

RESEARCH OPEN ACCESS

Relational Intensification in Families During COVID-19: A Comparative Study of Slovenia and Croatia

Andrej Naterer¹  | Dunja Potočnik²  | Danijela Lahe¹ 

¹Department of Sociology, University of Maribor, Maribor, Slovenia | ²Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Centre for Youth and Gender Studies, Zagreb, Croatia

Correspondence: Andrej Naterer (andrej.naterer@um.si)

Received: 27 February 2026 | **Revised:** 30 July 2026 | **Accepted:** 10 August 2026

Keywords: comparative research | COVID-19 | family functioning | family resilience | parent–child relationships | youth autonomy

ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examines how young people in Slovenia and Croatia perceived changes in family satisfaction, parent–child relationship quality, and family influence on important decisions before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background: Pandemic restrictions redirected daily life toward family contexts and intensified family co-presence for many young people, heightening intergenerational interaction and autonomy negotiation. Although families are often framed as buffers or stressors, less is known about how young people experienced family functioning across national contexts.

Method: A convergent mixed-methods design integrated nationally representative survey data from 2018 and 2023 ($N = 2503$; ages 16–29; balanced gender distribution) with 10 focus groups ($N = 80$). Analyses assessed family satisfaction, parent–child relationship quality, and perceived influence on important decisions.

Results: Family relationships remained generally positive, yet relational intensity increased during the pandemic. Slovenian participants reported greater shifts toward moderate evaluations and heightened negotiation, whereas Croatian participants showed more stability and stronger extended kin involvement. Qualitative findings revealed the coexistence of emotional support and tension under conditions of intensified family co-presence and restricted mobility.

Conclusion: Family resilience during COVID-19 operated through dynamic recalibration of boundaries and authority, integrating both cohesion and strain.

Implications: Practitioners and policymakers should strengthen family communication, autonomy-supportive practices, and external support systems during societal disruption.

1 | Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic created an unusually strong external stressor for family systems, disrupting routines, constraining external resources, and intensifying interdependence within households. Family stress theory posits that the impact of external events on family functioning is mediated by relational processes, available resources, and meaning-making practices (Hill 1949; Boss 2002; Conger et al. 2010). Rather than producing uniform deterioration or resilience, stress conditions tend to reorganize interaction patterns, redistribute roles, and

recalibrate boundaries within families. Examining family life during COVID-19 therefore provides an opportunity to observe how family systems adapt under sustained societal disruption.

Contemporary models of family resilience emphasize that adaptive functioning is not the absence of conflict, but the capacity to reorganize while maintaining relational cohesion and effective communication (Walsh 2015, 2020; Prime et al. 2020). Under conditions of restricted mobility and intensified family-centered daily life, families were required to renegotiate privacy, authority, emotional labor, and decision-making processes. Such

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2026 The Author(s). *Family Relations* published by Wiley Periodicals LLC on behalf of National Council on Family Relations.

renegotiation is particularly salient in families with adolescents and young adults, where autonomy development and intergenerational power dynamics are already in flux (Steinberg and Silk 2002; Smetana 2017). Pandemic conditions amplified these developmental processes by embedding autonomy negotiation more deeply within everyday family interaction.

Family systems theory further suggests that heightened proximity can increase both emotional closeness and relational tension, as subsystem boundaries (e.g., parent–child, sibling, and couple) are recalibrated in response to environmental constraints (Cox and Paley 1997; Minuchin 2018). From this perspective, support and strain are not opposing states but interconnected features of systemic adaptation. Increased conflict may reflect boundary adjustment and developmental recalibration rather than dysfunction per se. Understanding how families navigated COVID-19 thus requires attention to ambivalence, negotiation, and shifting authority patterns within households.

The intensification of family life during the pandemic is particularly relevant for understanding youth agency and autonomy. Contemporary research does not conceptualize autonomy as simple independence from parents or the absence of family influence. Rather, autonomy is understood as a relational and developmental process that unfolds within ongoing family relationships (Steinberg and Silk 2002; Smetana 2017). As young people move through adolescence and emerging adulthood, they increasingly participate in decision-making, negotiate boundaries, and selectively engage with parental guidance while maintaining emotional ties to family members. Agency therefore emerges not outside family relationships but through them. From a broader youth studies perspective, transitions to adulthood have become more prolonged, uncertain, and dependent on family resources, making autonomy increasingly negotiated rather than achieved through abrupt separation (Arnett 2014; France 2007). Pandemic conditions are particularly relevant in this regard because restrictions on mobility, education, and peer interaction concentrated everyday life within family settings, potentially increasing both family influence and opportunities for autonomy negotiation. Examining how young people balanced personal decision-making with continued family involvement therefore provides important insight into how agency was enacted under conditions of intensified family interdependence.

Empirical research during the pandemic documents heterogeneous outcomes in parent–child relationships, including reports of strengthened cohesion alongside elevated stress and conflict (Donker et al. 2021; Prime et al. 2020). However, much of this literature relies on single-country data, parent-reported measures, or psychological distress outcomes. Fewer studies situate family processes within comparative contexts that consider how governance responses and cultural norms intersect with systemic adaptation. Moreover, youth perspectives remain underrepresented in family scholarship, despite their central role in autonomy negotiation and intergenerational influence.

The research problem addressed in this study is that existing pandemic family research has documented both support and strain within families, but has not sufficiently explained how young people themselves experienced these ambivalent relational processes across national contexts, nor how

pandemic-related family change can be distinguished from ordinary developmental changes in autonomy, co-residence, and family influence. This problem is particularly important for adolescents and young adults, whose relationships with parents are already undergoing renegotiation as part of the transition toward adulthood. The main aim of this study is therefore to examine how young people in Slovenia and Croatia perceived changes in family satisfaction, parent–child relationship quality, and family influence on important decisions before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic and to interpret these changes through family stress, family systems, resilience, and ecological-developmental perspectives.

This article contributes to family science by conceptualizing pandemic family life as a process of relational intensification, in which resilience and strain co-occur within family systems. Relational intensification is empirically indicated by three observable shifts in family processes. First, it is reflected in movement away from uniformly positive evaluations toward more moderate and differentiated assessments of family satisfaction and parent–child relationships, signaling renegotiation rather than collapse. Second, it is evidenced by the simultaneous reporting of emotional support and heightened conflict within the same relationships, indicating increased emotional density within the family system. Third, it appears in expanded negotiation over autonomy and decision-making authority, as restricted mobility and intensified family co-presence embed developmental boundary work more deeply within everyday interaction. Together, these markers allow relational intensification to be examined as a measurable pattern of systemic adjustment rather than a purely interpretive concept. Drawing on mixed-methods representative data from Slovenia and Croatia, we analyze changes in family satisfaction, parent–child relationship quality, and perceived influence on decision-making before (2018) and after (2023) the pandemic. Slovenia and Croatia provide an analytically valuable comparison. Both countries share similar cultural values (WVS 2025), historical legacies, welfare arrangements, and strong traditions of family co-residence, yet they differ in pandemic governance, cultural orientations toward autonomy and familial interdependence, and broader crisis contexts. These similarities and differences allow for a refined examination of how national contexts shaped young people's experiences of family life during the pandemic, without resorting to cultural essentialism. Comparing two contexts characterized by strong intergenerational ties but differing governance responses enables examination of how macro-level stress exposure interacts with family-level processes.

