self-regulation by providing an external control mechanism to children. A previous study found that power assertive and obedience demanding behaviors of parents were associated with a deficit in the regulatory mechanisms of children (Akçınar & Baydar, 2014). Bornstein et al. (2017) indicated that strict behavioral control is associated with behavioral problems by restricting autonomy. Therefore, I posit that power assertive and obedience demanding behaviors of parents are associated with aggressive behaviors of children due to deficits in the self-regulation by providing an extrinsic control with the enactment of harsh punishment and feeling restricted by obedience demanding (Figure 1, Path J).

Alsarhi et al. (2019) stated that mothers could use religious belief as a disciplinary tool. I expect that expressions of mothers about their belief in punishing God may provide an external control mechanism for children and can be perceived as a threat of divine punishment by children. Therefore, I hypothesize that maternal belief in punishing God predicts aggressive behaviors of children by providing an external control mechanism (Figure 1, Path I).

I also expect that boys have higher aggression than girls. According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1973), the behaviors of parents provide modeling for children about the acceptance of aggressive behaviors (Duman & Margolin, 2007). In a patriarchal society (such as in Turkey), boys are expected to experience fewer adverse responses to their aggressive behaviors, so they enact more aggressive behaviors than girls. Despite the provided counter findings in previous studies, due to the patriarchal structure of Turkey, I expect that boys have higher aggressive behaviors than girls because, in patriarchal family relations, they have more opportunities to observe the patriarchal power of same-sex parents and receive a less negative response for their aggressive behaviors.

The present study is unique in its way of approaching the macro-level and micro-level factors of aggressive behaviors of children. In this study, I (i) used a new conceptualization of religious belief: belief in punishing God; (ii) investigated the association of gender role attitudes with the power relations between spouses; (iii)

conceptualized links among maternal belief in punishing God, power differential favoring the husband, maternal power assertion, and aggressive behaviors of children. Additionally, in order to distinguish the role of belief in punishing God in power relations in the family and child aggression, the role of maternal religiosity in power relations in the family and child aggression was tested as a covariate. In order to analyze all these associations, 5-year longitudinal data, which provide information about the power relations in the family and aggressive behaviors of children at age 3 in the baseline year, was used.



Chapter 2:

METHOD

2.1 Participants and Design

The sample of the present study was composed of the mother-child dyads who participated in the Early Childhood Developmental Ecologies in Turkey (ECDET) study. The ECDET study was established with a nationally representative sample selected with a stratified cluster sampling method from 19 provinces of Turkey. It was a longitudinal study in which the data were collected annually between 2008-2013. The number of mother-child dyads for the five years were 1,052, 916, 871, 820, and 793, respectively.

One of the aims of this study was to investigate the association of maternal religiosity and belief in punishing God with child aggression. The proportion of the participants who identified themselves with religions other than Islam was very small, and no participants identified themselves as being not religious. Therefore, in order to generalize the findings to the Muslim population, mothers who identified themselves as non-Muslim were excluded from the present study. Consequently, the number of participants in this study dropped to 1,050.

2.2 Procedures

The mothers and their focal children were annually visited at their homes. The data were collected through maternal reports and direct observations of trained interviewers. Approximately 1.5 to 2 hours were spent on interviewing each mother and child dyad.

2.3 Measures

In this thesis, measures of aggressive behaviors of children at age seven, maternal power assertion, maternal distress, spousal power relations, and gender role attitudes at age five, and maternal religiosity and belief in punishing God at age four were used. The total number of years of education of the mothers and fathers and sex of the focal children were used as covariates.

2.3.1 *Aggressive Behaviors*

In order to measure aggressive behaviors of children, items from Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI, Eyberg & Robinson, 1983) and Adaptive Social Behavior Inventory (ASBI; Hogan, Scott, & Bauer, 1992) were used. First-order under regulation, aggression towards adults, physical aggression towards peers, and verbal aggression towards peers latent factors were identified with these items. I also estimated a second-order overall aggression latent factor with the first-order aggression latent factors.

The Turkish version of the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI-TR) was developed by Batum and Yagmurlu (2007). In order to adapt items to Turkish, minor changes were made. For example, living with or close to an extended family is one of the characteristics of the families in Turkey (Ataca et al., 2005). Therefore, "Verbally fights with sisters and brothers." was adapted to "Verbally fights with siblings or children of the extended family." The scale was based on maternal reports, and it was used to assess the frequency of the behaviors of children. In the original version, the frequency of each behavior was rated on a 7-point Likert scale. In order to make it easier for the mothers to respond to the items, a 5-point Likert scale was used in the ECBI-TR (In the ECDET study, the total percentage of mothers who had a five or lower level of education was 69%). For the present study, 11 items (e.g., "Hits parents.", "Physically fights with peers.") from ECBI-TR were used to measure the aggression of children. High scores indicated a high frequency of aggressive behaviors.

The Turkish version of the ASBI (ASBI-TR) was adapted by Kumru, Sayil, and Yagmurlu (2011). The purpose of this scale was to measure the social competence of preschool children. Three items (e.g., "Bullies other children [i.e., beats or uses bad words].") of the ASBI-TR measured aggressive behaviors of children. Therefore, in order to take advantage of a large number of items that measured aggressive behaviors of children, these three items were included in the aggression factors. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. High scores indicated a high frequency of behaviors.

Some of the aggression items measured similar behaviors. Therefore, based on semantic similarities, I used four items to identify two item packets. Items and item packets that were used to construct first-order latent factors are shown in Table 1 (detailed presentation is given in statistical analyses.) In the results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), two item packets and ten items indicated four aggression

Table 1: Items and Item Packets of the First-Order Aggression Factors.

Constructs	Items and item packets
Under regulation	1. Destroys toys and other objects. 2. Has temper tantrums 3 and 4. Gets angry when does not get own way. Yells or screams.
Aggression towards adults	5. Talks back to adults. 6. Hits parents.
Physical aggression towards peers	7. Physically fights with peers. 8. Fights with siblings or children of the extended family.
Verbal aggression towards peers	9 and 10. Verbally fights with peers. Verbally fights with siblings or children of the extended family. 11. Teases or provokes peers. 12. Teases peers and calls them names. 13. Bullies peers (i.e., beats them or uses bad language). 14. Disturbs the activities of peers.

dimensions: under regulation, aggression towards adults, physical aggression towards peers, and verbal aggression towards peers. Under regulation had two items and one item packet, aggression towards adults had two items, physical aggression towards peers had two items, and verbal aggression towards peers had four items and one item packet. Additionally, I constructed a second-order overall aggression factor which was indicated by these four first-order dimensions. The average ω coefficient for under regulation was 0.646, (95% *CI* = 0.591, 0.691). For aggression towards adult, physical aggression towards peers, and verbal aggression towards peers the average ω coefficients were 0.573, (95% *CI* = 0.471, 0.658), 0.706 (95% *CI* = 0.642, 0.756), and 0.639, (95% *CI* = 0.563, 0.696), respectively.

Additionally, in order to estimate descriptive statistics, t-tests, and correlations for the first-order latent factors of under regulation, aggression towards adults, physical aggression towards peers, and verbal aggression towards peers, and the second-order overall aggression factor, which we obtained from the measurement model, I estimated factor scores. The standard deviations of the factor scores of under regulation,

aggression towards adults, physical aggression towards peers, verbal aggression towards peers, and overall aggression were .46, .67, .75, .73, and .44, respectively.

2.3.2 *Maternal Power Assertion*

In order to measure maternal power assertion, items from the Parenting Questionnaire (PQ, Sanson, 1994) and Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME, Bradley & Caldwell, 1984) were used. Three measures for the maternal report of harsh punishment, maternal report of obedience demanding, and observer report of harsh punishment were constructed.

The Turkish version of the Parenting Questionnaire (PQ-TR) was adapted by Yagmurlu and Sanson (2009). In each item, mothers reported the frequency of their specific behavior. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert rating scale. For the present study, 11 items (e.g., "I slap or hit my child to control his/her behaviors.") from the PQ-TR were used to measure maternal power assertion.

In order to depict the living conditions of children in Turkey, the Turkish version of HOME (HOME-TR) was adapted by Baydar and Bekar (2007). For the present study, six items (e.g., "How do you respond, if your child hits you in anger?") from the HOME-TR were used to measure maternal power assertion. Three items were based on the maternal reports and rated on a Likert scale, and the other three items were based on the observations of the trained interviewers and rated as binary variables. The items used in the maternal report of harsh punishment were rescaled and adapted to a 5-point Likert scale.

I identified maternal power assertion by the maternal report of harsh punishment, maternal report of obedience demanding, and observer report of harsh punishment. The items and measures representing maternal power assertion are displayed in Table 2. The maternal report of harsh punishment had six items from the PQ-TR and three items from the HOME-TR. The factor representing maternal report of obedience demanding had five items from PQ-TR. The internal reliability of the maternal report of harsh punishment and maternal report of obedience demanding were .86 and .81, respectively.

Lastly, the observer report of harsh punishment was computed as the sum of the three binary items from HOME-TR. However, the majority of the sum of items

Table 2: Items Used to Construct Measures for Maternal Report of Harsh Punishment, Maternal Report of Obedience Demanding, and Observer Report of Harsh Punishment.

