



| Research Article/ Araştırma Makalesi |

## A Disadvantaged Student Group: Educational Experiences of Working Children

### Dezavantajlı Bir Öğrenci Grubu: Çalışan Öğrencilerin Okul Deneyimleri<sup>1</sup>

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#### Keywords

1. Disadvantaged Groups
2. Working Children
3. Education

#### Anahtar Kelimeler

1. Dezavantajlı Gruplar
2. Çalışan Çocuklar
3. Eğitim

#### Received/Başvuru Tarihi

25.02.2020

#### Accepted /Kabul Tarihi

29.05.2020

#### Abstract

*Purpose:* The present study aims to analyze the availability of educational services for working students. The study attempts to determine the impact of educational activities conducted in schools attended by working students on education quality, the problems and expectations of working students based on the views of the stakeholders.

*Design/Methodology/Approach:* The participants include school administrators, teachers and parents of working students in the qualitative study. Conducting the research at the secondary school level is seen as a limitation. The participants of the study consist of secondary school administrators and children who study in these schools. Semi-structured interview forms are employed as the data collection instrument, and the collected data are analyzed with the content analysis method.

*Findings:* The study findings demonstrated that educational activities had certain negative effects such as disinterest in schooling, academic failure, fatigue, absenteeism, and undesired behavior, as well as positive effects such as acquisition of a vocation, maturity, and protection. The stakeholders suggested issues such as negative role models, absenteeism, fatigue, early professional responsibilities, conflict, academic failure, and recommendations such as parent training, financial support, and vocational training. It was determined that these students expected financial support, parent training and planned work schedules.

*Highlights:* It could be suggested that there are various interactive dimensions of the employment of educational activities for working children, and future policies that are specific to the problem and the region could be more effective when compared to the present centralist approaches.

#### Öz

*Çalışmanın amacı:* Bu araştırmanın amacı, çalışan öğrencilerin eğitim hizmetlerinden yararlanma durumlarının değerlendirilmesidir. Araştırmada, çalışan öğrencilerin eğitim hizmeti aldıkları okullarda eğitim faaliyetlerinin niteliğine etkileri, yaşanan sorunlar ve beklentiler paydaşların görüşlerine dayalı olarak belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır.

*Materyal ve Yöntem:* Nitel yöntemlerle gerçekleştirilen araştırmada okul yöneticileri, öğretmenler ve öğrenci velileri katılımcı olarak yer almaktadır. Araştırmanın ortaokul düzeyinde gerçekleştirilmesi birer sınırlılık olarak görülmektedir. Katılımcı olarak ortaokullarda görev yapmakta olan okul yöneticileri ile çocuğu ortaokula devam eden öğrenci velileri yer almaktadır. Veri toplama aracı olarak yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formları kullanılmış, elde edilen veriler içerik analizi yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir.

*Bulgular:* Araştırmanın bulgularına göre çalışma faaliyetinin okula ilgisizlik, akademik başarısızlık, yorgunluk, devamsızlık ve istenmeyen davranışlar gibi olumsuz etkilerinin yanında meslek edinme, olgunlaşma ve koruma gibi olumlu etkileri tespit edilmiştir. Olumsuz rol model, devamsızlık, yorgunluk, hayata erken atılma, çatışma, akademik başarısızlık gibi sorunlar; aile eğitimi, maddi destek ve mesleki eğitim gibi öneriler ortaya çıkmıştır. Maddi destek, aile eğitimi ve programlı çalışma gibi beklentilerin olduğu belirlenmiştir.

*Önemli Vurgular:* Çalışan çocukların eğitim faaliyetlerinden yararlanmaları noktasında birbiriyle etkileşim halinde çeşitli boyutların mevcut olduğu, bu olguya yönelik geliştirilecek politikalarda, toptancı yaklaşımlardan ziyade duruma ve bölgeye özgü politikaların daha etkili olabileceğini söylemek mümkündür.

<sup>1</sup>This paper is adapted from the dissertation study carried out in Inonu University Institute of Educational Sciences Department of Educational Administration Doctoral Program entitled "The Investigation of Disadvantaged Groups' Access to Education and Teaching Services According to Stakeholder Opinions"

