

# INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRESCHOOLERS' COMPETITION STYLES, ANXIETY LEVELS AND THEIR PARENTS' PARENTAL STYLES

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between preschoolers' competition styles, anxiety levels, and their parents' parental styles. The sample of the study consists of 400 preschool children and their parents. The Demographic Information Form, Parenting Style Scale, Preschool Competition Questionnaire, and Anxiety Scale for Preschool Children were used as data collection tools in this quantitative survey-based study. As a result of the research, significant negative correlation was found between the task-oriented competition style of preschool children and their generalized anxiety level, separation anxiety, specific phobia anxiety and total anxiety level. A negative significant relationship was found in the other-referenced competition and separation anxiety sub-dimension. A negative significant correlation was found between the maintenance of dominance hierarchy style and specific phobia anxiety and total anxiety. A negative significant relationship was found between democratic parenting style and social anxiety sub-dimension, and total anxiety level. A positive significant relationship was found between parents' authoritarian and overprotective parenting styles and all sub-dimensions of anxiety scale and total anxiety level. There was no significant relationship between permissive parenting style and any of the sub-dimensions of the anxiety scale and total of the anxiety scale. A positive significant relationship was found between democratic parenting style and task-oriented competition style.

**Keywords:** Parental styles, anxiety levels, competitive styles, preschool.

## INTRODUCTION

Every parent has open or hidden ideas about what kind of person their child should be in the future. In order for the child to reach this goal in the future, parents exhibit various styles. This diversity in the behavior of parents leads to different child-rearing behaviors and styles such as being authoritarian, permissive, democratic and overprotective (Karabulut Demir, 2007). In other words, parents' behavior is a reflection of their styles. Parental styles are the whole of the behaviors that parents put forward from the moment their children are born. Parental styles, which are also defined as the situation of parents reacting positively or negatively to individuals, objects, environments, and events that can be effective in the development of their children, are important in terms of both the educational sciences and psychology (Alisinanoğlu,

2003). Styles exhibited by parents play an important role in the healthy development of children psychologically and physically (Sümer et al., 2010). Parental styles affect the child-parent relationship and the development of children in the first years of their lives (Fitzgerald & White, 2003). In the literature, it has been emphasized that parental styles are highly effective on children's social, emotional, and cognitive development (Arnott & Brown, 2013) and their behaviors and academic success (Blissett & Haycraft, 2008; Bornstein & Bornstein, 2007; Braza et al., 2015; Huang & Gove, 2015; Rocha Lopes et al., 2015; Sak et al., 2015; Wang, 2014). There are many classifications of parental styles (Bakhla et al., 2013; Baumrind et al., 2010; Hibbard & Walton, 2014; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). In this study, it was decided to consider parental styles under four headings: democratic style, authoritarian style, permissive style, and overprotective style.

**Authoritarian Parental Style;** Parents with this style harm children's self-confidence because they do not allow their children to take responsibility (Günalp, 2017). These parents think that their children's cognitive, social and personality development is unimportant. The priority of these parents is to fully comply with the rules determined by a strict understanding of discipline (Köksal, 2016). Children have a pessimistic view of life in the face of pressure caused by authoritarian parenting. The child cannot act alone when her/his parents do not allow it. Children expect constant direction and control from their parents (Yavuzer, 2011). Parents do not allow the child to express their own feelings and thoughts. Authoritarian parents do not take into account their children's preferences and often place punishment on raising children. They do not give children free choice; they approach the child in a cold, rigid, and sharp way (Aydoğan Arslan, 2017).

**Permissive Parental Style:** It is known that this style prevents the children's personalities and behaviors from emerging in a healthy way. Permissive parents let their kids do whatever they want. This situation causes children to exhibit behaviors that can be described as spoiled after a while. As a result, they may come into conflict with their parents (Uykan & Akkaynak, 2019). These parents give their children unlimited freedom, fulfill their insistent demands, indulge them, and give in easily to them. They never control their children; they neglect them (Aydoğan Arslan, 2017). As a result of the permissive style, the child tries to reach the undeserved ones in her/his social environment and grows up as a self-centered, spoiled individual who cannot take responsibility (Mutallimova, 2014).