Constructs	Items
Maternal report of harsh punishment	1. I slap my child to make him/her behave accurately. 2. I slap or hit my child to control his/her behaviors. 3. I yell at my child when he/she misbehaves. 4. When my child misbehaves, I physically punish him/her (e.g., slapping). 5. In order to correct the behavior of my child, I physically punish him/her (e.g., slapping, shaking, pinching). 6. I slap my child when she/he does not behave obediently. 7. How do you react when your child gets mad at or angry at something? 8. If your child hits you with anger and an instant tension, how do you respond? 9. Children can sometimes strain one's patience. In the last week, how many times did you physically punish (e.g., spanking, shaking, pinching) your child if this was the case?
Maternal report of obedience demanding	1. I expect my child to do what is told without questioning. 2. I expect my child to do what is told without questioning and immediately. 3. When I ask my child for something, I do not mind his/her wishes and objections. 4. I expect my child to obey his parents without questioning. 5. I expect my child to do what is told without arguing.
Observer report of harsh punishment	1. During the interview, the mother spoke out against, humiliated, or scolded the child more than once. 2. The mother physically restrained the child during the interview (e.g., holding the child in her arms to restrict movements of the child, take him/her away even though the child did not want to). 3. The mother physically punished her children (e.g., beating or pinching).

corresponded to zero. Therefore, I coded the sum of the observer report of harsh

punishment as a binary variable (0 – 1).

2.3.3 *Maternal Distress*

In order to measure maternal distress at age five, a subset of items from the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI, Derogatis, 1993) was used. The Turkish version of the scale was adapted by Sahin and Durak (1994) with slight changes. For example, no phrase corresponded to "feeling blue" in Turkish. Therefore, this item was represented in two items: "feeling tearful" and "feeling sad." Additionally, "feeling fearful" and "feeling scared" did not have distinctive meanings in Turkish. Therefore, "feeling fearful" was excluded from the scale. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The items of maternal distress are shown in Table 3.

The studies conducted based on self-reports of Western mothers showed that anxiety symptoms cooccurred with depression symptoms (Azak & Raeder, 2013; Piche et al., 2011). Previous studies showed that in addition to typical depression symptoms, atypical depression symptoms were likely to be reported in collectivistic cultures (Dora & Baydar, 2020). Additionally, in a study conducted with a Turkish sample, it was found that 95% of the patients diagnosed with depression displayed somatization symptoms (Simon et al., 1999). The results of the present study confirmed the previous findings. I found that depression was highly correlated with somatization ($r = .62, p < .001$) and anxiety ($r = .81, p < .001$), and anxiety was also highly correlated with somatization ($r = .72, p < .001$). Therefore, I computed maternal distress with 19 items ($\alpha = .92$; e.g., "Feelings of worthlessness") from the depression, anxiety, and somatization subscales. The skewness of the maternal distress was 1.64 ($SE = .08$). Therefore, the square-root transformation on the variable was used.

2.3.4 *Spousal Power Relations*

Spousal power relations were constructed with two measures: perceived maltreatment by the wife and patriarchal relationship. Perceived maltreatment by the wife was measured with eight items from the Marital Quality Scale (Baydar & Yumbul, 2004), and patriarchal relationship was measured with three items from the Gender Role Behaviors Scale.

Table 3: Items Used to Construct a Measure for Maternal Distress.

Items

1. Nervousness or shakiness inside
2. Faintness or dizziness
3. Pains in the heart or chest
4. Thoughts of ending your life
5. Suddenly scared for no reason
6. Feeling lonely
7. Feeling tearful
8. Feeling sad
9. Feeling no interest in things
10. Nausea or upset stomach
11. Trouble getting your breath
12. Hot or cold spells
13. Numbness or tingling in parts of your body
14. Feeling hopeless about the future
15. Feeling weak in parts of your body
16. Feeling tense or keyed up
17. Spells of terror or panic
18. Feeling so restless you could not sit still
19. Feelings of worthlessness

In the Marital Quality Scale, the items were rated on a 3- point Likert scale, and mothers reported the existence of maltreatment by their husbands. The perceived maltreatment by the wife ranged from verbal maltreatment (e.g., "My husband uses a negative tone of voice when he talks.") to sexual maltreatment (e.g., "My husband forces me to have sexual intercourse with him."). A large number of participants did not report any maltreatment by their husbands. Therefore, the items of perceived maltreatment by the wife were coded as binary variables. The perceived maltreatment by the wife was modeled as a count variable by computing the sum of the binary items (range 0 – 8). In order to simplify the numerical analysis of the count variable, perceived maltreatment by the wife was recoded into six categories. I generated categories for each of less than or equal to one, greater than one and less than or equal

to two, greater than two and less than or equal to three, greater than three and less than or equal to four, greater than four and less than or equal to six, and greater than six. The items are shown in Table 4.

The Gender Role Behaviors Scale was developed with items of the scales of Hoffman and Kloska (1995), Larsen and Long (1988), Prasad and Baron (1996), and Fournier et al. (1983). Three items ($\alpha = .81$; e.g., "It is my husband who represents our family.") from the Gender Role Behaviors scale were used to construct the patriarchal relationship. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. High scores indicated high patriarchal relationships in marriage. The items are shown in Table 5.

Table 4: The Items Used to Construct Perceived Maltreatment by the Wife.

Items	
1.	My husband uses profanity at home.
2.	My husband has coercive behaviors.
3.	At times, my husband shows oppressive behaviors.
4.	My husband uses a negative tone of voice when he talks.
5.	During some of our discussions, my husband verbally maltreats me.
6.	My husband sometimes uses an aggressive tone of voice while we are discussing our problems.
7.	Sometimes my husband verbally maltreats me.
8.	My husband forces me to have sexual intercourse with him.

Note: The items of perceived maltreatment by the wife were rated on 0-1. Therefore, the factor loadings of these items could not be estimated.

2.3.5 Gender Role Attitudes

The Gender Role Attitudes Scale was designed to assess the internalization of traditional gender roles by the mothers (Baydar et al., 2013). It was developed based on the same scales used to measure the patriarchal relationship. The gender role attitudes of mothers were measured with 13 items ($\alpha = .91$; e.g., "The academic achievement of boys is more important than the academic achievement of girls."). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The traditional gender role attitudes of the mothers were represented with high scores. The items are shown in Table 6.

Table 5: Items of the Patriarchal Relationship.

Items
1. It is my husband who represents our family.
2. When my husband returns home, he expects everything is done by me.
3. The one who has the final word in our family is my husband.

2.3.6 Religiosity

In order to measure maternal religiosity, six items from the Religiosity Scale were used. The Religiosity Scale was generated to investigate the importance of religious belief in the daily life and parenting behaviors of the mothers (Baydar et al., 2008). Maternal religiosity was constructed with four indicators: subjective religiosity, religious practice, religious parenting, and Quranic study.

Subjective religiosity was measured with one item "Regardless of the frequency of formal religious practices, on what level do you consider yourself as a religious person?" Religious practice was measured with two items "How often did you worship in the last month?" and "How often did you go to the mosque, shrine, mawlid, or attended prayer groups?" Religious parenting was measured with two items "I or someone from my family teach religious edicts to my child." and "I or someone from my family take my child to the place of worship and religious activities." The items of religious practice were rated on a 6-point Likert scale. In order to provide consistency with other items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, these items were rescaled. Additionally, the Quranic study was measured with one item ("Have you ever attended in Quranic study?"), and it was rated as a binary variable.

2.3.7 Belief in Punishing God

Belief in punishing God was constructed with one item ("When correcting my child's unwanted behaviors, I warn him/her that it is a sin, or that God would punish him/her.") from the Religiosity Scale (Baydar et al., 2008) and one item ("I think that I will be punished for my sins.") from the Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogatis, 1993).

Table 6: Gender Role Attitudes Items.

Items

1. Listening the words of men more than women is natural.
2. More attention should be paid to morals of girls than boys.
3. Boys can be raised less restrictively than girls.
4. While a man and a woman are employed for a job which suits both, it is normal to prefer to hire a man.
5. A woman's remaining at the forefront of a society, is not proper.
6. Girls should help with household chores more than boys.
7. Having an education is more important for boys than girls to provide a living in the future.
8. It is normal that to have the floor for men in a group in which both men and women are included.
9. It is normal for men to have more prestigious jobs than women.
10. The academic achievement of boys is more important than the academic achievement of girls.
11. A husband should have primary responsibility for contributing to a family income.
12. Boys should be raised in a way that they will be courageous and venturous while girls should be raised in a way that they will be sensitive and easygoing.
13. Women should make more sacrifices than men, for the sake of a family.

Items were based on maternal reports measured at age four. The items of belief in punishing God were rated on a 5-point scale. A high level of belief in punishing God was indicated with high scores.

2.4 Statistical Analyses

We used descriptive statistics to present the characteristics of the sample. In order to investigate whether the characteristics of participants who participated in all rounds of the study (retained) and who did not participate in at least one round of the study (attrited) differed from each other, I compared these groups. Differences between the

participants who were retained and who were attrited were tested with *t*-tests and χ^2 -tests.

In order to represent the maternal and child characteristics in the conceptual model, two separate measurement models were estimated. Then, I built a structural model by testing the hypothesized associations step by step. All the analyses for the measurement and structural models were conducted using MPLUS 8.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2019).