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## INTRODUCTION

Child labor or working child phenomenon has attracted global attention, especially in developing nations (Pirzada, et al. 2020). When the legal texts regarding the working children are examined, it is seen that some restrictions were imposed in the Geneva Declaration adopted by the League of Nations in 1924, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959. In line with these limitations, each country has made its own internal regulations. Turkey through its constitution, article 50th, has secured that none shall be required to perform work unsuited to his/her age, sex, and capacity. Minors, women, and physically and mentally disabled persons, shall enjoy special protection with regard to working conditions (Constitution of The Republic of Turkey, 1982). In addition, Article 71 of the Labor Law numbered with 4857 and Article 59 of the Primary Education and Education Law numbered with 222 constitute the legal infrastructure for children to work. Working children experience difficulties in educational activities and struggle under difficult job conditions (Pirzada, et al., 2020). Because it is known that the extracurricular factors also affect their educational activities (Domina, et al. 2017; Johansson & Höjer, 2012). The fact that school-age children, who work in jobs that require skills above their physical capacity, lead to problems in harnessing the benefits of educational activities and lack of investment in future human capital (Lordoglu, 2017; Yuksel, et al. 2015; Sevinc & Sevinc, 2012; Gorucu & Akbiyik, 2010; Emerson & Souza, 2007; Psacharopoulos, 1997). Not only is the time spent by children to attend the school, but also the time spent on educational activities after the school to do homework, rest and sleep is valuable. It is natural that a child who arrives at school tired, falls asleep in class, and could not find time to do homework, would exhibit lower academic performance and would not acquire adequate achievements when compared to an unemployed student with similar learning skills (Cigno, 2011).

The correlation between child labor and education could be determined by social and household characteristics, employment and education opportunities (Bhalotra & Tzannatos, 2003; Psacharopoulos, 1997). Especially when social security is not available for parents with inadequate income and several children, they require the income provided by the children to meet their basic needs and livelihood. Previous studies reported that children are employed for economic, social and cultural reasons (Nelson & Quito, 2018). The inadequate income level of the parents is a significant factor that affects the educational lives of children (Hirsch, 2007; Demie & Lewis, 2011, Cassen & Kingdon, 2007; Psacharopoulos, 1997). Parental awareness, their attitude towards schooling and education, their perceptions and motivation are among the social and cultural determinants (Pandey & Gautam, 2015). These economic, social and cultural factors could affect the child's attitude towards school and academic performance (Mills & Gale, 2010). Children's achievements could fall behind their peers when they work as they attend school (Psacharopoulos, 1997). Thus, these children are caught in a vicious circle, where children without quality education and adequate personal and social competencies could fall behind the educational achievements of their peers (Kluttz, 2015; Psacharopoulos, 1997).

On the other hand, certain authors argued that acceptance of child labor as completely harmful was too ambitious. These authors claimed that not all child labor was negative, child labor could be coordinated with educational activities, and it may provide educational resources (Orrnert, 2018; Libório & Ungar, 2010). As long as labor does not prevent school attendance, it could be argued that if the children of low-income families could contribute to the household income and education expenses, policies that completely ban child labor could lead to negative consequences (Sedlacek, et al. 2009). The effects of child labor on academic performance are complex. Certain studies suggested that short-term after-school employment has little effect on academic achievement. It could be argued that especially high school or university students could possess the physical requirements of school and work, and short-term employment would contribute to the development of these students. However, it would be unfair to expect the same performance from young children in primary education. Previous studies demonstrated that the employment of primary school children leads to negative academic consequences. Thus, it could be suggested that child labor affects academic achievements especially in primary education. In other words, even minimal employment in primary education age could significantly affect the physical, mental and emotional development of children. Furthermore, even its impact on academic life is very limited or does not exist, child labor in primary education would reduce the future employment chances of these children in qualified and productive jobs (Sanchez, et al. 2009).

Based on the findings reported in the literature, it could be argued that it is quite difficult to describe the phenomenon of child report definitely since it entails various dimensions with complex effects (Psacharopoulos, 1997). Literature review would demonstrate that several studies tackled the phenomenon from various perspectives (Babahanoglu, 2020; Dursun & Aksakal, 2018; Icli & Bagis, 2018; Tuesday & Akyol, 2014; Bilgin, 2012; Cigno, 2011; Tor, 2010; Basu & Zarghamee, 2009; Bilgin, 2009; Esin, et al. 2005; Fidan, 2004; Woodhead, 2004; Altintas, 2003). Although the educational problems of working children were frequently mentioned in these studies, it was observed that the phenomenon was mostly discussed based on access to education. On the other hand, the number of studies on the education of working children are limited in education literature (Pirzada, et al. 2020; Cangur et al. 2013; Kara & Calik, 2012; Cockburn & Dostie, 2007; Psacharopoulos, 1997). And, it was observed that these studies mostly focused on the educational requirements and access to education of working children. Review of these studies revealed a gap in the literature in the investigation of the availability of educational activities for working school children, and the present study aimed to fill this gap, and emphasize the relations between education and working children. It was considered that the present study would provide a significant foundation for future studies. Furthermore, the present study was expected to contribute to the literature on social justice, a popular topic in international literature. In the study, in addition to access to education, which is important for both working and other children, the relationship of these children with education was discussed

based on the collected data. The study aimed to analyze the availability of educational services for working students. Thus, the following research problems were determined:

- Do working students have an impact on the quality of educational activities conducted at school, and describe this impact if there is?
- What are the problems encountered by working students during education?
- What are the expectations of stakeholders about the active employment of educational services by working students?