During the acute phase of the pandemic, Slovenia implemented longer and more stringent lockdown measures, including extended school closures and mobility restrictions, whereas Croatia adopted comparatively shorter and less restrictive measures (OECD 2020). These differences provide empirical grounding for treating governance variation as differential stress exposure within the ABC-X framework. In terms of the family stress model (ABC-X), governance responses can be conceptualized as variations in the intensity of the stressor (A) and in the availability of external resources (B) that shape family adaptation. Stricter mobility restrictions, school closures, and service disruptions may increase stress exposure while simultaneously limiting access to institutional supports, thereby

shifting regulatory demands inward toward the family system. From an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner 1979), these macro-level policy environments form part of the exosystem that indirectly structures everyday interaction, boundary negotiation, and meaning-making processes within families.

These theoretical perspectives guide the analysis in the following way:

1. Family stress theory frames the pandemic as an external stressor whose effects depend on family resources and interpretations of the crisis.
2. Family systems theory directs attention to how intensified interaction reorganizes boundaries, roles, and authority within the family.
3. Resilience theory helps interpret sustained positive assessments not as the absence of strain, but as evidence of adaptive reorganization under stress.
4. Youth autonomy theory focuses attention on how young people negotiate parental influence while developing independent decision-making.
5. Ecological theory situates these family processes within broader policy and institutional environments, showing how school closures, restricted mobility, and reduced access to peer and support networks shifted developmental and emotional demands toward the family.

Empirically, these theoretical perspectives are examined through changes in family satisfaction, parent–child relationship quality, qualitative accounts of support and strain, and perceived influence on important decisions.

By grounding the analysis in family stress, resilience, and systems frameworks, this study advances three contributions to family science. First, it conceptualizes pandemic-related change as relational intensification, demonstrating that resilience and strain are intertwined processes within family systems rather than opposing outcomes. Second, it integrates youth perspectives to illuminate how autonomy negotiation functions as a core mechanism of family adaptation under conditions of intensified family co-presence and restricted mobility. Third, through cross-national comparison, it shows how macro-level governance contexts shape family-level processes, thereby linking structural stress exposure to everyday intergenerational dynamics. Together, these contributions extend family resilience theory by specifying how families recalibrate boundaries, authority, and emotional exchange during sustained societal disruption.

2 | Data and Methods

This study draws on data from the YO-VID22: Well-Being and Support Structures of Young People Before, During, and After the COVID-19 Pandemic project and employs a convergent mixed-methods design. The aim of the design was to combine population-level evidence on changes in youth family relationships with qualitative accounts of how young people interpreted and negotiated these changes in everyday family life.

Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately and integrated at the interpretive stage.

2.1 | Quantitative Data and Sample

The quantitative component combines two survey sources. The pre-pandemic baseline derives from the 2018 Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Youth Studies Southeast Europe survey, a face-to-face survey administered between January and March 2018 among young people aged 16–29 in Slovenia and Croatia. Completion time was approximately 40–60 min. The post-pandemic data derive from the YO-VID22 survey, a Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) survey conducted in autumn 2023 among the same age group. The age range of 16–29 was used because it corresponds to the target population of the YSEE and YO-VID22 youth studies and captures both late adolescence and emerging adulthood. This broad range is analytically relevant because family influence and autonomy negotiation do not end at legal adulthood in Slovenia and Croatia, where prolonged education, delayed residential independence, and continued reliance on family resources are common features of youth transitions. The average completion time was approximately 25 min. The 2023 survey also included a retrospective item asking respondents to assess their relationship with parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the analysis distinguishes between three reference points: 2018 as the pre-pandemic baseline, retrospective assessment of the pandemic period collected in 2023, and 2023 as the post-pandemic assessment. Participation in both surveys was voluntary and respondents did not receive financial compensation.

Because no separate quantitative survey wave was conducted during the acute phase of the pandemic, the “during COVID” measure should be interpreted as perceived retrospective change rather than as contemporaneously measured longitudinal change. This limitation is important because retrospective evaluations may be affected by recall bias and by respondents’ current family circumstances.

Both surveys used standardized questionnaires and comparable measures, but the two waves were independent cross-sectional samples rather than a longitudinal panel. The 2018 YSEE survey used a face-to-face design with quota sampling to approximate national representativeness among young people aged 16–29 in Slovenia and Croatia. The 2023 YO-VID22 survey used an online CAWI design and applied comparable quota criteria to approximate the same target population. In both waves, quotas were based on gender, age group, region, settlement type, and educational attainment. Because respondents were not followed longitudinally, the analysis identifies population-level differences between survey waves rather than individual-level change trajectories.

The final analytical sample comprised 2503 respondents: 1287 from Slovenia and 1216 from Croatia. In Slovenia, 52.9% of respondents were male and the mean age was 22.87 years. In Croatia, 51.2% of respondents were male and the mean age was 22.77 years. Table 1 presents selected characteristics of the 2023 YO-VID22 sample by country, including gender, age group, education/employment status, and household members.

TABLE 1 | Sample characteristics by country, 2023 YO-VID22 survey.

				Male		Female		
Gender	Slovenia			52.9%		47.1%		
	Croatia			51.2%		48.8%		
				16–19	20–24	25–29		
Age groups	Slovenia			26.6%	35.1%	38.3%		
	Croatia			26.3%	36.4%	37.3%		
				In formal education	Employed	Neither in education nor employment		Other
Education/employment status	Slovenia			71.8%	22.1%	3.5%		2.6%
	Croatia			59.1%	31.8%	6.8%		2.3%
		Living alone	Mother	Father	Brothers/ sisters	Partner	Own children	Other people
Household members	Slovenia	8.7%	68.6%	59.8%	49.2%	26.7%	10.1%	19.4%
	Croatia	4.8%	71.1%	61.5%	51.1%	23.0%	8.9%	17.0%

Note: Multiple responses were possible for household members; percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

These characteristics are important for interpreting the findings because the meaning of parent–child relationship quality and family influence differs across adolescence, emerging adulthood, and different living arrangements. The 2023 data show that most respondents lived with at least one parent, which supports the relevance of family co-presence for interpreting pandemic and post-pandemic family relationships. At the same time, the household item captures current household members rather than full residential histories before and during the pandemic. For respondents living with parents, pandemic restrictions may have intensified everyday co-presence directly. For respondents living independently, family influence may have operated more through communication, advice, emotional support, and decision-making guidance than through shared household routines.

2.2 | Measures

The analysis focuses on three dimensions of family relationships. First, satisfaction with family life was measured on a five-point scale ranging from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. Second, parent–child relationship quality was measured through respondents' assessment of how well they got along with their parents, including categories indicating very good relationships, occasional differences of opinion, frequent arguing, and very conflictual relationships. Third, perceived influence on important life decisions was measured by asking respondents who had the greatest influence on their important decisions, including mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, other family members, friends, and the option that no one influenced them because they decided independently.

These indicators were selected because they capture complementary dimensions of relational intensification: overall family satisfaction, everyday parent–child relationship quality, and the

distribution of influence and autonomy within young people's support networks.