**Democratic Parenting Style:** in this parental style, tolerance, affection, and respect are not subject to any conditions (Bolattekin, 2014). Parents accept and love children unconditionally. In family environments where this style is exhibited, children are allowed to act independently within the framework of certain limits and rules. Children's individual differences are also taken into account. In democratic style, the child's behavior is limited when necessary. When parents identify behaviors that are accepted and appreciated in the family, children also develop their ability to control themselves. It is the healthiest style among parental styles. The rules in the family are understandable and clear. Parents do not solve problems on behalf of the child but instead show the child problem-solving strategies (Kuzgun, 1972).

**Overprotective Parental Style:** parents with this style are very attentive to children. Overprotective parents oppose all decisions made by the child and make all decisions for the child. For this reason, the child has a self-confidence problem, and the child feels worthless. These children have problems in the field of social development. It is not easy for children to be accepted by society (Uykan & Akkaynak, 2019). The child cries and insists on crying until

her/his request is fulfilled. The children cannot learn to protect themselves due to the overprotective style of the parents and develop an identity that is shy, vulnerable, and shy, acting on what others say. These children become spoiled and irresponsible people who use the people around them. Children become dependent and incapable of making decisions on their own (Aydoğan Arslan, 2017).

Another factor in which parental styles are effective in the development of children is anxiety. There are studies showing that there is a relationship between parental styles and anxiety levels in children (McLeod et al., 2007). The styles of parents towards the situations that occur in their children's lives in the preschool period can cause children to feel anxiety (Sirkeci, 2017). Anxiety, in its most common sense, can be expressed as an uncomfortable feeling that people feel in a certain part of their lives (Koç, 2014). Anxiety can be characterized as an abnormal state of fear and worry (Firat, 2015). Anxiety can be experienced in the form of mild tension or extreme panic. It can be physicalized with symptoms such as anxiety, insecurity, fear, confusion, feeling bad, headache, weakness, palpitation, dizziness, muscle tension, rapid breathing, difficulty breathing, and dry mouth. Anxiety varies both between individuals and at the point of behavioral symptoms (Köknel, 1995). To summarize anxiety in general terms, it can be said that the individual feels an inner state of tension and restlessness for which the reason is unclear (Direk, 2021).

Anxiety is an innate emotion that should be present in the individual as long as it is kept at a normal level. An appropriate level of anxiety motivates the individual, brings success, and protects against the dangers of life. However, when the level of anxiety is not at a normal level, individuals can be negatively affected. Anxiety affects daily life more than thought (Cüceloğlu, 2016). Anxiety can develop differently in every child. Anxiety such as social anxiety, obsessive-strain disorders, separation anxiety, and specific phobias can be seen in children. The two most common types of anxiety in preschool children are social anxiety and separation anxiety. The feeling of anxiety is also effective in the personality development and learning of the child. In addition, the feeling of anxiety increases children's learning problems and prevents them from finding solutions to these problems (Yorgancı, 2006).

Another important issue for preschool children is competition styles. The concept of competition is reinforced in the education community and societies of our age, and the feeling of competition can sometimes be seen as a disadvantage for those who work for the same purpose. The popularity of a competitive culture creates the need for a generation that has the characteristics of being open to different ideas, sensitive to the rights of other individuals, and respecting the different (Kargı, 2016).