The measurement model, which was estimated for four maternal characteristics, included latent constructs for religiosity, parental education, spousal power relations, and maternal power assertion. Religiosity had four indicators: Quranic study, subjective religiosity, religious practice, and religious parenting. Parental education had two indicators that were maternal and paternal education. Spousal power relations had two indicators: household power relations and maltreatment by the husband. Maternal power assertion had three indicators: maternal report of harsh punishment, maternal report of obedience demanding, and observer report of harsh punishment.

In order to estimate a measurement model for aggressive behaviors of children, four first-order latent factors and one second-order latent factor were constructed. Based on the concepts that the items and item packets measured, I constructed four first-order latent factors: under regulation, aggression towards adults, physical aggression towards peers, and verbal aggression towards peers. The results of the CFA pointed out a hierarchical structure for aggressive behaviors of children. The first-order latent factors were interdependent constructs of overall aggression. Therefore, in order to investigate the shared information of the four first-order latent factors with overall aggression, a second-order overall aggression factor as an overarching construct was estimated. Additionally, I included the correlations which the modification indices and nested goodness of fit tests suggested in the measurement model for child characteristics. Therefore, I estimated the correlations among the items from

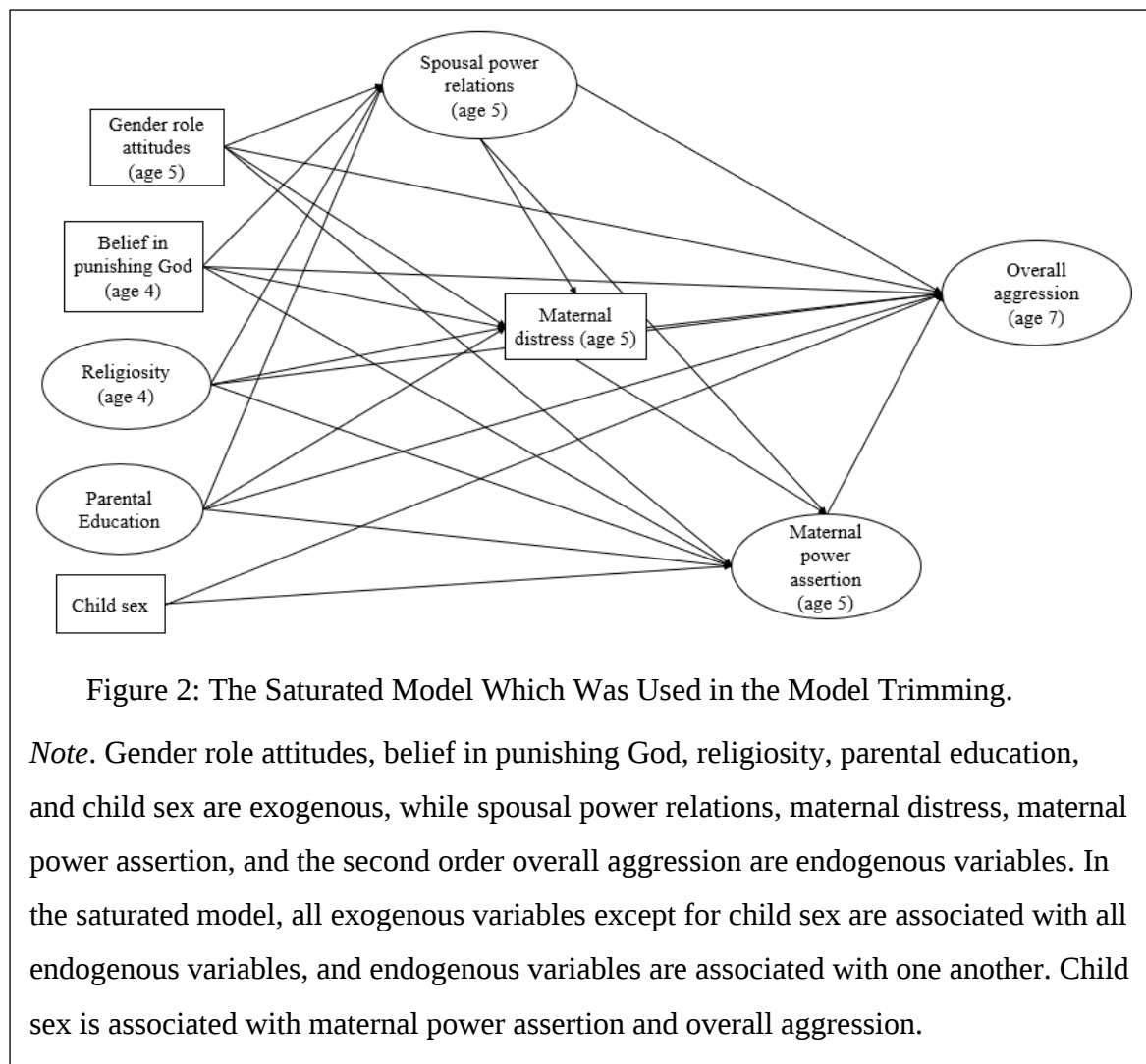
the Adaptive Behavior Inventory, correlation of “Physically fights with brothers, sisters, or children of the extended family.” with “Verbally fights with peers. Verbally fights with brothers, sisters, or children of the extended family.”, and the correlation of “Has temper tantrums.” with “Hits parents.” in the measurement model for child characteristics.

In this thesis, I aimed to investigate the associations of belief in punishing God, religiosity with spousal power relations, maternal power assertion, and aggressive behaviors of children. Therefore, I estimated all these associations in a saturated model (Figure 2). In order to obtain the most parsimonious and best-fitting model, I carried out systematic model trimming, starting with the saturated model. If I had a specific hypothesis for a path, this path was never constrained. For example, I hypothesized that the gender role attitudes of mothers were associated with spousal power relations. Therefore, I did not constrain the path coefficients from gender role attitudes to spousal power relations to zero.

Only if I did not have a specific hypothesis for a path and constraining this path to zero did not substantively deteriorate the fit indices of the model, I constrained this path to zero. In order to decide to constrain a path to zero or not, I assessed the deterioration in the fit indices of the nested model. The count variable (perceived maltreatment by the wife) and the binary variables (Quranic study and observer report of harsh punishment) prevented from obtaining a nested chi-square (likelihood ratio) test for model testing. Therefore, in order to select the most parsimonious and best-fitting model, I needed to use Bayesian fit indices (Klein, 2016).

Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), and the sample-size adjusted Bayesian Information Criterion (SABIC) were the alternative fit indices. When the sample size increases, the comparative correction of AIC becomes smaller (Klein, 2016). BIC directly considers the sample size of the study (Raftery, 1995), and it is more prone to variations when the sample size increases (Klein, 2016). Therefore, in order to assess the deterioration in the fit indices of the nested model, I used SABIC by taking advantage of the large sample size of the study to handle possible variations in BIC (Klein, 2016).

I computed $\Delta SABIC$ by calculating the difference of the SABIC of the nested model with the SABIC of the best-fitting previous model. If a constraint resulted in a substantial deterioration in the fit of the model, SABIC of the nested model was more than six points larger than the SABIC of the best-fitting previous model; I interpreted that parameter as a significant contributor in the model (Kass & Raftery, 1995). In this case, I continued model trimming without constraining this parameter. However, if the constraint did not substantially deteriorate the fit of the nested model, SABIC of the



nested model was not more than six points larger than the SABIC of the best-fitting previous model, I continued the model trimming by implementing this constraint. I interpreted this model as a positive candidate model (Kass & Raftery, 1995). I carried out these systematic testing procedures for all endogenous variables in the model.

In order to handle the missing data, Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimation was used. FIML provides unbiased and consistent parameter estimates by presenting maximum likelihood estimations for all parameters under the assumption of missing at random (MAR). It is superior to listwise deletion, pairwise deletion, similar response pattern imputation (Enders & Bandalos, 2001), the mean substitution, and multiple imputations (Allison, 2012). Missingness at random assumes that missing information in the data can be estimated based on observed information about the cases. FIML uses available data to estimate all parameters in the model (Kline, 2016).

The model that we obtained as a result of the model trimming included indirect, total, and interaction effects, besides direct effects. I estimated the indirect, total, and interaction effects based on the most parsimonious and best-fitting model.



Chapter 3:

RESULTS

The comparisons of the characteristics of participants who were retained and who were attrited are shown in Table 7. The attrition rate over five years, which was the percentage of the mother-child dyads who did not participate in at least one round of the study, was 24.6%. The results showed that mothers who were attrited had higher rates of urban status, higher maternal education, a lower number of children, and lower patriarchal behaviors in their marriage than the mothers who were retained. These characteristics of the mothers who were attrited from the study indicated a higher socioeconomic status than the mothers who were retained in the study. The high socioeconomic status of the participants could result in a high rate of mobility and, consequently, attrition from the study. Additionally, I found that living with or close to an extended family was higher for participants who were retained. This might be a reason for the low mobility rates of the participants who were retained. On the other hand, I found that mothers who were attrited and who were retained did not significantly differ in belief in punishing God, gender role attitudes, perceived maltreatment by the wife, the indicators of religiosity, and maternal power assertion. Additionally, the factor scores of under regulation, aggression towards adults, physical aggression towards peers, verbal aggression towards peers, and overall aggression of children who were attrited and who were retained did not significantly differ.

The descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables are displayed in Table 8. The belief in punishing God was positively correlated with almost all variables. The correlations of belief in punishing God with the indicators of religiosity, traditional gender role attitudes, patriarchal relationship, maternal report of harsh punishment, maternal report of obedience demanding, and the factor scores of under regulation, aggression towards adults, physical aggression towards peers, verbal aggression towards peers, and overall aggression were weak and positive. The correlation of religious practice with religious parenting was positive and moderate, while the other correlations of the indicators of religiosity with each other were positive and weak. Additionally, subjective religiosity and religious practice were weakly and negatively correlated with the factor scores of under regulation, aggression towards adults, physical aggression

Table 7: Comparisons of the Characteristics of Participants Who Were Retained and Who Were Attrited.

Variables	Participants who were retained - Mean (SD) or percentage	Participants who were attrited- Mean (SD) or percentage	Independent Sample <i>t</i> -test / Chi Square test
Child gender ^a (boy)	54.6%	57.8%	.80
Maternal urbanicity ^a	50.8%	63.1%	11.99**
Age of mothers (in years)	30.23 (5.74)	29.63 (5.71)	1.40
Total number of children for a mother	2.26 (.97)	1.85 (.96)	5.89***
Maternal education (completed in years)	5.88 (3.48)	6.49 (3.99)	2.37*
Paternal education (completed in years)	7.37 (3.23)	7.68 (3.80)	1.27
Number of people live in a household	4.97 (1.77)	4.29 (1.61)	5.49***
Number of extended family in a neighborhood	3.35 (2.59)	2.19 (2.49)	-6.32***
Monthly expenditure of per person in the family (\$)	23.01 (17.41)	30.84 (34.50)	5.06***
Belief in punishing God	2.20 (1.01)	2.18 (.93)	-.20
Subjective religiosity	3.64 (.73)	3.71 (.75)	1.20
Religious practice	2.59 (1.12)	2.62 (1.21)	.34
Religious parenting	2.66 (1.01)	2.64 (.97)	-.21
Quranic study ^a (participation)	57.5%	53.4%	.72
Gender role attitudes	5.03 (1.98)	4.60 (2.11)	-1.87
Patriarchal relationship	6.80 (2.32)	6.22 (2.76)	-2.09*
Maltreatment by the husband ^b (no maltreatment)	57.3%	54.2%	3.07
Maternal distress	3.07 (2.02)	3.17 (2.00)	.43
Maternal report of obedience demanding	4.62 (2.38)	4.56 (2.40)	-.22
Maternal report of harsh punishment	2.60 (1.93)	2.86 (2.04)	1.18
Observer report of harsh punishment ^a (no punishment)	93.2%	94.6%	.23
Under regulation ^c	.00 (.47)	-.23 (.21)	-1.01
Aggression towards adults ^c	.00 (.67)	-.27 (.35)	-.81
Physical aggression towards peers ^c	.00 (.75)	-.33 (.45)	-.88
Verbal aggression towards peers ^c	.00 (.73)	-.31 (.43)	-.90
Overall aggression ^c	.00 (.44)	-.20 (.23)	-

Notes. The table shows the comparisons of the participants who were attrited and who were retained. Analyses were conducted with independent samples *t*-test for means and Chi-Square test for percentages. ^aRepresents binary variables; ^brepresents count variable; ^crepresents factors scores estimated by the results of the Confirmatory Factor Analyses. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

Table 8: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of the Variables.

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1.Belief in punishing God	914	2.19	.99	.07*	.11***	.20***	.08*	.18***	.12***	.26***	.30***	.24***	.05	.17***	.18***	.17***	.18***	.18***
2.Subjective religiosity	910	3.65	.73		.28***	.30***	.13***	.01	.01	-.03	.00	.01	.00	-.10**	-.10**	-.09*	-.09**	-.10**
3.Religious practice	907	2.59	1.14			.41***	.21***	.00	-.03	-.04	-.04	-.03	.00	-.09*	-.09*	-.10**	-.10**	-.09**
4.Religious parenting	914	2.66	1.01				.24***	.03	.01	.03	.05	.06	.00	-.06	-.06	-.05	-.05	-.06
5.Quranic study ^a	913	-	-					-.05	-.03	.05	-.02	-.05	-.01	-.04	-.04	-.02	-.02	-.04
6.Gender role attitudes	868	4.99	1.99						.56***	.13***	.25***	.27***	.07*	.05	.05	.07	.07	.05
7.Patriarchal relationship	863	6.75	2.37							.10**	.20***	.23***	.07*	.07*	.06	.09**	.09*	.07*
8.Maternal distress	868	3.08	2.02								.35***	.27***	.13***	.27***	.26***	.24***	.25***	.27***
9.Maternal report of harsh punishment	868	2.62	1.94									.47***	.21***	.29***	.30***	.29***	.29***	.29***
10.Maternal report of obedience demanding	868	4.61	2.38										.12***	.16***	.15***	.13***	.14***	.15***
11.Observer report of harsh punishment ^a	847	-	-											.12***	.14***	.12***	.13***	.13***
12.Under regulation ^b	790	.00	.46												.98***	.92***	.95**	.99***
13.Agression towards adults ^b	790	.00	.67													.94***	.96***	.99***
14. Physical aggression towards peers ^b	790	.00	.75														.99**	.96***
15.Verbal aggression towards peers ^b	790	.00	.73															.97***
16. Overall aggression ^b	790	.00	.44															-

Notes: ^aPoint-biserial correlations are estimated for the categorical variables. ^bFor the descriptive statistics and correlations, factor scores of aggression towards adults, overall aggression towards peers, and physical aggression towards peers which were acquired by CFA models, are used. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

towards peers, verbal aggression towards peers, and overall aggression.

3.1 *The Results of the Measurement Models*

The goodness of fit indices of the measurement model estimated for the four maternal characteristics, which were religiosity, parental education, spousal power relations, and maternal power assertion, were $AIC = 33,340.76$ and $BIC = 33,519.12$, with 36 free parameters. The estimated factor loadings of all indicators of the four latent variables were significant. The unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are shown in Table 9. The standardized factor loadings are shown in Figure 3. Maltreatment by the husband, one of the indicators of spousal power relations, was a count variable. Therefore, the standardized coefficient of maltreatment by the husband could not be estimated in the model. This prevented from comparing the standardized factor loadings of the indicators of spousal power relations.

The results of the measurement model estimated for the child characteristics included four first-order under regulation, aggression towards adults, physical aggression towards peers, and verbal aggression towards peers latent factors. One second-order overall aggression latent factor was estimated based on the results of the CFA. The results of the measurement model for the child characteristics provided a satisfactory fit, $\chi^2(44) = 103.77$, $p < .001$, $CFI = 0.98$, $RMSEA = 0.04$, $95\% CI = [0.03, 0.05]$. The unstandardized factor loadings of all indicators are significant, and they are presented in Table 10 with standard errors. The standardized factor loadings are shown in Figure 4.

3.2 *The Results of the Structural Model*

The most parsimonious and best-fitting model by model trimming was estimated. The goodness of fit indices of the unconstrained model were $AIC = 66,769.75$, $BIC = 67,329.84$, and $SABIC = 66,970.93$, with 113 free parameters. The goodness of fit indices of the steps of the model trimming are shown in Table 11.

The goodness of fit indices of the most parsimonious and best-fitting model were $AIC = 66,778.21$, $BIC = 67,303.61$, and $SABIC = 66,966.94$, with 106 free parameters. The estimated unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are shown in Table 12.

Table 9: Unstandardized Coefficients and Standard Errors of the Measurement Model for Maternal Characteristics.

Latent constructs	Indicators	<i>B</i>	(<i>SE</i>)
Religiosity	Religious parenting	1.000 ^a	(0.000)
	Quranic study ^c	1.142***	(0.174)
	Religious practice	0.996***	(0.101)
	Subjective religiosity	0.474***	(0.061)
Parental education	Paternal education	1.000 ^a	(0.000)
	Maternal education	1.401***	(0.136)
Spousal power relations	Maltreatment by the husband ^b	1.000 ^a	(0.000)
	Patriarchal relationship	0.612***	(0.128)
Maternal power assertion	Maternal report of obedience demanding	1.000 ^a	(0.000)
	Maternal report of harsh punishment	0.948***	(0.087)
	Observer report of harsh punishment ^c	0.804***	(0.168)