Resilience, strain, agency, and autonomy were not measured as separate psychometric scales. Instead, they were treated as theoretically informed analytical constructs derived from the combination of survey indicators and qualitative themes. Resilience was inferred from sustained positive assessments of family life and parent–child relationships, together with qualitative accounts of emotional support, routine maintenance, and practical help. Strain was inferred from moderate or conflictual assessments and from narratives of exhaustion, lack of privacy, irritation, and constrained peer contact. Youth agency and autonomy were examined through the survey item on independent decision-making and through qualitative accounts of disagreement, selective engagement with parental advice, and negotiated decision-making.

2.3 | Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis uses descriptive and comparative techniques to examine differences between Slovenia and Croatia and changes between 2018 and 2023. The analysis focuses on distributions and percentage differences rather than causal modeling. This analytical strategy is appropriate because the study aims to identify broad patterns of relational renegotiation before, during, and after the pandemic rather than to estimate causal effects. Particular attention is given to shifts from very positive assessments toward moderate evaluations, changes in conflictual responses, and cross-national differences in perceived family influence.

Quantitative analysis consisted of frequency distributions and cross-tabulations by country and survey year. Percentages

were calculated using valid responses for each item. Because the study focuses on theoretically guided pattern identification rather than causal inference, the analysis emphasizes substantive differences in distributions across countries and time points. Where figures present multiple sources of influence, categories are not mutually exclusive; respondents could identify more than one influential person, which is why percentages do not sum to 100%.

2.4 | Qualitative Data and Analysis

The qualitative component consists of ten focus groups conducted in Slovenia and Croatia, five in each country. In total, 80 young people participated: 30 in Slovenia and 50 in Croatia. Focus group participants were recruited through purposive sampling designed to capture variation in age, gender, educational and employment status, and country context. Recruitment was conducted through schools and universities, youth organizations, and project networks, including PUMO—Project Learning for Young Adults. The focus group sample was not intended to be statistically representative: rather, it was designed to provide interpretive depth and to contextualize survey patterns through young people's accounts of family support, conflict, privacy, autonomy, and decision-making during and after the pandemic. Focus groups included young people from different social positions, including students, employed youth, and young people not in education, employment, or training. Participants were aged between 16 and 29. Focus groups lasted between approximately 90 and 120 min; participation was voluntary and participants did not receive financial compensation.

The focus groups followed a semi-structured discussion guide developed on the basis of the project aims, existing literature, and preliminary survey findings. Discussions addressed family dynamics before, during, and after the pandemic; emotional support; conflict; co-residence; privacy; autonomy; and decision-making.

All focus groups were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized prior to analysis. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis in QDA Miner, combining manual coding with systematic comparison across transcripts. Four researchers participated in the coding process, with two researchers coding the Slovenian transcripts and two researchers coding the Croatian transcripts. Coding combined deductive and inductive elements: initial codes were informed by the study's theoretical focus on family support, strain, autonomy, decision-making, privacy, and relational change during the pandemic, while additional codes were developed inductively as new patterns emerged from participants' accounts. After independent coding, the national research teams compared coding decisions, discussed discrepancies, and resolved disagreements through consensus. Codes were then grouped into broader themes through iterative comparison within and across national datasets. The excerpts included in the article were selected because they illustrate central themes and mechanisms identified in the analysis, rather than because they represent the frequency of a theme.

2.5 | Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated at the interpretive stage. Survey data were used to identify population-level patterns in family satisfaction, parent–child relationship quality, and perceived influence on decision-making. Focus group data were then used to interpret the relational processes underlying these patterns. This integration allowed the study to connect structural indicators of change with young people's own accounts of everyday family life.

The mixed-methods design is particularly suited to the study's theoretical framework. Survey data capture measurable indicators of relational recalibration, while qualitative narratives illuminate the interactional processes through which family support, tension, and autonomy were negotiated. Together, these data allow relational intensification to be examined both as a population-level pattern and as an everyday relational process.

2.6 | Ethical Procedures

The study was reviewed and approved by the project's joint scientific and ethical committee in Zagreb on May 12, 2023 and May 16, 2023. All procedures were conducted in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines at the Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor and the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb and with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Participation in both survey and focus group components was voluntary. Adult participants provided informed consent before participation. For participants aged 16–17, assent was obtained from the young person, together with parental or legal guardian permission where required by national legislation and institutional ethical guidelines.

Survey participation was anonymous. Focus group participation was confidential and participants were informed about audio recording, transcription, anonymization, and the use of selected excerpts in publications. They were also informed of their right to withdraw and of the expectation that other focus group members would respect the confidentiality of the discussion.

2.7 | Methodological Limitations

Several methodological limitations should be noted. First, the quantitative data compare two cross-sectional survey waves rather than following the same individuals over time. The findings therefore indicate population-level shifts rather than individual longitudinal trajectories. Second, the “during COVID” measure of parent–child relationship quality was collected retrospectively in 2023 and may be affected by recall bias. In addition, the survey did not directly measure whether all respondents shared a household with parents before and during the pandemic. Claims about intensified family co-presence are therefore interpreted as referring to the broader household-centered conditions created by pandemic restrictions, rather

than as an individual-level measured exposure for every respondent. This limitation is especially relevant for older respondents, some of whom may have lived independently from their parents during the pandemic. Third, the study relies on self-reported assessments of family relationships, which reflect young people's subjective perceptions rather than observed family interactions. Finally, although the comparison between Slovenia and Croatia provides valuable contextual insight, the findings cannot be generalized automatically to countries with different welfare systems, co-residence patterns, or family cultures.

3 | Results

This section presents the empirical findings of the study, focusing on changes in young people's assessment of family relationships before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Results are presented in four subsections, moving from overall family satisfaction to parent-child relationship quality, relational ambivalence, and perceived family influence on decision-making. Quantitative survey data are complemented by qualitative focus group insights where appropriate.

3.1 | Changes in Youth Satisfaction With Family Life Before and After the Pandemic

Satisfaction with family life provides a useful starting point for examining how young people experienced relational change

during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. As restrictions on mobility, education, and social interaction redirected everyday life toward the household, family relationships became a key context in which young people assessed emotional support, everyday functioning, and their sense of belonging. Changes in family satisfaction therefore capture young people's overall assessment of this intensified relational environment. At the same time, such overall assessments do not reveal the specific relational processes through which satisfaction is produced or contested. The following section first compares levels of family life satisfaction among youth in Slovenia and Croatia before and after the pandemic, and subsequently moves beyond these aggregate assessments to examine changes in the quality of parent-child relationships in greater detail. In interpreting these distributions, the analysis focused on three observable patterns: whether very high family satisfaction declined, whether moderate evaluations increased, and whether dissatisfaction became more widespread. This approach allows changes in family satisfaction to be read not simply as improvement or deterioration, but as evidence of possible relational recalibration after the pandemic period.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of young people's satisfaction with family life in Slovenia and Croatia in 2018 and 2023. In Slovenia, the findings indicate a noticeable shift in how young people assessed family life after the pandemic. While the majority of respondents continued to report positive assessments, the proportion of those expressing very high satisfaction declined between 2018 and 2023. This change was accompanied