The concept of competition in educational sciences is defined as the individual being better than other individuals who are considered to be in a similar situation, not falling behind, and imitating those who she/he thinks are better than herself/himself (Bilici, 2019; Damon, 2006). Freud (1961), Adler (1985) and Horney (2022) have developed some approaches to explain competition. In current study, the approach of Erich Fromm, who emphasized that the social environment in which a person lives shapes competitive behaviors, was adopted. In the literature, competition has been handled as Other-Referenced Competition, Task-Oriented Competition, and Maintenance of Dominance Hierarchy. Other-Referenced Competition: According to Bülbül and Akkaynak (2021), children learn competitive behavior first in their families, then in schools where they attend pre-school education, and by comparing themselves with other individuals in the environment in the relationships they establish with their peers. The competitive behavior that children display by looking at their families and peers in the

preschool period is called other-referenced competition (Tsiakara & Digelidis, 2014). In other words, in this competitive style, the child gets her/his motivation from other individuals around her/him. It is thought that children's thinking that they are superior and trying to convince other individuals of it are effective in exhibiting other-referenced competition behavior (Tassi et al., 2001). Task-Oriented Competition: This competitive style is defined as the competitive behavior that the child displays to improve and develop his/her own skills and performance (Bilici, 2019). It has been observed that preschool children exhibit competitive behavior in order to surpass their peers and achieve success in the plays they play with their peers, and this behavior motivates the children towards the goal (Sheridan & Williams, 2006). While doing these, the child exhibits both the task-oriented competitive style and the other-referenced competitive style at the same time. There are also those who emphasize that the other-referenced competition and Task-Oriented Competition styles are not independent of each other (Uyanık Balat et al., 2017). Maintenance of Dominance Hierarchy: This competitive style was identified as a third competitive style in a study conducted by Paquette et al. in 2013. It has been stated that children use this competitive style mostly to keep the dominance situation in their own hands in order not to conflict with their peers and siblings at home, in educational institutions, and in the places where they play.

Competitive behavior is a human condition that emerges spontaneously in children and can develop depending on their personal characteristics and interactions with their environment. In this respect, this behavior can be considered an innate feature of children and can be seen as an important source of motivation that leads children to be successful in self-development at every stage of their lives (Bülbül & Akkaynak, 2021). Competitive behavior can also be seen in preschool children (Sönmez, 2016). If the competitive behaviors that can be seen in the socialization stages of preschool children are positive, they support the children's desire to be successful in an exciting way (Sheridan & Williams, 2006). The degree of competition in preschool children reveals the effect of competitive behavior on the child. A certain degree of competition is considered a positive situation in terms of the preschool child's interest and focus on her/his work. However, the high level of competitive behavior can negatively affect the adaptation of the preschool child to the environment (Sönmez, 2016). In the preschool period, children compete and have fun during these competitions. Competitive behavior mainly emerges from physical activities such as sports activities and playing different games. Competitive behavior can be observed in daily routines wherever preschool education takes place. It is important to take off her boots first, grab the swing first, go to the playground first, stand next to the teacher during the story hour, and during all this, competitive behavior is observed. Children use the basic elements of competition while playing. In other words, children use it in their lives by combining play and competition (Sheridan & Williams, 2006).

Competitive behavior can also occur between children and their siblings. It is known that children, who have to compete to obtain the attention and love of their parents, feel insecure and lonely (Özensel, 2004). Relationships with family, parents, siblings, and peers can be listed as factors affecting preschool children's competitive styles (Bülbül & Akkaynak, 2021). Competitive behavior is very common in children attending preschool education (Tsiakara & Digelidis, 2014), and it is very important to evaluate competitive behavior in this period because it emerges in early childhood (Uyanık Balat et al., 2017).

In the literature, it is seen that there are studies dealing with the relationship between the styles of the parents of preschool children and the competitive styles of the children (Bülbül & Akkaynak, 2019). There are also studies examining the relationship between parents' styles of parenting preschool children and their children's anxiety levels (Sirkeci, 2017). When the

literature is examined, as far as we know, no study has been found that deals with parental styles, children's competitive styles, and anxiety levels together. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between parental styles and children's competitive styles and anxiety levels in the preschool period. The study aimed to provide concrete evidence about the critical role of parenting in supporting children's healthy development by examining the relationship between children's competitive styles, anxiety levels, and parenting styles. Furthermore, we anticipate that the study's findings will offer crucial insights into the parenting styles that foster healthier children. Is there a significant relationship between parental styles, children's competitive styles and anxiety levels? This question expresses the main research question of the research. In line with the main research question of the research, answers are sought for the following sub-questions.