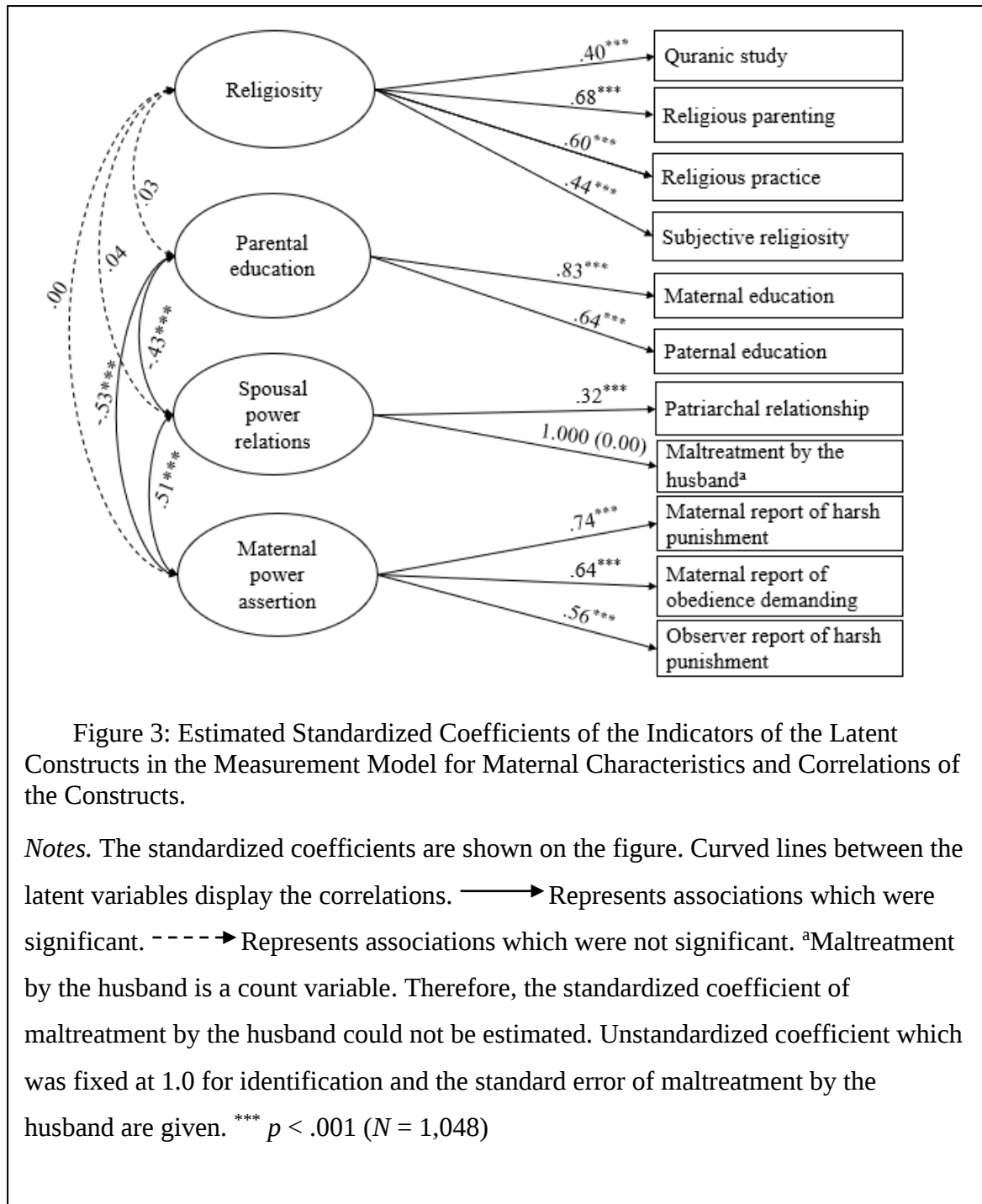
Notes: ^aThe loading of these indicators are fixed at 1.0 for identification.

^bMaltreatment by the husband is a count variable. ^cQuranic study and observer report of harsh punishment are categorical variables. *** $p < .001$

The standardized coefficients of the most parsimonious model are shown in Figure 5. The proportion of variance in overall aggressive behaviors of children at age 7 accounted for by the most parsimonious and best-fitting model is 22%.

Constraining the path coefficients from parental education to spousal power relations (Table 11, Model II) and maternal power assertion (Table 11, Model VI) to zero caused significant deteriorations in the fit of the model. Therefore, although I did not hypothesize a direct association of parental education with spousal power relations and maternal power assertion, I freely estimated these parameters in the model.

I constrained the coefficients from parental education (Table 11, Model III) and gender role attitudes (Table 11, Model IV) to maternal distress, and the coefficients from child sex (Table 11, Model V) and gender role attitudes (Table 11, Model VII) to



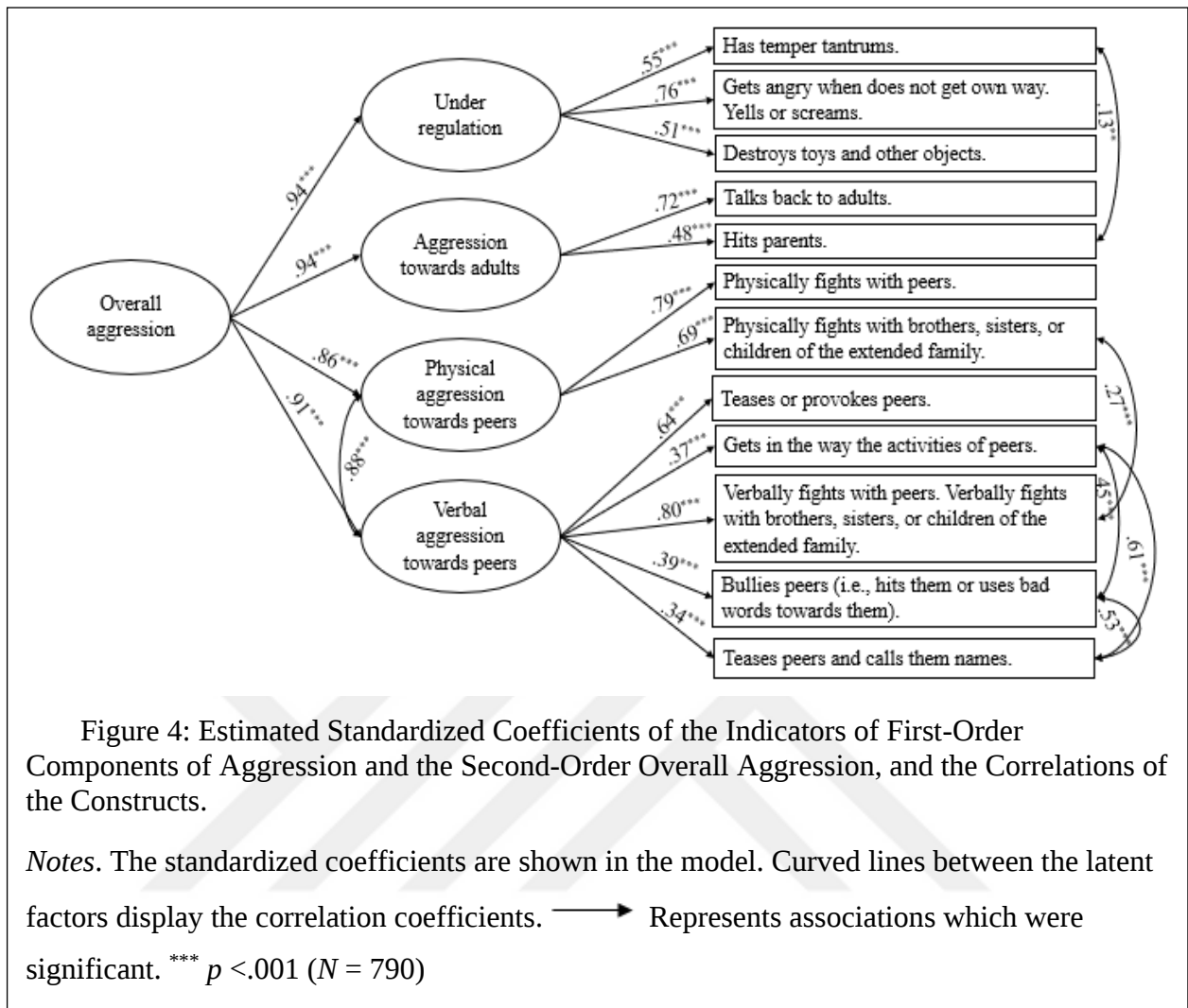
maternal power assertion to zero. Additionally, the coefficients from parental education (Table 11, Model VIII), gender role attitudes (Table 11, Model IX), and maternal distress (Table 11, Model X) to overall aggression were constrained to zero. As shown in Table 11, any of the constraints did not cause a significant deterioration in the model fit. Therefore, I kept these constraints to estimate the most parsimonious and best-fitting model.

Table 10: Unstandardized Coefficients and Standard Errors of the Indicators of the Confirmatory Factor Analyses Model for Child Characteristics.