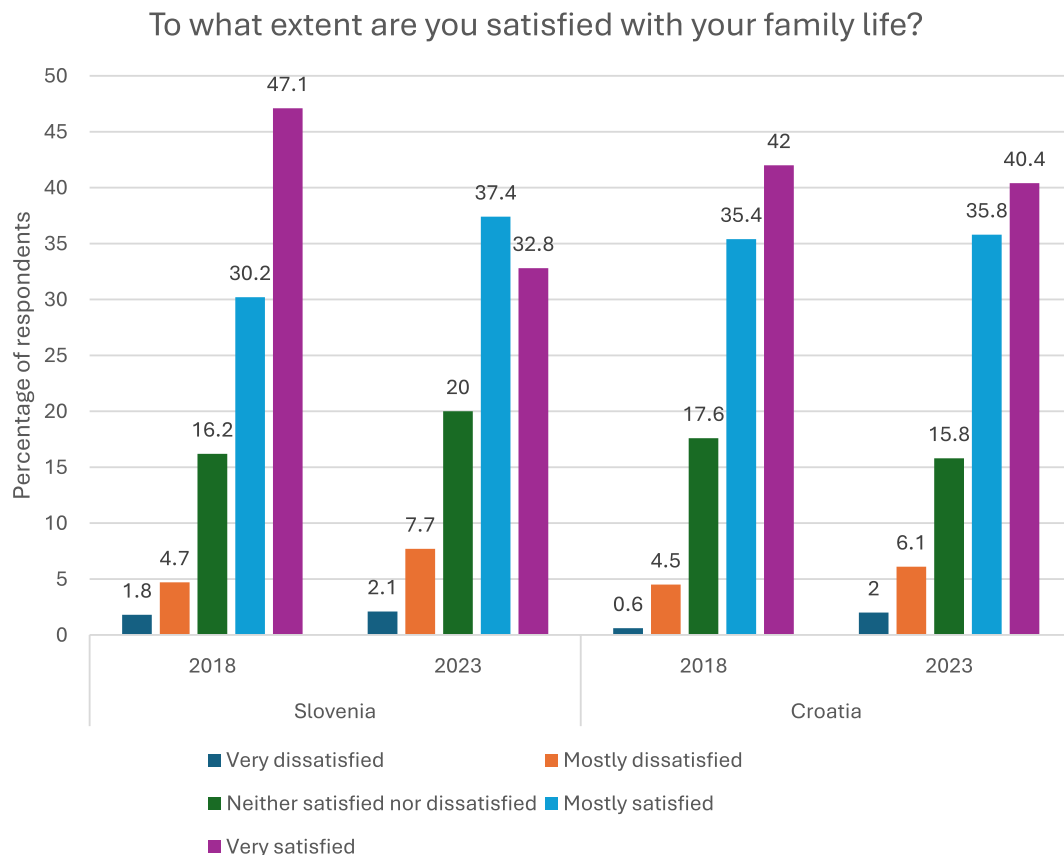


FIGURE 1 | Satisfaction with family life of youth in Slovenia and Croatia, 2018 and 2023 (%). Source: Data files YSEE 2018 and YOVID-22 2023. [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

by an increase in moderate satisfaction levels, suggesting a redistribution away from strongly positive assessment rather than a rise in dissatisfaction. Family life remained an important and generally supportive context, but young people's assessments became more differentiated, reflecting a recalibration of how family relationships were experienced under conditions of intensified family-centered daily life and restricted mobility.

In Croatia, satisfaction with family life remained comparatively stable across the two time points. Response distributions show continued high levels of satisfaction, with only minor shifts across categories. Although lower satisfaction levels increased slightly, these changes remained limited and did not alter the overall pattern of predominantly positive assessment. This stability suggests that, among Croatian youth, family life satisfaction showed less observable change across the pandemic period and retained a relatively consistent profile.

Comparing the two contexts highlights divergent patterns in how pandemic-related changes were reflected in young people's assessment of family life. In Slovenia, the pandemic period appears to have prompted a reassessment of family relationships, resulting in fewer very positive assessments and greater emphasis on moderate satisfaction. This redistribution toward moderate evaluations aligns with the proposed pattern of relational intensification, suggesting recalibration of relational expectations rather than erosion of family cohesion. In Croatia, by contrast, family life satisfaction showed greater resilience, with assessment remaining largely unchanged over time. Importantly, in both countries, dissatisfaction remained confined to a small minority of respondents, which underlines the continued centrality of family relationships as a generally supportive dimension of youth life during and after the pandemic.

While these satisfaction measures capture broad assessment shifts, they do not reveal the relational dynamics underlying these assessments. The following section therefore examines changes in parent-child relationship quality in greater detail, focusing on everyday interaction, closeness, and conflict within families.

3.2 | Parent-Child Relationship Quality Before, During, and After the Pandemic

Parent-child relationships constitute a central axis of family life during youth, particularly in contexts where co-residence is common and intergenerational interaction intensified during the pandemic. Examining how young people assessed their relationships with parents before, during, and after the COVID-19 period allows for a more fine-grained understanding of how support, conflict, and negotiation around autonomy unfolded within families. The following section, therefore focuses on changes in parent-child relationship quality in Slovenia and Croatia, combining comparative survey data with qualitative accounts to illuminate how young people experienced relational continuity and disruption under conditions of prolonged proximity.

Figure 2 presents young people's assessments of their relationships with parents in Slovenia and Croatia across three reference periods: before the COVID-19 pandemic, measured in the 2018 survey; during the pandemic, assessed retrospectively in the 2023 survey; and after the main period of pandemic restrictions, measured in the 2023 survey. Across both countries, the pandemic period was associated with a temporary movement away from very positive assessments of parent-child relationships toward more moderate assessments.

In Slovenia, the share of young people reporting very good relationships with their parents declined during the pandemic, alongside an increase in reports of occasional disagreement and conflict. Qualitative accounts suggest that this shift was driven less by open family breakdown than by three recurrent processes: intensified co-presence, reduced privacy, and increased parental monitoring. Participants described how the relocation of work, education, and leisure into the household made ordinary disagreements more frequent and more difficult to avoid.

Just the fact that we were spending so much time together became exhausting for all of us (family members). Can you imagine 4 people locked together on 55m²? Of course we love each other, but that situation made everything somehow worse. My parents were working from home, they were constantly present, controlling everything and I had no private space. (Female, 25, Slovenia)

This account illustrates how the decline in very positive assessments did not necessarily indicate a breakdown of parent-child relationships. Rather, it points to the everyday intensification of interaction, in which ordinary disagreements became more frequent and more difficult to avoid under conditions of intensified family co-presence.

Although some recovery was evident by 2023, the distribution of responses did not fully return to pre-pandemic levels, indicating a persistent shift toward more negotiated assessments of relationship quality.

In Croatia, changes were more limited. While reports of conflict increased during the pandemic, levels of very good parent-child relationships remained comparatively stable across the three time points.

As much as they supported me, I also believe that I supported them during the pandemic. This was most obvious during the lockdown. While it was hard for us as young people, adapting to the situation was even harder for them, the older family members. (Male, n.a., Croatia)

This example helps explain the greater stability observed in the Croatian survey distribution. The participant presents pandemic family life not as a rupture, but as an intensification of already established relational patterns.