What kinds of parenting styles do parents of preschoolers use?

What are the anxiety levels of preschool children?

What are the competitive styles of preschool children?

Is there a relationship between the competitive styles of preschool children and their anxiety levels?

Is there a relationship between the anxiety levels of preschool children and their parents' parenting styles?

Is there a relationship between the competitive styles of preschool children and their parents' parenting styles?

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, the relationship between competitive styles, anxiety levels, and parental styles of preschool children was examined in its current state, and no manipulation was done. Therefore, this study is called a quantitative survey-based study.

### Participants

The study's population consisted of children and parents of children attending preschool education institutions in Van province's central districts (Ipekyolu, Tuşba, and Edremit) (Totally 34043 children and their parents). The study's sample consisted of 400 preschool children and their parents, as determined by the random sampling method. The names of the preschool education institutions affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in the central districts of Van province were taken. Next, we distributed scales to the parents and teachers of the children from the schools and classes selected by lot.

Table 1

*Demographic Information of the Participants of the Study*

Variable		n	%
Parent's Gender	Female	288	72.0
	Male	112	28.0
Parent's Marital Status	Married	391	97.8
	Divorced/widow	9	2.3
Mother's Age	26-30	126	31.5
	31-35	157	39.3
	36-40	86	21.5

*continued*

	41 years and older	31	7.8
Father's Age	26-30	50	12.5
	31-35	141	35.3
	36-40	134	33.5
	41 years and older	75	18.8
Mother's Educational Level	Literate	51	12.8
	Primary school	98	24.5
	High school	144	36.0
	Bachelor	107	26.8
Father's Educational Level	Primary school	60	15.0
	High school	175	43.8
	Bachelor	127	31.8
	Graduate	38	9.5
Family Type	Nuclear family	343	85.8
	Extended family	57	14.3
Number of children	1	42	10.5
	2	177	44.3
	3	107	26.8
	4	37	9.3
	5 and above	37	9.3
Living House	Detached house	220	55.0
	Apartment	180	45.0
Child's Gender	Girl	197	49.3
	Boy	203	50.8
Child's Age	4 Years old	44	11.0
	5 Years old	264	66.0
	6 Years old	92	23.0
Duration of preschool education received	1 year	319	79.8
	2 years	81	20.3
Child's Birth Order	1	143	35.8
	2	132	33.0
	3	78	19.5
	4 and later	47	11.8

### **Data Collection Process**

After obtaining the necessary permissions from the university's ethics committee and the Provincial Directorate of National Education, the names of pre-school education institutions were obtained. Then, the scales were distributed to the parents and teachers of the children, who were determined by drawing lots, from the classes determined by drawing lots among these schools. Scales were filled in by the teachers and parents. It was emphasized that participation was voluntary, and consent forms were obtained from the participants.

### **Measures**

**Demographic Information Forms.** The forms prepared by the researchers were related to the gender of the children, the number of siblings, age, duration of attending kindergarten, birth

order, age and education level of the parents, family type (nuclear-wide), marital status of the parents and the type of house they lived in.

**Parenting Style Scale.** The Parenting Style Scale is a measurement tool developed by Karabulut and Şendil (2008) in order to reveal the child-rearing styles and behaviors of parents who have children between the ages of 2-6. The parent style scale consists of four sub-dimensions (authoritarian-11 items, democratic-17 items, permissive-9 items, overprotective-9 items) and 46 items. The scale is a five-point Likert type scale. The options are: (1) “never like this”, (2) “rarely like this”, (3) “sometimes like this”, (4) “usually like this”, (5) “always like this”. In this way, it is determined how often the parents who answered the items exhibited the behaviors in question. The scores obtained from each dimension are calculated separately from each other and a score is calculated for each dimension. Which dimension parents get the highest score means they adopt that style (Karabulut & Şendil, 2008). As a result of the reliability analyzes performed for the scale, Cronbach's alpha values were determined as .74 for the permissive dimension, .75 for the overprotective dimension, .76 for the authoritarian dimension, and .83 for the democratic dimension.