First/Second-order factors	Indicators	<i>B</i>	(<i>SE</i>)
Under regulation	Destroys toys and other objects.	1.000 ^a	(0.000)
	Gets angry when does not get own way.	1.524***	(0.120)
	Yells or screams.		
Aggression towards adults	Has temper tantrums.	0.957***	(0.089)
	Talks back to adults.	1.000 ^a	(0.000)
	Hits parents.	0.383***	(0.034)
Physical aggression towards peers	Physically fights with peers.	1.000 ^a	(0.000)
	Physically fights with brothers, sisters, or children of the extended family.	0.912***	(0.052)
Verbal aggression towards peers	Verbally fights with brothers, sisters, or children of the extended family.	1.000 ^a	(0.000)
	Verbally fights with peers.		
	Gets in the way the activities of peers.	0.455***	(0.046)
	Teases or provokes peers.	0.686***	(0.040)
	Bullies peers (i.e., hits them or uses bad words towards them).	0.486***	(0.048)
Overall aggression	Teases peers and calls them names.	0.429***	(0.049)
	Under regulation	1.000 ^a	(0.000)
	Aggression towards adults	1.465***	(0.126)
	Physical aggression towards peers	1.448***	(0.130)
	Verbal aggression towards peers	1.481***	(0.127)

Notes: ^aThe loading of this indicator is fixed at 1.0 for identification. *** $p < .001$
($N = 790$)

I present the results of the most parsimonious and best-fitting model (Table 11, Model X) and report the standardized coefficients. As hypothesized in the conceptual model, controlling for parental education, belief in punishing God was positively but weakly ($\beta = .12, p = .014$) associated with spousal power relations. I hypothesized that



the gender role attitudes of the mothers were associated with spousal power relations. However, this hypothesis was not supported, and I found that the gender role attitudes of the mothers ($\beta = .07, p = .371$) were not significantly associated with spousal power relations. Additionally, maternal religiosity ($\beta = .03, p = .636$) was not significantly associated with spousal power relations.

The association of spousal power relations ($\beta = .47, p < .001$) with maternal distress was positive and moderate. At the same time, belief in punishing God ($\beta = .15, p < .001$) was positively but weakly associated with maternal distress. However, maternal religiosity ($\beta = -.07, p = .147$) was not significantly associated with maternal distress.

Table 11: AIC, BIC, and SABIC Scores of Gradually Parsimonious Model Predicting Spousal Power Relations, Maternal Distress, Maternal Power Assertion, and Overall Aggressive Behaviors of Children.

Descriptions of model simplifications	<i>AIC</i>	<i>BIC</i>	<i>SABIC</i>	ΔAIC	ΔBIC	$\Delta SABIC$	number of free parameters
Model I. Unconstrained model: All parameters were freely estimated.	66,769.75	67,329.84	66,970.93				113
Model II. The path coefficients from parental education to spousal power relations were constrained to zero.	66,791.63	67,346.76	66,991.03	-21.88	-16.92	-20.01	112
Model III. The path coefficients from parental education to maternal distress were constrained to zero.	66,772.99	67,328.13	66,972.40	-3.25	1.71	-1.47	112
Model IV. The path coefficients from parental education and gender role attitudes to maternal distress were constrained to zero.	66,772.83	67,323.01	66,970.46	0.16	5.11	1.94	111
Model V. The path coefficients from child sex to maternal power assertion were constrained to zero.	66,771.60	67,316.82	66,967.44	1.24	6.19	3.02	110
Model VI. The path coefficients from child sex and parental education to maternal power assertion were constrained to zero.	66,782.70	67,322.96	66,976.76	-11.1	-6.14	-9.32	109
Model VII. The path coefficients from child sex and gender role attitudes to maternal power assertion were constrained to zero.	66,775.9	67,316.16	66,969.96	-4.30	0.66	-2.52	109
Model VIII. The path coefficients from parental education to overall aggression were constrained to zero.	66,774.79	67,310.10	66,967.07	1.11	6.07	2.89	108
Model IX. The path coefficients from parental education and maternal distress to overall aggression were constrained to zero.	66,774.94	67,305.29	66,965.44	-0.15	4.81	1.63	107
Model X. The path coefficients from parental education, maternal distress, and gender role attitudes to overall aggression were constrained to zero.	66,778.21	67303.61	66966.94	-3.28	1.68	-1.50	106

Notes: If the SABIC of the nested model was more than six points larger than the SABIC of the best-fitting previous model; we interpreted that as a substantive deterioration in the fit of the model. Therefore, the explained path coefficients of Model II and Model VI were not constrained to zero.

Table 12: The Estimated Unstandardized Coefficients (Standard Errors) of the Most Parsimonious and Best-Fitting Model.

Predictor Variables	Predicted Variables			
	Spousal power relations	Maternal distress	Maternal power assertion	Overall aggression towards
Belief in punishing God	0.139* (0.056)	0.302*** (0.072)	0.264*** (0.061)	0.040* (0.020)
Religiosity	0.047 (0.100)	-0.201 (0.142)	-0.070 (0.110)	-0.114** (0.040)
Gender role attitudes	0.039 (0.043)			-0.026** (0.008)
Parental education	-0.227*** (0.43)		-0.211*** (0.045)	
Spousal power relations		0.783*** (0.083)	0.246** (0.090)	0.072** (0.024)
Maternal distress			0.163*** (0.036)	
Maternal power assertion				0.085*** (0.024)
Child sex				0.129** (0.038)

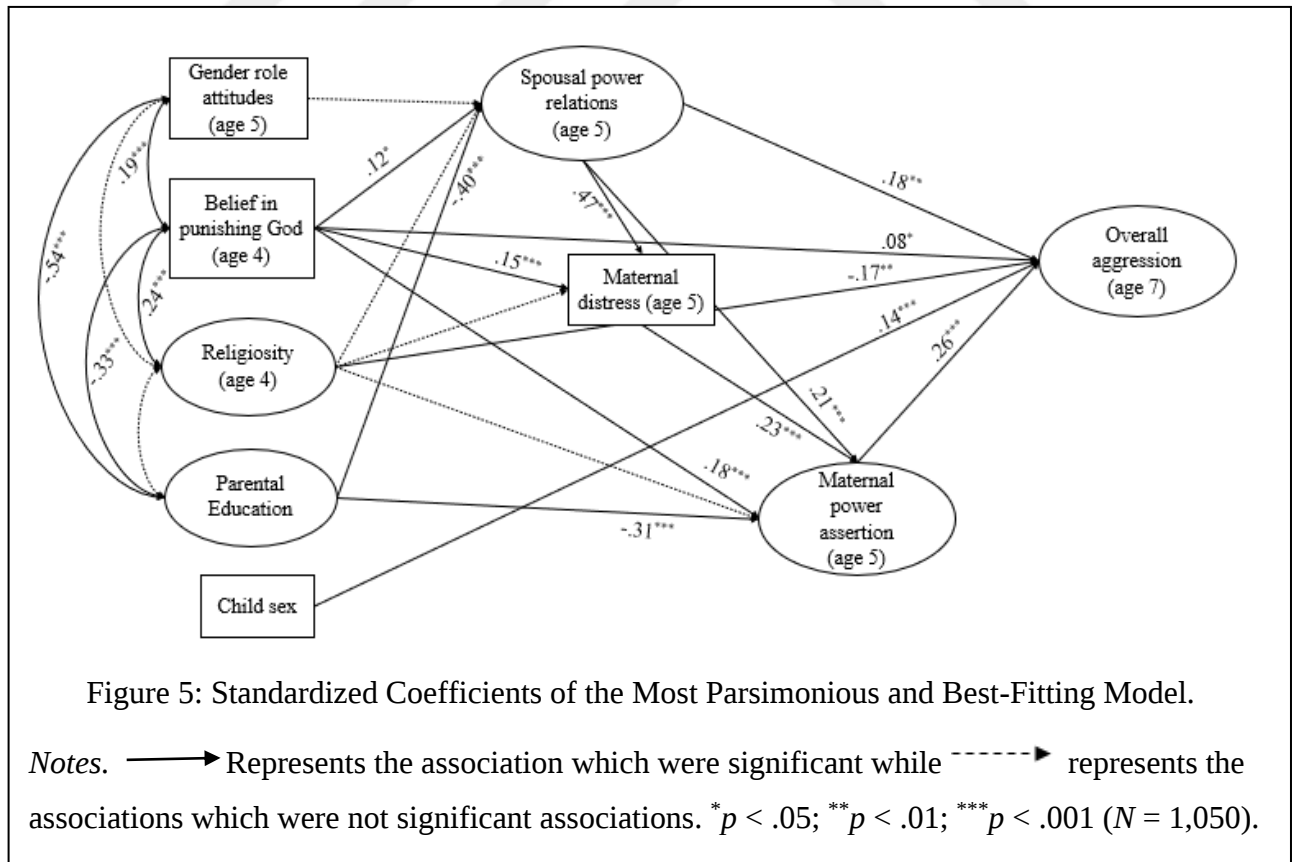
Notes. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ ($N = 1,050$).

The results of the analyses conducted to estimate the predictors of maternal power assertion supported the hypotheses of the present study. I found that controlling for parental education, belief in punishing God ($\beta = .18, p < .001$), spousal power relations ($\beta = .21, p = .004$), and maternal distress ($\beta = .23, p < .001$) were positively but weakly associated with maternal power assertion. However, I did not find a significant direct association of maternal religiosity ($\beta = -.03, p = .522$) with maternal power assertion.

As hypothesized, spousal power relations ($\beta = .18, p = .002$) and maternal power assertion ($\beta = .26, p < .001$) at age five were directly and positively, but weakly, associated with aggressive behaviors of children at age seven. Additionally, I found that maternal religiosity ($\beta = -.17, p = .001$) had a direct, negative, but weak association with child aggression. The belief in punishing God ($\beta = .08, p = .049$) had a direct, positive but weak association with aggressive behaviors of children. The results also showed that, as expected, boys had relatively higher aggressive behaviors than girls ($\beta = .14, p < .001$).