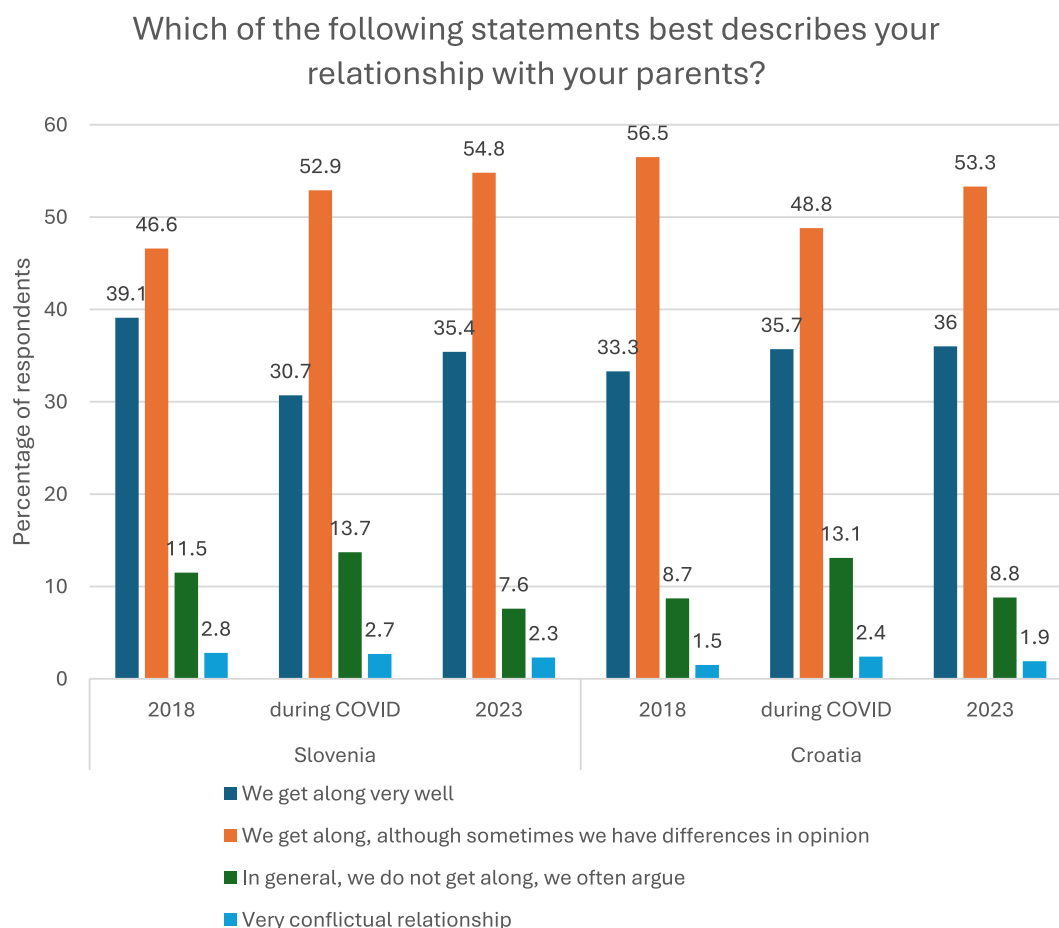


FIGURE 2 | Relationship with parents in 2018, during COVID and in 2023 (%). *Source:* Data files YSEE 2018 and YOVID-22 2023. [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

By 2023, indicators of conflict largely returned to pre-pandemic levels, suggesting greater continuity in parent–child relations over time.

Viewed comparatively, these patterns indicate greater volatility in parent–child relationship quality among Slovenian youth than among their Croatian peers. In both contexts, the pandemic coincided with heightened relational tension, but its intensity and persistence differed. Whereas Slovenian youth exhibited a clearer and more lasting redistribution toward moderate assessment, Croatian youth showed more temporary fluctuations. These shifts in distribution support the interpretation of heightened relational intensity, in which boundary negotiation becomes more visible without fundamentally undermining relational stability.

Across the focus groups, participants described parent–child relationships during the pandemic through a recurring combination of closeness, fatigue, and boundary negotiation. The following excerpts were selected because they illustrate these relational processes underlying the survey patterns: intensified co-presence, emotional support, conflict, privacy negotiation, and perceived influence on decision-making.

Qualitative focus group data help contextualize these shifts. Participants frequently described increased emotional closeness and mutual support during periods of lockdown, often linked

to shared routines and collective coping. At the same time, they also referred to growing irritation and disagreement arising from prolonged co-presence and differing expectations. As one participant explained:

At first it was nice that we were all together more, but after a while it became exhausting. We helped each other, but we also argued more, especially about everyday things. (Female, 19, Slovenia)

This quotation captures the central mechanism of relational intensification: increased proximity produced both care and fatigue. The same family environment that provided practical and emotional support also generated irritation because boundaries between study, work, leisure, and family interaction became blurred.

Overall, the findings suggest that parent–child relationships during the pandemic were characterized by heightened relational intensity rather than uniform deterioration. While most young people in both countries continued to report generally positive relationships with their parents, the pandemic period was marked by increased negotiation and temporary conflict, particularly in Slovenia. These dynamics provide a foundation for examining how family relationships functioned simultaneously as sources of support and tension, addressed in the following section.

3.3 | Family Relationships as Simultaneous Sources of Support and Tension

Our findings indicate that family relationships during the pandemic were characterized by heightened intensity in which support and tension frequently coexisted. Rather than moving uniformly toward either greater harmony or conflict, young people's assessments point to an ambivalent relational pattern, reflected in the quantitative shift toward more moderate assessments and in qualitative accounts of everyday family life under prolonged co-presence.

Survey data show that, despite temporary increases in conflict and declines in fewer very positive assessments, the majority of young people in both Slovenia and Croatia continued to report generally positive family relationships. At the same time, the growth of intermediate response categories suggests that many young people experienced family life as more complex and negotiated than before the pandemic. This pattern was particularly pronounced in Slovenia, where shifts toward moderate assessment persisted into the post-pandemic period.

Qualitative focus group data help illuminate how young people made sense of this ambivalence. Three recurring qualitative patterns help explain this ambivalence: the re-establishment of family routines as a source of support, the loss of peer contact and privacy as a source of strain, and emotional fatigue caused by prolonged co-presence. These patterns often appeared together in participants' accounts, indicating that support and tension were not separate outcomes but interconnected dimensions of intensified family life. Participants frequently described families as key sources of emotional security, practical support, and shared coping with stress during periods of lockdown.

At the beginning of the pandemic I was alone at home, you know, being hooked up the online classes but in fact playing games in the background all day long. For a while it was fun but soon become boring and lonely. However, once the lockdown hit situation for me somehow surprisingly improved. Why? Because my mother stayed at home (laughing). At first it was annoying, but she established old routines. She made sure I got up in the morning, attended classes and other things. Every day she prepared our meals and we (family members) actually sat together and had lunch every single day, something that we did not do since I was a kid. And we liked it! (Male, 20, Slovenia)

This example shows why family satisfaction remained generally high despite the pandemic. The family functioned as an immediate support system when peer, educational, and institutional supports were restricted.

The second pattern concerned the loss of peer contact and the narrowing of everyday life to the household. Several participants emphasized that family support could not fully compensate for the absence of friends, classrooms, public spaces, and ordinary generational interaction.

We are social beings and we have to be in contact with others to function normally. Parents are... well they are ok, but you also have to be with your own peers. For our generation it was terrible. We were denied this social contact for 2 years. And I am not talking about being with your best friends. I am talking about being locked with grownups, being outside the classroom or off the street. (Female, 19, Slovenia)

This excerpt demonstrates that the same relational closeness that enabled support also reduced privacy and autonomy. The finding is therefore not simply that families were supportive or stressful, but that support and strain were produced within the same intensified relational space.