## METHOD

### The Research Model

The present study was conducted with the phenomenological design, a qualitative research method. Phenomenological design could be preferred to investigate phenomena that people may encounter in daily life but do not have a deep understanding about, in other words, to research familiar phenomena (Yildirim & Simsek, 2011). In phenomenological studies, the data are analyzed in-depth based on the ideas, emotions, approaches and descriptions of the participants about the phenomenon (Patton, 2014).

### The Study Group

The study group included school administrators, teachers and student parents in secondary schools attended by students who worked after school. Because school administrators, teachers and student parents have experiences with working children that's why they were included to the study group. The entire study group consist of Turkish citizens. The study group was assigned with the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling method is a common method in qualitative research (Gliner, et al. 2015). The assignment criteria included concurrent employment and school attendance. Thus, the criterion sampling strategy, one of the purposive sampling methods, was employed. The criterion sampling strategy entails the inclusion of participants who meet predetermined criteria in the study (Patton, 2014). The study group included 30 participants. The data collection process was terminated when data repetition and saturation were observed. In addition, this study has some limitations. The research sampling limited to students working in a workplace after school and that it is carried out at secondary school level can be seen the limitations of the study.

There is no data on students who work after school. Thus, secondary schools in disadvantaged or low-income neighborhoods were visited, and information on the presence of working students was obtained from school administrators, and interviews were conducted with volunteering working students at schools. In the study, the private information of the participants was kept confidential, and abbreviations were used to identify the participants. The administrators of schools with working students were abbreviated as WA, teachers with working students were abbreviated as WT, and parents with a working child were abbreviated as WP. The study group demographics and interview durations are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. The study group demographics and interview duration**

Participants							
Participant	Participant Code	Gender	Seniority (year)	Education level	Income level (TL)	# of children	Interview duration (minute)
Administrator	WA1	Male	9	Bachelor	-	-	28
Administrator	WA2	Male	11	Bachelor	-	-	25
Administrator	WA3	Male	20	Bachelor	-	-	22
Administrator	WA 4	Male	7	Bachelor	-	-	29
Administrator	WA 5	Female	7	Bachelor	-	-	25
Administrator	WA 6	Male	4	Bachelor	-	-	30
Administrator	WA 7	Male	11	Bachelor	-	-	32
Administrator	WA 8	Female	4	Bachelor	-	-	27
Administrator	WA 9	Female	4	Bachelor	-	-	31
Administrator	WA 10	Female	8	Bachelor	-	-	27
Administrator	WA 11	Male	8	Bachelor	-	-	29
Administrator	WA 12	Female	7	Bachelor	-	-	30
Administrator	WA 13	Male	15	Bachelor	-	-	33
Administrator	WA 14	Male	5	Bachelor	-	-	34
Teacher	WT1	Female	3	Bachelor	-	-	32
Teacher	WT 2	Male	4	Bachelor	-	-	27
Teacher	WT 3	Male	2	Bachelor	-	-	27
Teacher	WT 4	Female	4	Bachelor	-	-	28

Teacher	WT 5	Female	4	Bachelor	-	-	26
Teacher	WT 6	Female	5	Bachelor	-	-	29
Teacher	WT 7	Male	8	Bachelor	-	-	25
Teacher	WT 8	Male	9	Bachelor	-	-	28
Teacher	WT 9	Female	5	Bachelor	-	-	26
Teacher	WT 10	Male	5	Bachelor	-	-	24
Teacher	WT 11	Female	2	Bachelor	-	-	34
Parent	WP1	Male	-	Primary school	2000	8	24
Parent	WP 2	Male	-	Literate	2000	6	23
Parent	WP 3	Male	-	Primary school	2200	6	23
Parent	WP 4	Male	-	Middle school	3000	7	24
Parent	WP 5	Male	-	Literate	1800	5	25

### Data Collection Instruments

The study data were collected with the interview technique, which is a common technique in qualitative research. In the interview technique, individual perspectives and ideas about an event, case or fact are determined (Patton, 2014). Semi-structured interview approach is a preferred interview method. In this approach, the interview questions are determined in advance to establish the limits of the discussion and concentrate on the topic during the interview (Patton, 2014). In the study, the following three questions were asked to the participants to collect the data:

1. Do working students have an impact on the quality of educational activities conducted at school and describe this impact if there is?
2. What are the problems encountered by working students during education and what do you suggest to resolve these problems?
3. What are the expectations of stakeholders about the active employment of educational services by working students?