**The Preschool Anxiety Scale.** The scale was developed by Spence et al., 2001. Turkish validity and reliability studies of the scale were carried out by Uğraş et al. (2018). The item responses of the scale are in five-point Likert type. Responses for these items were graded between zero and four. These choices are; often true (4), quite true (3), sometimes true (2), rarely true (1), and never true (0). As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, it was seen that the scale had four factors. These factors are social anxiety (7 items), generalized anxiety (9 items), separation anxiety (5 items) and specific phobia (9 items). These items measure anxiety symptoms rather than anxiety itself. In reliability analysis, internal consistency coefficients were .93 for the whole scale and .84 for social anxiety level, .73 for separation anxiety level, .83 for generalized anxiety level, and .82 for specific phobia.

**Preschool Competition Scale.** The purpose of this measurement tool, developed by Paquette et al. (2013), is to examine the competitive styles of preschool children. The scale was adapted to Turkish and its validity and reliability analyzes were carried out by Uyanık Balat et al. (2017). This scale consists of 17 items that reveal the behaviors that can be observed in the daily lives of children between the ages of 2-6. This measurement tool is a 6-point Likert-type scale filled by teachers on behalf of preschool children. The original three-factor structure was confirmed by confirmatory factor analysis. These three factors are Other-Referenced Competition (8 items), Task-Oriented Competition (6 items) and Maintenance of Dominance Hierarchy (3 items). The Cronbach alpha coefficients of the factors ranged from 0.91 to 0.96.

### **Analysis**

The data collected within the scope of the study were analyzed using the SPSS-26 package program. In order to decide whether parametric or non-parametric tests will be used in data analysis, it was first tested whether the assumptions of the parametric tests were met. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Skewness and Kurtosis values and Histogram, Q-Q graph were examined to test whether the data had a normal distribution. When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the Skewness and Kurtosis values in all sub-dimensions of the three scales used are between -1 and +1.

Table 2  
*Skewness and Kurtosis Values*

	n=400	Skewness	Kurtosis
Parenting Style Scale	Democratic	-.872	.313
	Authoritarian	.784	.424
	Overprotective	-.387	-.374
	Permissive	.154	-.576
Preschool Anxiety Scale	Social anxiety	.320	-.765
	Generalized anxiety	.159	-.335
	Separation anxiety	.167	-.787
	Specific phobia	.237	-.328
	Overall anxiety	.132	-.385
Preschool Competition Questionnaire	Other-Referenced Competition	.441	-.210
	Task-Oriented Competition	-.296	-.335
	Maintenance of Dominance	-.133	-.623
	Hierarchy		

In order to examine the homogeneity of the variances, the distribution of the Levene homogeneity test was examined, it was determined that the homogeneity assumption was provided since the Levene Statistics were  $p > .05$ . In summary, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test ( $p > .050$ ), Skewness and Kurtosis values, Histogram and Q-Q graph results reveal that the data has a normal distribution. The data of the study were analyzed with parametric tests according to the sub-research questions. The descriptive analysis was used. In addition, the relationship between the variables was examined by Pearson Product of Moments.

## RESULTS

**Parenting styles of parents of preschool children.** Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation values of the parents, participating in the study, from the Parenting Style Scale.

Table 3  
*Parenting Styles*

Parenting Styles	n	$\bar{x}$	Sd
Democratic	400	4.40	.418
Authoritarian	400	1.73	.480
Overprotective	400	3.97	.625
Permissive	400	2.13	.538

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that while the parents' authoritarian style ( $\bar{x}=1.73$ ) and permissive style ( $\bar{x}=2.13$ ) are low; the parents' democratic style ( $\bar{x}=4.40$ ) and overprotective style ( $\bar{x}=3.97$ ) are at high levels.

**Anxiety levels of preschool children.** Table 4 shows the mean scores and standard deviation values of anxiety level of the preschool children participating in the study.