A third pattern concerned emotional fatigue and the loss of private space. Here, support itself could become burdensome when constant availability and proximity made it difficult for young people to withdraw from family interaction:

They (parents) were there for me all the time, which helped a lot, but at the same time I felt like I couldn't breathe anymore. There was no space just for myself. (Female, 21, Slovenia)

This account illustrates how support and strain were often experienced within the same relationships, rather than as opposing or sequential states. The simultaneous presence of cohesion and irritation provides qualitative confirmation of relational intensification as increased emotional density within the family system.

In Croatia, participants more often framed family relationships as reliable sources of emotional regulation and practical coping, particularly when formal or professional support felt insufficient.

I was once sent to a psychologist and I felt that I was just constantly going in circles with my problems and I think that actually harmed my state. When I distanced myself from that and turned to my family, trying to talk to them more about what was happening, it calmed my mind much more. (Female, n.a., Croatia)

Read together, these examples show that ambivalence was present in both countries but articulated differently. Slovenian participants more often framed intensified family life through exhaustion, loss of privacy, and absence of peer contact, whereas Croatian participants more often emphasized continuity, practical help, and broader kin involvement. These differences suggest that relational intensification did not produce identical outcomes across contexts, but rather that the coexistence of support and strain was shaped by the broader social and family environments in which young people experienced the pandemic. Importantly, young people did not describe these dynamics as exceptional or dysfunctional, but as part of an intensified everyday reality that required ongoing

adjustment. Families remained reliable sources of care and stability, yet also became environments in which boundaries, privacy, dependence, and independence had to be continuously renegotiated. This relational ambivalence provides an important backdrop for understanding patterns of family influence on youth decision-making, examined in the following section.

3.4 | Perceived Influence of Family Members on Youth Decision-Making

To further examine how intensified family relationships translated into everyday practices, this section focuses on young people's perceptions of who influenced their important life decisions in the post-pandemic period. Perceived influence provides insight into how family relationships functioned in shaping youth agency under conditions of heightened uncertainty and constrained access to alternative sources of support.

Figure 3 shows that in both Slovenia and Croatia, immediate family members were the most influential actors in young people's decision-making in 2023. Mothers were identified as the most influential figures in both contexts, followed by fathers and siblings.

Three recurring qualitative patterns help explain these distributions. First, mothers were frequently described as primary sources of emotional support and guidance. Second, Croatian participants more often referred to broader kinship networks, including grandparents and siblings, as important sources of support. Third, young people in both countries described family influence as something that was actively negotiated rather than passively accepted.

Apart from that (visiting the psychiatrist) the strongest support came from my mother. (Female, 19, Slovenia)

During COVID, things were actually great for me. I come from a rural area and we're surrounded by forests. My mother, our dog and I would spend at least an hour and a half walking through the woods every day. I would often listen to lectures while walking. I also became much closer to my mother: we would walk and talk and even when we got out of breath, we would pick up the conversation again as soon as we could. For me, that time was really positive. (Female, n.a., Croatia)

Together, these accounts suggest that maternal influence was often rooted in emotional availability and everyday interaction rather than formal authority. Mothers were frequently described as interpreters of uncertainty, providers of routine, and key sources of reassurance during the pandemic period.

Extended family members played a more prominent role in Croatia than in Slovenia, while friends were reported as comparatively less influential in both countries. This pattern was reflected in participants' descriptions of their support networks, which often extended beyond the nuclear family. Qualitative accounts indicate that family support was often distributed across multiple relatives rather than concentrated exclusively within parent-child relationships. One Croatian participant, for example, differentiated clearly between relationships with individual family members:

When it comes to particular family members, my satisfaction is definitely a 10 for my mother, sister and grandmother. For my father, it's more like a 3 or 4. My parents are divorced and my father has mostly been there financially rather than in the way I

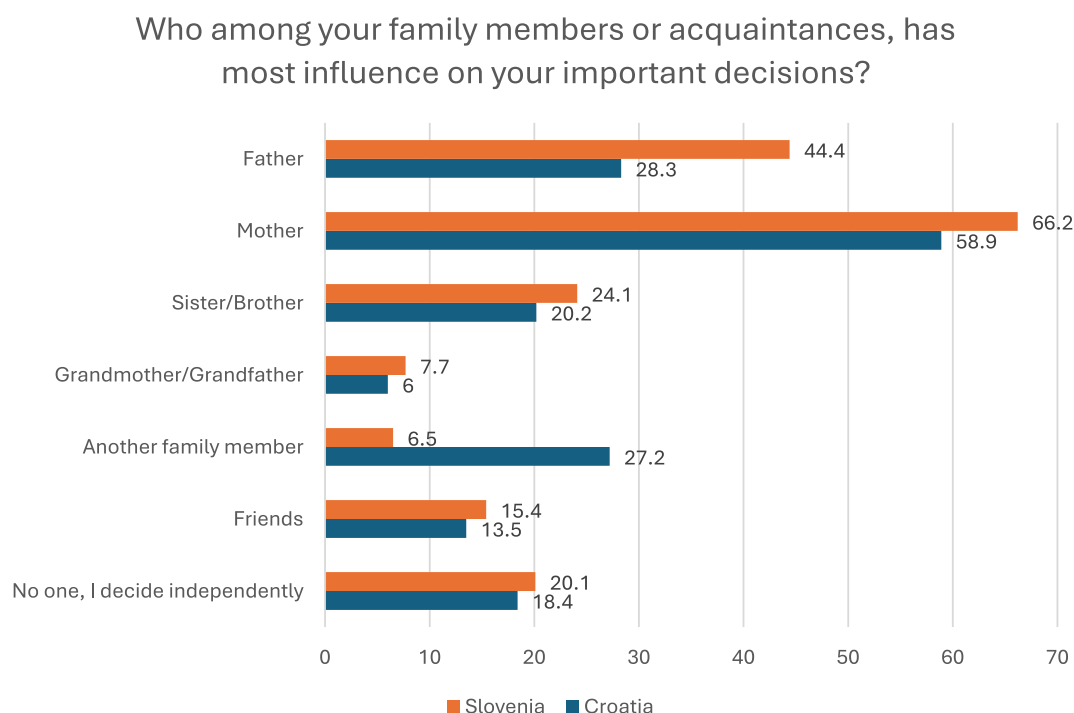


FIGURE 3 | Influence of family and friends on important decisions in 2023 (%). Multiple responses were possible; percentages do not sum to 100%. Source: Data files YOVID-22 2023. [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/famr.12347)]

would have liked. Well, not so much now, but when I was younger, I would have liked him to be around more and to spend more time with me. (Male, n.a., Croatia)

The quote illustrates how emotional support and relational satisfaction were distributed across a broader kinship network rather than concentrated solely within the parent–child relationship. In this case, the participant’s mother, sister and grandmother appear to compensate for the perceived absence of paternal involvement, suggesting that extended family members may serve as important sources of support and resilience within Croatian family contexts.

A minority of young people, more often in Slovenia, reported making decisions independently. Comparatively, the results indicate a stronger and more differentiated pattern of familial influence among Croatian youth, particularly through extended family networks. In Slovenia, although family influence remained substantial, a higher share of young people emphasized individual decision-making, suggesting greater perceived autonomy within family-centered contexts.