As depicted in Figure 5, the most parsimonious and best-fitting model had indirect effects besides the direct effects. The standardized total effect of the belief in punishing God on maternal power assertion was significant ($\beta = 0.25$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < .001$). The results showed that the association of belief in punishing God with maternal power assertion was positively but weakly mediated by maternal distress ($\beta = 0.03$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = .002$). Additionally, the association of belief in punishing God with maternal power assertion was positively but weakly mediated by spousal power relations and maternal distress ($\beta = 0.01$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = .032$). However, the indirect effect of belief in punishing God on maternal power assertion through spousal power relations was not significant ($\beta = 0.02$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = .075$). The results revealed that the indirect effects of belief in punishing God on maternal power assertion were weak, and 72% of the total effect of belief in punishing God on maternal power assertion was accounted for by the direct effect of belief in punishing God on maternal power assertion.

I hypothesized that maternal distress partially mediated the association of spousal power relations with maternal power assertion. The total effect ($\beta = 0.31$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .001$) and the indirect effect of spousal power relations on maternal power assertion



through maternal distress were positive ($\beta = 0.11$, $SE = 0.02$, $p < .001$). As expected, maternal distress partially mediated the association of spousal power relations with maternal power assertion.

The indirect effects of belief in punishing God and the religiosity of mothers on the aggressive behaviors of children were also estimated. The standardized total effect of belief in punishing God on overall aggression was positive but weak ($\beta = 0.17$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < .001$). Even though there was a positive and significant total indirect effect of belief in punishing God on child aggression, the indirect effect through maternal power assertion was almost zero ($\beta = 0.05$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = .003$). Additionally, the standardized total effect of religiosity on overall aggression was negative but weak ($\beta = -0.12$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = .004$). However, neither the total indirect effect nor any specific indirect effect of religiosity on the overall aggression of children was significant.

I also estimated the indirect and total effects of spousal power relations on child aggression. The results showed that the standardized total effect of spousal power relations on aggressive behaviors of children was positive and moderate ($\beta = 0.27$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < .001$). Maternal power assertion partially mediated this association ($\beta = 0.05$, $SE = 0.02$, $p = .013$).

I also hypothesized that the gender role attitudes of the mothers moderated the association of spousal power relations with maternal distress. However, as opposed to the hypothesis, it was found that the gender role attitudes of the mothers ($\beta = -0.01$, $SE = 0.02$, $p = .818$) did not significantly moderate the association of spousal power relations with maternal distress.

Exploratory analyses to estimate four models that test the direct effects of belief in punishing God and maternal power assertion on the four components of overall aggression were conducted, controlling for their direct effects on overall aggression. The results showed that belief in punishing God ($\beta = 0.02$, $p = .614$) and maternal power assertion ($\beta = -0.05$, $p = .298$) were not directly associated with physical aggression towards peers. Belief in punishing God ($\beta = 0.01$, $p = .658$) and maternal power assertion ($\beta = -0.05$, $p = .202$) were not directly associated with verbal aggression towards peers. Additionally, belief in punishing God ($\beta = 0.00$, $p = .956$) and maternal power assertion ($\beta = 0.08$, $p = .177$) were not directly associated with aggression

towards adults. Lastly, belief in punishing God ($\beta = -0.04$, $p = .261$) and maternal power assertion ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = .069$) were not also directly associated with under regulation.



Chapter 4:

DISCUSSION

This thesis aimed to investigate the association of maternal religiosity with the power relations in the family and aggressive behaviors of children. Previous studies examined the association of parental religiosity with spousal relationships (Mahoney et al., 2003; Mahoney, 2010) and parent-child relationships (De Roos et al., 2004; Kumru et al., 2019; Mahoney et al., 2020; Read, 2003). Except for very few of them (Alsarhi et al., 2019; Bartkowski et al., 2008; Bornstein et al., 2017; Strayhorn et al., 1990), the literature on the association of parental religiosity with child development is notably scarce. Strayhorn et al. (1990) defined religiosity as if theistic religiosity and focused on personal religiousness. Religiosity was defined as if a matter for personal life in Bornstein et al. (2017). Alsarhi et al. (2019) defined religiosity as if an aspect that was a matter of both social institutions and personal life. In this range of the definition of religiosity, Bartkowski et al. (2008) defined religiosity as if a factor that affected the cohesion and belongingness of the family.

Despite the various definitions of religiosity, it was not defined as if a personal belief derived from fear of divine punishment. Correspondingly, the association of maternal belief in punishing God with power relations in the family and child development has not been studied. Therefore, in this thesis, the role of maternal belief in punishing God on power relations in the family was examined. I investigated the association of maternal belief in punishing God with asymmetrical power relations between spouses, maternal power assertion, and child aggression using longitudinal and nationally representative data.

The findings of this thesis showed that different dimensions of maternal religiosity had positive or adverse effects on child development. For the first time, I explored that maternal belief in punishing God, which derived from fear of divine punishment and acceptance of the ultimate authority of God, was directly and positively associated with aggressive behaviors of children. However, the effect size was fairly small (standardized $\beta = .08$; Standardized β coefficients of the direct and indirect effects of the model were used to indicate the effect sizes.)

In this thesis, I found that maternal religiosity, which was measured with subjective religiosity, religious practices, and religious parenting, was negatively associated with child aggression (standardized $\beta = -.17$). In a study conducted with Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Class data, Bartkowski et al. (2008) found that religious attendance and integration of parents with a religious network were positively associated with parental involvement and child development. It is possible to interpret the findings of this thesis, similar to the findings of Bartkowski et al. (2008). Even though the effect size is small, the negative association of maternal religiosity with child aggression showed a beneficial role of maternal religiosity in child development.

Additionally, as addressed in Johnson et al.'s (2013) study, beliefs in the benevolent and authoritarian concepts of God were associated with the social behaviors of individuals. They found that those authoritarian concepts of God were positive while benevolent concepts of God were negatively associated with aggressive behaviors among Catholic Christians and non-Catholic Christians. Despite the fact that belief in the benevolent concept of God was not considered in the framework of this thesis, the negative association of maternal religiosity with aggressive behaviors of children might be explained based on the negative association of belief in the benevolent concept of God with aggressive behaviors. Accordingly, belief in benevolent God might foster forgiving and tolerating behaviors of mothers by modeling the forgiving and tolerating characteristics of God. Those forgiving and tolerating behaviors of mothers might provide a model for children and prevent the development of aggressive behaviors.

The association of belief in divine punishment, which was one of the aspects of maternal religiosity, with child development was previously studied in a sole study of Alsarhi et al. (2019). Similar to their hypothesis but contrary to their findings, I found that the association of belief in punishing God with child aggression was mediated by maternal power assertion with a total effect size of 0.17. The use of a threat of divine punishment as a disciplinary tool might provide external control and interfere with the development of regulatory skills in children (Eisenberg & Valiente, 2002).

The findings of this thesis on the role of maternal power assertion in the association of belief in punishing God with child aggression were comparable with the findings of Bornstein et al. (2017) and the meta-analyses of Mahoney et al. (2001). However, a cross-sectional study conducted with 271 preschool children who were five years old

and their mothers found much higher associations of strict God concept with power assertive parenting practices (De Roos et al., 2004). Another study was conducted with 647 adults in order to investigate the association of religiosity with attitudes towards corporal punishment. Ellison and Bradshaw (2009) found that the hierarchical image of God and belief in Hell were modestly associated with positive attitudes towards power assertive parenting. The conceptualization of strict God concept with multiple characteristics (e.g., “God condemns, God punishes, God is strict, God controls me.”) in De Roos et al. (2004) and the cross-sectional methods of the latter two studies might have resulted in a stronger association.

The findings of this thesis supported the role of parental religiosity in parenting responsibilities such as raising obedient children in the Judeo-Christian religion (e.g., Mahoney et al., 2003). Alghafli et al. (2014) stated that Islam guides the daily life, parenting attitudes and behaviors, and spousal responsibilities of Muslims. In line with the endorsement of raising obedient children in Turkish culture (Kumru et al., 2019), I found that mothers who had a high belief in punishing God tended to use power assertive parenting (standardized $\beta = .18$). The effect of belief in punishing God on maternal power assertion indicated that maternal belief in punishing God was a factor that possibly influenced maternal power assertion in a culture characterized by the endorsement of parental authority (Baydar & Akçınar, 2018).

It was previously found that belief in the inerrancy of religious scripts was positively associated with inequalitarian gender role behaviors for Christian and Muslim women (Sherkat, 2000). Conservative Protestantism was associated with traditional and authoritarian gender role behaviors, and masculine and traditional gender role behaviors were associated with the perpetuation of abusive behaviors towards the wife (Ellison et al., 1999). The positive association of belief in punishing God with spousal power relations had in agreement with literature. Mothers who believe in punishing God were likely to be exposed to asymmetrical power relations in marriage with an effect size of 0.12. Considering the link between belief in punishing God and scriptural inerrancy, following the previous studies (e.g., Mahoney et al., 2003; Murray-Swank et al., 2006), it was possible to expect a positive link between belief in punishing God to power differential in spousal relations favoring the male authority.

Unlike previous studies, no association of maternal religiosity with spousal power relations and maternal power assertion was found in this thesis. Previous studies conceptualized religiosity mostly as liberal and conservative (Mahoney et al., 2001; Mahoney, 2020; Murray-Swank et al., 2006). However, I distinguished between maternal belief in punishing God and maternal religiosity. The result might indicate that fear of punishment by God was a factor that was associated with asymmetrical power relations in a family. Therefore, in order to examine the role of maternal religiosity on power relations in the family, the findings of this thesis stipulated the need for investigation of different aspects of religiosities.