Table 4  
*Anxiety level of Preschool Children*

Children's anxiety	n	$\bar{X}$	Sd
Social anxiety	400	1.29	.785
Generalized anxiety	400	1.48	.633
Separation anxiety	400	1.35	.832
Specific phobia	400	1.68	.743
Overall anxiety	400	1.45	.572

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that the anxiety levels of children are low in the sub-dimensions of the scale and in the overall total of the scale.

**Competitive styles of preschool children.** Table 5 shows the mean and standard deviation values of competitive styles of the preschool children participating in the study.

Table 5  
*Competition Styles of Preschool Children*

Competition Styles	n	$\bar{X}$	Ss.
Other-Referenced Competition	400	2.92	.853
Task-Oriented Competition	400	4.25	.962
Maintenance of Dominance Hierarchy	400	4.11	1.191

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that preschool children have the most task-oriented competition style, followed by the maintenance of dominance hierarchy. Also, it is seen that the other-referenced competition style was the least style which preschool children have.

**The relationship between the competitive styles of preschool children and their anxiety levels.**

Table 6  
 Pearson Correlation Analysis Results of the Relationship Between Competition Styles and Anxiety Levels of Preschool Children

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1- Social anxiety	1							
2- Generalized anxiety	.431**	1						
3- Separation anxiety	.265**	.580**	1					
4- Specific phobia	.420**	.566**	.468**	1				
5- Overall anxiety	.694**	.818**	.766**	.795**	1			
6- Other-Referenced	-.069	-.040	-.109*	-.072	-.098	1		
7- Task-Oriented	-.085	-.159**	-.138**	-.102*	-.156**	-.059	1	
8- Maintenance of Dominance Hierarchy	-.080	-.046	-.097	-.113*	-.112*	.444**	.422**	1

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01

As seen in Table 6, a significant negative correlation was found between the other-referenced competition and the sub-dimension of separation anxiety ( $r=-.109$ ,  $p<.05$ ). In other words, it can be said that if the separation anxiety of preschool children increases, their other-referenced competition will decrease. There were significant negative relationships between task-oriented competitive styles of preschool children and generalized anxiety ( $r=-.159$ ,  $p<.01$ ), separation anxiety ( $r=-.138$ ,  $p<.01$ ), specific phobia anxiety ( $r=-.102$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and overall anxiety level ( $r=-.156$ ,  $p<.01$ ). In other words, it can be said that when preschool children's

generalized anxiety, separation anxiety, specific phobia anxiety and overall anxiety increase, their task-oriented competition will decrease. Negatively significant correlations were found between preschool children's maintenance of dominance hierarchy competitive styles and specific phobia anxiety ( $r=-.113$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and overall anxiety ( $r=-.112$ ,  $p<.01$ ). In other words, it can be said that if preschool children's specific phobia anxiety and total anxiety increase, their maintenance of dominance hierarchy competitive styles will decrease. When the correlation values of the sub-dimensions that have a significant relationship between the competitive styles of preschool children and their anxiety levels are examined, it can be said that the relationship is low.

### The relationship between the anxiety levels of preschool children and their parents' parenting styles.

Table 7

*Pearson Correlation Analysis Results of the Relationship Between Anxiety Levels of Preschool Children and Parenting Styles of Their Parents*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1-Social anxiety	1								
2-Generalized anxiety	.431**	1							
3- Separation anxiety	.265**	.580*	1						
4- Specific phobia	.420**	.566*	.468*	1					
5- Overall anxiety	.694**	.818*	.766*	.795*	1				
6- Democratic	-.129**	-.091	-.065	-.093	-.123*	1			
7- Authoritarian	.191**	.245*	.180*	.115*	.236**	-.381**	1		
8- Overprotective	.249**	.154*	.143*	.231*	.255**	.183**	-.034	1	
9- Permissive	.086	.087	.035	-.033	.056	-.170**	.422**	-.027	1

\* $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.01$

When Table 7 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant negative correlation between democratic parenting style and social anxiety sub-dimension ( $r=-.129$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and total anxiety level ( $r=-.123$ ,  $p<.01$ ). In other words, it can be said that social anxiety and total anxiety level of children will decrease if the democratic parenting style of the parents of preschool children increases.