This autonomy, however, should not be understood as a simple absence of family influence. Rather, it was often relationally negotiated. Among participants who emphasized independent decision-making, autonomy was rarely described as complete separation from family influence. Instead, young people frequently portrayed decision-making as a process of negotiation in which parental advice remained important, even when it was not ultimately followed. One Slovenian participant described how she and her sister attended protests during the lockdown despite their parents’ disapproval:

When we were younger, my sister and I listened to our parents a lot, but now not so much. (Female, 19, Slovenia)

When asked whether this had led to friction or disagreement, she replied:

No, not really. Of course, our parents did not like it and they thought it was dangerous, but somehow they respected it. I think they realized that we had grown up to a certain degree and that we were not children anymore, you know.

This example illustrates a relational form of autonomy in which young people maintained meaningful family relationships while simultaneously asserting their capacity to make independent decisions. Rather than rejecting parental influence, participants often described autonomy as emerging through ongoing negotiation, disagreement, and mutual recognition.

Qualitative focus group data help contextualize these patterns. Many participants described parents, especially mothers, as key sources of guidance and reassurance during the pandemic, particularly in relation to education, health, and future planning. At the same time, young people often emphasized that such influence was not experienced as directive, but as something they

actively negotiated. As one participant explained how family influence often coexisted with a sense of personal agency, rather than replacing it:

They gave me advice all the time and I listened, but in the end I still tried to decide for myself what felt right. (Male, 20, Slovenia)

This quotation captures selective engagement as a form of youth agency. Family influence operated through advice, reassurance, and negotiation rather than simple parental control. In this sense, intensified family influence during the pandemic reorganized autonomy instead of eliminating it.

Overall, the findings suggest that family influence on youth decision-making was perceived as especially important in the pandemic and post-pandemic context, reflecting both increased reliance on family resources and limited access to alternative sources of guidance. At the same time, young people’s accounts show that this influence was often mediated through negotiation and selective engagement. During the pandemic, family influence appeared to operate mainly through advice, reassurance, and everyday interaction rather than direct control. Young people relied on family resources, but they also described moments of disagreement and independent decision-making. Family influence and youth agency therefore operated together rather than as opposing forces.

4 | Discussion

This study examined how family systems adapted to sustained societal disruption, conceptualizing pandemic-related change as relational intensification rather than simple deterioration or strengthening of relationships. Grounded in family stress and resilience theory (Hill 1949; Boss 2002; Walsh 2015, 2020), the findings indicate that COVID-19 functioned as a prolonged exogenous stressor that reorganized interaction patterns, recalibrated boundaries, and made intergenerational dynamics more visible within households.

Across both Slovenia and Croatia, family satisfaction and parent–child relationship quality remained generally positive, suggesting substantial adaptive capacity within family systems. However, the observed shift from very positive toward more moderate assessments, particularly in Slovenia, indicates relational recalibration rather than decline. From a systems perspective (Cox and Paley 1997; Minuchin 2018), intensified family co-presence and restricted access to non-family settings increased emotional density within family relationships, heightening both cohesion and friction. Such coexistence of support and tension reflects boundary adjustment under constrained environmental conditions. The empirical indicators identified in the introduction, namely moderation of relationship evaluations, coexistence of support and conflict, and intensified autonomy negotiation, collectively substantiate relational intensification as a measurable pattern of systemic recalibration.

Importantly, autonomy negotiation emerged as a central relational mechanism of adaptation. Pandemic restrictions reduced

young people's access to peer networks and institutional supports, embedding developmental processes more firmly within family contexts. Increased parental involvement and influence did not uniformly undermine autonomy; rather, they were frequently embedded in ongoing negotiation, selective compliance and relational compromise. Consistent with developmental family research (Steinberg and Silk 2002; Smetana 2017), autonomy development unfolded within family systems navigating external stress exposure. In this context, disagreement and boundary testing may be interpreted as markers of developmental recalibration rather than dysfunction. However, these findings should also be interpreted in relation to ordinary developmental change. Because the study includes both adolescents and young adults, some shifts in parent–child relationships, autonomy and decision-making influence would be expected even without the pandemic. Movement toward more negotiated relationships with parents, greater emphasis on independent decision-making, and selective engagement with family advice are part of the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The contribution of this study is therefore not to claim that all observed changes were caused by COVID-19, but to show how pandemic conditions likely intensified and compressed already existing developmental processes. Restricted mobility, reduced peer contact, school and work disruptions and heightened uncertainty made family relationships more central to everyday regulation and future planning. In this sense, the pandemic did not create autonomy negotiation or family ambivalence, but made these processes more visible, more concentrated, and more consequential in young people's everyday lives.

The concept of relational intensification helps clarify why resilience and strain were intertwined. Families had to provide emotional security, coordinate routines, manage uncertainty, and renegotiate privacy and authority. The qualitative findings show that emotional closeness often coexisted with fatigue and irritation. In this context, resilience did not mean the absence of tension but the ability to maintain family cohesion despite conflict, frustration, and boundary negotiation (Walsh 2015, 2020).

The cross-national comparison further illustrates the contextual embeddedness of family adaptation. Differences between Slovenia and Croatia suggest that the intensity and duration of governance restrictions may have shaped the extent of relational renegotiation. Within the family stress model, variation in lockdown duration and school closure policies can be interpreted as differences in stressor intensity and access to external resources. In Slovenia, stricter lockdown measures may have amplified boundary negotiation and made intergenerational tensions more visible. In Croatia, stronger extended kin involvement appears to have distributed relational demands across a broader support network. These patterns underscore that family processes are nested within ecological systems in which policy environments shape both stress exposure and available relational resources.

Ecological theory helps clarify how these family-level changes were connected to the broader pandemic environment. From a Bronfenbrenner (1979) perspective, pandemic restrictions operated not only as macro-level public health measures but also as exosystemic disruptions that reorganized young people's everyday developmental contexts. School closures, restricted mobility, reduced peer interaction, and limited access to institutional

support weakened the usual connections between family, education, peers, and community settings. As a result, functions that are ordinarily distributed across several ecological contexts became more concentrated within family relationships. This concentration helps explain why family relationships could remain supportive while also becoming more strained: families were required to provide emotional security, practical coordination, educational support, and autonomy negotiation under conditions in which alternative relational and institutional resources were restricted. The ecological framework therefore supports the interpretation of relational intensification as a family-level process shaped by broader policy and institutional environments, rather than as an exclusively private or intrafamilial phenomenon.

Taken together, the findings extend family resilience theory in three ways. First, they specify how prolonged societal disruption produces relational intensification, making autonomy negotiation a visible mechanism of systemic adaptation. Second, they demonstrate that moderate assessments of relationship quality may signal recalibration rather than decline. Third, they link macro-level stress exposure to micro-level boundary and authority adjustments within families. Rather than conceptualizing families as either buffers or stressors, the results support a systemic understanding in which resilience and strain are dynamically intertwined.

5 | Implications for Practice and Policy

The findings have several implications for practitioners, family educators, and policymakers seeking to support families during periods of prolonged societal disruption.