Considering the association of spousal power relations with maternal distress (Proulx et al., 2007; Whisman, 2001) and maternal power assertion (Akçınar, 2017; Erel & Burman, 1995; Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2006), and the association of maternal distress with maternal power assertion (Barry et al., 2005), the mediating role of maternal distress on the association of spousal power relations with maternal power assertion was investigated in this thesis. The findings showed that despite the acceptance of the prevalence of patriarchal values, power differential in marriage was strongly and positively associated with maternal distress (standardized $\beta = .47$). Maternal distress and spousal power relations were positively and modestly associated with maternal power assertion. In other words, mothers who had high maternal distress and perceived power differential favoring their husbands were more likely to use power assertive parenting behaviors.

In agreement with previous studies, I found that spousal power relations (Capaldi et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2021) and maternal power assertion (Baydar & Akcinar, 2018; Gülseven et al., 2018) were directly associated with aggressive behaviors of children. Among the factors that were positively associated with aggressive behaviors of children, maternal power assertion was the strongest factor that predicted aggressive behaviors of children (standardized $\beta = .26$). These findings showed that exposure to the asymmetrical power relations between parents and maternal power assertion probably led to legitimization and acceptance of the use of power in order to control behaviors, thoughts, and decisions. In a family where children were exposed to asymmetrical power relations, they learned to use power to control and manipulate others (Dishion & Patterson, 2015).

The findings of this thesis showed that power differential between spouses favoring the husband was directly associated with child aggression, and maternal power assertion partially mediated this association. As emphasized in the Bioecological Systems theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007) and reviewed in Chuang et al.'s (2018) study, individuals were directly affected by the family members who were engaged in the proximal processes, and macro-level factors affected these relationships. Maternal religiosity and patriarchal ideology, macro-level factors considered in this thesis, influenced both spousal relations and the mother-child relationship. The findings of the thesis suggested parallel paths from the enactment of power in the spousal relationship and maternal power assertion to child aggression. Due to the fact that maternal power assertion partially mediated the association of spousal power relations with aggressive behaviors of children, the path from the enactment of power in the asymmetrical spousal relations favoring the husband to aggressive behaviors was not linear.

I also investigated (i) the association of gender role attitudes with spousal power relations; and (ii) the interaction effect of gender role attitudes with the spousal power relations on maternal distress. In a review, Davis and Greenstein (2009) stated that among the cultural factors, the gender role ideology of individuals was associated with gender role behaviors. Güvenç (2014) found that if a woman had egalitarian gender role attitudes and perceived marital relations as patriarchal, she found her situation as stressful. Accordingly, I hypothesized that maternal distress of a woman who had asymmetrical power relations favoring her husband was higher if she held egalitarian gender role attitudes. However, contrary to the hypothesis and the findings of previous studies, gender role attitudes were not associated with spousal power relations. The association of spousal power relations with maternal distress did not differ based on the gender role attitudes of mothers. The nonsignificant association of gender role attitudes with spousal power relations might demonstrate that the gender role attitudes of husbands might be a more powerful predictor of asymmetrical power relations in the family than the gender role attitudes of wives (Kroska, 2004, as cited in Davis & Greenstein, 2009).

The findings of this thesis indicated that parental education was negatively associated with spousal power relations and maternal power assertion with the effect sizes of $-.40$ and $-.31$, respectively. Besides all the factors that predicted power relations

in the family, parental education was a protective factor in the transmission from asymmetrical power relations in the family to aggressive behaviors of children.

4.1 Limitations

This thesis has some limitations. First, maternal religiosity and belief in punishing God were not measured with standardized scales. Despite the development of new scales to investigate the psychology of religion in Islam, a scale with high generalizability and predictive validity is still needed (Abu-Raiya & Hill, 2014). Islamic religiosity is a multidimensional construct that has similarities and differences with other religions, and the values of Islamic religiosity are intertwined with culture. Therefore, people who believe in the same religion might show different attitudes and behaviors in different regions (Abu-Raiya & Hill, 2014). However, Abu-Raiya and Hill (2014) suggested that testing scales in different cultures might provide information to operationalize religious constructs. Additionally, using a standardized scale that measures belief in punishing God with more items that quantify fear of divine punishment and scriptural inerrancy might contribute to capturing variations in belief in punishing God.

Second, except for the observer-report of harsh punishment, this thesis is predominantly based on maternal reports. Maternal distress might lead to biased assessments of mothers by eliciting negative appraisals of children (Barry et al., 2005; Deater-Deckard et al., 2005; Lazarus, 1993). Therefore, in order to provide comparable results, aggressive behaviors of children might also be measured with teacher reports and self-reports of children.

Third, the direct effects of the maternal power assertion and spousal power relations on child aggression are weaker than my expectations. In order to investigate possible reasons for the weakness of these associations, the role of possible protective factors on the association of power relations in the family should be considered. Social support from extended family is an important protective factor for child development in a collectivist culture (Baydar et al., 2014). Even though families in Turkey are nuclear, family members are emotionally and socially bonded to extended family (Ataca, 2009), and nuclear families are “functionally extended” (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982, cited in Ataca, 2009). For example, grandparents have emotional and instrumental support to raise

grandchildren. Instrumental support from the extended family decreases the childcare responsibilities of a mother and thereby may have a buffering role in maternal distress (Baydar et al., 2014). Accordingly, considering the positive association of maternal distress with maternal power assertion, instrumental support from the extended family buffer maternal power assertion towards children. Additionally, social support from the extended family might provide alternative role models and positive interactions to children (Akcinar & Baydar, 2018). These role models and interactions might prevent the development of child aggression. Therefore, in order to examine the association of power relations in the family with child aggression, the “functionally extended” characteristics of families in Turkey and the possible protective role of social and instrumental support from the extended family should be considered in further research.

Fourth, despite the fact that nuclear families are examined in this thesis, along with the traditional family characteristics in Turkey, it is possible to observe other asymmetrical power relations in the family. For example, due to gender and generation hierarchies, a daughter-in-law (mother) has the most subordinate role in the extended family. Regarding the same-sex members of a traditional family, a mother-in-law is superior to the mother and has the power to control her because of the generation hierarchy (Güvenç, 2014). Therefore, other asymmetrical power relations in the family can be addressed to investigate the association of religiosity with power relations in the family.

4.2 Conclusion

To my knowledge, this thesis was the first study that found religiosity was a multidimensional construct associated with power relations in the family and child development. Therefore, in order to examine the role of religiosity in family relations, the well-being of individuals, and child development, I focused on the different dimensions of religiosity. Additionally, the findings provided information on the role of religiosity in the association of power relations in the family in a non-Western and predominantly Muslim country. Regarding the dominance of research on Western and Christian contexts, this is one of the strengths of this thesis.

The findings showed that asymmetrical power relations favoring husbands affected the well-being of mothers adversely, and it was directly and indirectly associated with

maternal power assertion. This finding suggested that even in a society with patriarchal and authoritarian characteristics, patriarchal family relations had detrimental effects on family relations. Additionally, despite the weakness of the associations, the power differential between spouses favoring the husband was directly and indirectly associated with aggressive behaviors of children through maternal power assertion. These findings pointed out the adverse effects of the practice of patriarchy on family relations and the aggressive behaviors of children. Therefore, in order to reduce possible adverse effects of the asymmetrical power relations favoring the husband on maternal well-being and child aggression and prevent the enactment of power in the mother-child relationship, policies that support the egalitarian gender roles for men and women can be developed and implemented.

In the framework of power relations in the family, power differential in spousal relations favoring the husband was associated with the power dynamics of the family. However, the findings of this thesis showed that parental education was a protective factor that prevented the enactment of power differential in spousal relations favoring husband and maternal power assertion. The results indicate that parental education is a factor that affects family dynamics. Along with the positive association of education with maternal employment, egalitarian gender role attitudes, and egalitarian division of household labor (Davis & Greenstein, 2009), parental education may have a preventive role in asymmetrical spousal relations favoring husbands. In line with this, it will prevent the enactment of power in the mother-child relationship by allowing mothers to develop positive management skills.

As found in the Value of Children II study (Kağıtçıbaşı & Ataca, 2005), the protective role of parental education in the enactment of power in the mother-children relations might be associated with the modernization of Turkey. As shown in that study, especially in urban families, obedience expectation of parents was decreased (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010). In line with this, the negative association of parental education with the enactment of power differential by mothers towards children might indicate the decrease in the obedience expectations by the mothers.

The findings provided different perspectives for practitioners who work with religious groups. Although the effect sizes were small, this thesis demonstrated that maternal religiosity and belief in punishing God had opposing roles in child aggression.

Belief in punishing God positively affected the enactment of power in two proximal processes: spousal relations and mother-child relationships. However, maternal religiosity was negatively associated with aggressive behaviors of children. Therefore, the findings suggest that clinicians who work with families whose religiosity is an important aspect of their lives may consider religiosity is a multidimensional construct. Different religious beliefs may have opposing roles in spousal relations, parent-child relationships, individual well-being, and the behavioral development of children.



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