Positive significant relationships were found between parents' authoritarian parenting style and their children's social anxiety ( $r=.191$ ,  $p<.01$ ), generalized anxiety ( $r=.245$ ,  $p<.01$ ), separation anxiety ( $r=.180$ ,  $p<.01$ ), specific phobia anxiety ( $r=.115$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and total anxiety level ( $r=.236$ ,  $p<.01$ ). In other words, it can be said that if parents' authoritarian parenting style increase, their children's anxiety in all sub-dimensions of the scale and their total anxiety will also increase.

Positive significant relationships were found between parents' overprotective parenting style and their children's social anxiety ( $r=.249$ ,  $p<.01$ ), generalized anxiety ( $r=.154$ ,  $p<.01$ ), separation anxiety ( $r=.143$ ,  $p<.01$ ), specific phobia anxiety ( $r=.231$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and total anxiety level ( $r=.255$ ,  $p<.01$ ). In other words, it can be said that if parents' overprotective parenting

style increases, their children's total anxiety and all sub-dimensions of the anxiety scale will also increase.

There was no significant relationship between the parents' permissive parenting style and any of the sub-dimensions of the anxiety scale and the overall scale. When the correlation values of the significant relationships between parents' parenting styles and their children's anxiety level are examined, it can be said that the relationships between them are low.

**The relationship between the competitive styles of preschool children and their parents' parenting styles.**

Table 8  
*Pearson Correlation Analysis Results of the Relationship Between Preschool Children's Competition Styles and Parenting Styles of Their Parents*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1- Other-Referenced Competition	1						
2- Task-Oriented Competition	-.059	1					
3- Maintenance of Dominance Hierarchy	.444**	.422**	1				
4- Democratic	.022	.172**	.060	1			
5- Authoritarian	.029	-.088	.029	-.381**	1		
6- Overprotective	-.086	-.034	-.083	.183**	-.034	1	
7- Permissive	.021	-.047	-.21	-.170**	.422**	-.027	1

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01

When Table 8 is examined, it is seen that only there is a significant positive correlation between the democratic parenting style and their children's task-oriented competition style ( $r = .172, p < .01$ ). In other words, it can be said that when parents' democratic parenting style increases, there will be an increase in their children's task-oriented competition style. When the correlation value of the relationship between these two variables is examined, it can be said that the relationship between them is low.

When Table 8 is examined, it is seen that only there is a significant positive correlation between the democratic parenting style and their children's task-oriented competition style ( $r = .172, p < .01$ ). In other words, it can be said that when parents' democratic parenting style increases, there will be an increase in their children's task-oriented competition style. When the correlation value of the relationship between these two variables is examined, it can be said that the relationship between them is low.

**DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

According to the findings of the study, it was determined that the parents of preschool children exhibited more democratic and overprotective parental styles. Yalçın (2016) also stated in his study that parents have more overprotective and democratic styles. It is thought that the high level of democratic style is related to the educational status of the parents participating in the research, mostly at the high school and university level. Mızrakçı (1994), as a result of his study to reveal the factors affecting the child rearing styles of mothers, stated that the most effective factor on the child rearing styles was the education level of the parents. He emphasized that increasing the democratic style of the parents parallel with the increasing in

the education level of parents. Contrary to this situation, Özyürek (2004) revealed that overprotective style is higher in primary and secondary school graduate parents.

According to the results of the current study, it was determined that the anxiety mean of the preschoolers were low in the overall and sub-dimensions of the anxiety scale. It is thought that this situation is related to the fact that most of the parents participating in the research had high school and bachelor degrees. It was stated in previous findings that anxiety in children decreased with the increase in the education level of the parents.

According to the results of the current research, children have the most task-oriented competition style, followed by the maintenance of dominance hierarchy competition style. The least common competition style is Other-Referenced competition style. The reason that the task-oriented competition style is the highest is thought to be related to the more democratic styles of the parents. On the other hand, as parallel with current research finding, Bay (2020) and Paquette et al. (2013) found that Other-Referenced competition style at least competition style in their studies. In the same studies, contrary to the current study, it was stated that the maintenance of dominance hierarchy competition style was seen the most (Bay, 2020; Paquette et al., 2013).