First, the coexistence of emotional support and tension suggests that conflict in times of crisis should not automatically be interpreted as dysfunction. Practitioners working with families should normalize relational ambivalence under sustained stress and help family members distinguish between destructive conflict and boundary negotiation associated with developmental recalibration. Programs that promote constructive communication, conflict management, and perspective-taking may strengthen adaptive capacity without framing disagreement as failure.

Second, autonomy negotiation emerged as a central mechanism of adaptation. Interventions targeting families with adolescents and young adults should therefore emphasize collaborative decision-making and shared problem-solving rather than unilateral parental control. Training in autonomy-supportive parenting practices, including structured dialogue about privacy, responsibilities, and future planning, may reduce boundary fatigue during periods of intensified co-residence.

Third, the findings underscore the importance of maintaining access to external relational resources. During lockdown conditions, reduced peer and institutional contact embedded developmental processes almost exclusively within family systems, increasing emotional density. Policymakers should prioritize keeping educational, counseling, and youth support services accessible, even in modified or digital formats, to prevent over-concentration of regulatory and emotional demands within families.

Fourth, cross-national differences highlight the protective role of extended kin networks in distributing stress. Community-based programs that facilitate intergenerational support, such as mentoring, extended family engagement initiatives, and neighborhood mutual-aid structures, may enhance systemic resilience by broadening relational resources beyond the nuclear household.

Finally, policy responses to future societal disruptions should explicitly consider family-level consequences. Economic uncertainty, housing precarity, and educational instability intensify reliance on family systems for regulation and support. Structural policies that reduce uncertainty in these domains indirectly strengthen family functioning by decreasing stress exposure and preserving developmental space for autonomy.

Overall, the results suggest that strengthening family resilience in crisis contexts requires attention not only to psychological coping but also to relational processes, communication patterns, boundary negotiation, and distribution of authority through which families adapt under sustained stress.

6 | Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings:

First, the study relies on self-reported data, which capture participants' subjective assessments of family functioning rather than observational or multi-informant measures. These perceptions are central to understanding relational processes, but they may also be shaped by recall bias, social desirability, or participants' current emotional states. Future research would benefit from incorporating multi-informant designs, such as parent and sibling reports or observational measures that could further triangulate relational dynamics within family systems.

Second, the quantitative component compares two cross-sectional time points, 2018 and 2023, rather than following the same individuals longitudinally. The analysis therefore captures population-level shifts, but cannot identify within-family trajectories or causal pathways of adaptation. Longitudinal panel data would allow for a more precise examination of how boundary negotiation, autonomy processes, and relational renegotiation unfold over time. In addition, the during-pandemic assessment of parent-child relationship quality was collected retrospectively in 2023 rather than through a separate survey wave during the acute pandemic period. This limits the precision with which pandemic-period changes can be reconstructed and requires caution in interpreting the "during COVID" category as perceived retrospective change rather than contemporaneously measured change.

Third, although the mixed-methods design strengthens interpretive depth, integration occurred primarily at the explanatory stage. Future research could use more fully integrated designs, such as sequential explanatory models, to examine how specific relational mechanisms identified qualitatively predict quantitative shifts in family functioning indicators.

Fourth, the comparative focus on Slovenia and Croatia enhances contextual insight but limits generalizability. Both countries are characterized by relatively strong intergenerational ties and high rates of intensified family co-presence. Findings may differ in contexts where residential independence occurs earlier or where kin networks play a less central role. Expanding comparative analyses across diverse welfare regimes, cultural contexts, and household arrangements would help clarify how structural conditions shape relational intensification under stress.

Fifth, the study focuses on adolescents and young adults living in or closely connected to parental households. Family systems with different structures, such as single-parent households, blended families, or families experiencing severe economic hardship, may show different patterns of adaptation. Future research should therefore examine how socioeconomic inequality, housing conditions, and family structure moderate relational recalibration under prolonged societal disruption. A related limitation concerns a broad age range of the sample. Respondents aged 16–29 occupy different positions in the transition to adulthood: some are minors living with parents, while others may be students, employed young adults, partnered, or living independently. The meaning of family influence and autonomy negotiation therefore differs across age groups and living arrangements. Although this study treats that range as analytically useful for examining youth transitions, future research should examine age-specific and household-specific patterns in greater detail.

Despite these limitations, the study provides mixed-methods evidence that young people experienced family resilience during COVID-19 through ongoing negotiation, boundary adjustment, and changes in everyday family roles. Continued research integrating systemic theory, developmental processes, and contextual analysis will be essential for advancing understanding of how families adapt to large-scale societal stressors.

Author Contributions

Andrej Naterer: conceptualization, methodology, data analysis, writing – original draft. **Dunja Potočnik:** data collection, qualitative analysis, writing – review and editing. **Danijela Lahe:** theoretical framing, interpretation, writing – review and editing.

Funding

This research was conducted as part of the YO-VID22: Well-Being and Support Structures of Young People Before, During, and After the COVID-19 Pandemic project, funded by Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency ARIS (grant number J7-4597) and Croatian Science Foundation HRZZ (grant number IPS-2022-02-8156).

Ethics Statement

Research was designed and executed in accordance with institutional guidelines at the University of Maribor. All procedures performed in the study were in line with relevant ethical standards and the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

References

- Arnett, J. J. 2014. "Presidential Address: The Emergence of Emerging Adulthood: A Personal History." *Emerging Adulthood* 2, no. 3: 155–162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696814541096>.
- Boss, P. 2002. *Family Stress Management: A Contextual Approach*. 2nd ed. Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452233895>.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. 1979. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674028845>.
- Conger, R. D., K. J. Conger, and M. J. Martin. 2010. "Socioeconomic Status, Family Processes, and Individual Development." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72, no. 3: 685–704. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00725.x>.
- Cox, M. J., and B. Paley. 1997. "Families as Systems." *Annual Review of Psychology* 48: 243–267. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.48.1.243>.
- Donker, M. H., S. Mastrotheodoros, and S. Branje. 2021. "Development of Parent-Adolescent Relationships During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Role of Stress and Coping." *Developmental Psychology* 57, no. 10: 1611–1622. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001212>.
- France, A. 2007. *Understanding Youth in Late Modernity*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Hill, R. 1949. *Families Under Stress: Adjustment to the Crises of War Separation and Reunion*. Harper & Brothers.
- Minuchin, S. 2018. *Families and Family Therapy*. Routledge.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2020. *Youth and COVID 19: Response, Recovery and Resilience (OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus)*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/c40e61c6-en>.
- Prime, H., M. Wade, and D. T. Browne. 2020. "Risk and Resilience in Family Well-Being During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *American Psychologist* 75, no. 5: 631–643. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000660>.
- Smetana, J. G. 2017. "Current Research on Parenting Styles, Dimensions, and Beliefs." *Current Opinion in Psychology* 15: 19–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.02.012>.
- Steinberg, L., and J. S. Silk. 2002. "Parenting Adolescents." In *Handbook of Parenting*, edited by M. H. Bornstein, vol. 1, 2nd ed., 103–133. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Walsh, F. 2015. *Strengthening Family Resilience*. Guilford publications.
- Walsh, F. 2020. "Loss and Resilience in the Time of COVID-19: Meaning Making, Hope, and Transcendence." *Family Process* 59, no. 3: 898–911. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12588>.
- World Values Survey (WVS). 2025. "Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map." <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp?CMSID=Findings>.