As a result of the research, the relationship between children's competition styles and their anxiety levels was found as low. It was found that when the separation anxiety of preschool children increases, their other-referenced competition will decrease. It is thought that this situation arises from the fact that children with separation anxiety compare themselves with their peers and other individuals due to their fear of losing their parents. The thought of competing with others and being win can be associated with the fact that children's parents are on their side. Also, it has been determined that with the increase in children's separation anxiety, generalized anxiety, specific phobia anxiety, and overall anxiety level, the task-oriented competition style will decrease. It is thought that this situation is due to the increase in children's anxiety levels, preventing them from being motivated and focused on a task. In the literature, as far as we know, no study has been found in which competition styles and anxiety levels of preschool children are discussed together.

In the findings of the current study, it was determined that when democratic parental styles increase, overall anxiety and social anxiety of children will decrease. There are parallel study findings with this result (Tekinceer, 2021; Thergaonkar and Wadkar, 2007). It is thought that this finding is related to the fact that children, who grow up in families with democratic parents, were accepted as they are, were felt valuable, think and express freely and as a result, they can be self-confident and strong in the face of the problems they face.

It has been determined that when the parents' overprotective and authoritarian styles increase, the anxiety levels of the children will also increase. There are parallel study findings with this result (Edwards et al., 2010; Rodriguez, 2010; Tekinceer, 2021). It can be said that children who are constantly restricted by their parents, overprotected, not supported to act independently, and not given the right to speak, will have less experience and skills in life, and as a result they may feel anxiety. Nazlıoğlu (2019) and Mcshane and Hastings (2009) stated that an overprotective style increases separation anxiety in children. No significant relationship was found between permissive parenting style and children's anxiety levels. Also, Sirkeci (2017) stated that there is no significant relationship between parental style and children's anxiety levels. Laurin et al. (2015) stated that permissive and overprotective styles cause an increase in overall anxiety level.

It has been found that when parents' democratic parenting style increases, there will be an increase in their children's task-oriented competition style. It is thought that this situation stems from children who were motivated by their parents, who had democratic style, to reach positive goals instead of comparing them with other children while raising children. In addition, as it was stated before, when parents' educational level increases, their democratic style also increases. In this case, it is thought that the relationship between the task-oriented competition style and democratic style may be related to the level of education. There was no significant difference between parental styles and competition styles in any of the other sub-dimensions. Contrary to this finding, Bülbül and Akkaynak (2021) stated that when democratic parental style increased, children's other-referenced competition style increased.

According to the results of the research, it can be said that the democratic style of the parents helps the children to keep their feelings of anxiety and competition at a healthy level. In addition, negative parental styles may cause high levels of anxiety and competition in children. This situation can negatively affect all developmental areas of the child and may cause negative situations in their future lives. Therefore, parents should pay attention to their styles towards their children.

Training can be organized so that parents can gain democratic style and realize the importance of their own styles in child education. Training about anxiety and competition in children can be organized for parents. It is important for teachers and families to be aware of the effects of anxiety, which has become one of the most common and current problems of our age, on children.

As related to some limitations, in current study, data were collected from families from similar socio-economic backgrounds. In further studies, similar studies can be conducted in regions with different socioeconomic levels. This study was designed in a quantitative research method. In further studies, qualitative or mixed research designs can be used to address the topic from different perspectives. In this study, democratic, authoritarian, permissive and overprotective parental styles were handled. In further studies, different styles such as neglect, careless, emotionless, unbalanced and indecisive parental style can be examined.

**Data Availability:** The data presented in this manuscript are available when reasonable request.

## **Declarations**

**Ethical approval:** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Also, this study was approved by the Ethics Board of XXX University before initiation of the study (Number: 2022/18-09).

**Informed consent:** Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

**Conflict of interest:** On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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