### Validity and Reliability

Creswell (2016) argued that validity is an effort to analyze the accuracy of findings in qualitative studies, and only the authors and participants could explain these efforts accurately. A number of strategies was adopted to improve the validity of the study based on Creswell's approach. Thus, the study aimed to construct a meaningful and consistent set of findings, expert opinions was obtained, the compatibility of the data and the conceptual framework was analyzed, the factuality of the findings was questioned by the study group and considered factual. Furthermore, the characteristics of the study group were described and the study group was diversified with the inclusion of school administrators, teachers and parents.

Reliability entails the intercoder consistency in the datasets (Creswell, 2016). Thus, the interview questions included clear statements, data were collected based on ethical principles, and expert opinion was employed in data analysis. The authors tried to be as impartial and empathetic as possible during the interviews.

### Data Analysis

Within the scope of the research, the data obtained through interviews were analyzed by content analysis method. Content analysis can be explained as an effort to reduce and interpret voluminous qualitative material to determine its basic meanings and consistencies (Patton, 2014). In content analysis, similar data are collected, organized and interpreted within the framework of determined themes and codes (Yildirim & Simsek, 2011). After the codes and themes were formed, the necessary arrangements were made, and the research findings were discussed in the context of the research problem and the relevant literature.

## FINDINGS

The first question was "Do working students have an impact on the quality of educational activities conducted at school and describe this impact if there is?" in the interview and the themes that were determined based on the data are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. The Effects of Working Students on the Quality of Educational Activities at School**

Effects	
Positive	Negative
Acquisition of a vocation	Disinterest in school
Maturity	Academic failure
Protection	Fatigue
	Absenteeism

Participants mostly considered the efforts of the students with inadequate academic performance and tendency to exhibit undesirable behavior to find a job after schools as a positive effect. The participant WA5 stated that *“the academic achievements of these children are quite inadequate, they cannot hope for an academic future, and they work rather than being unqualified individuals, so this could be considered as a positive effect, they both money and support their parents and acquire a vocation”*. Parents stated that they have concerns for the future vocation of their children, and they supported their children to work due to financial difficulties and low academic performance of their children. For example, WP1 stated the following: *“My two middle school children work, one works in the bakery and the other in a barber shop. Their school grades are not good, I wanted to them to have a métier at a young age”*.

Participants stated that the sense of responsibility of working students developed faster and they reached maturity earlier when compared to other students. On this issue, WA12 stated the following: *“It can be argued that, as a positive effect, these children develop a sense of responsibility and learn something from the artisan master informally”*. WT10 stated that *“children begin to work early, mature and develop a sense of responsibility”*.

It was also mentioned by some participants that the protection of working children from the negative effects of their circles was a positive effect. WT11 stated that *“when certain children are mischievous and do not study, the parents force them to work to prevent the negative impact of the environment, the child would not study anyway, at least, they are employed to stay away from bad habits”*.

The common negative effects mentioned by the participants included low interest of working students in school, abstinence from doing homework, lack of academic goals, inability to concentrate, the fact that they considered education dispensable, attend school due to obligation, and feel disconnected, were grouped under the theme of indifference to school. WA9 stated the following: *“These students do not have an academic goal, they attend only for the diploma, there is nothing on the written exam papers except their name”*. CT6 stated that *“working students have no interest in school, their commitment to school is very weak”*.

It was frequently stated that the academic achievement of working children was very low, which affected the school activities. For example, WA3 stated that *“these children have extremely poor academic achievements, they do not do homework. Sometimes parents allow them to work for this reason”*, while WP4 stated that *“My child is very unsuccessful at school, I want him to work he could acquire a profession”*.

It was stated by the participants that working students could not rest adequately due to their age; and therefore, are always tired physically and mentally. WT4 stated the following: *“Working students attend the school part-time and work part-time. They are very tired, they cannot concentrate on the courses, they cannot do their homework because they are tired”*.

Participants stated that working students are more likely to be late for class and absent when compared to other students. For example, WA6 stated that *“the education is full-time in our school, working students have an absenteeism tendency, but they do not attend classes especially in the afternoon, we seem to provide buffer education”*.

The second question was "What are the problems encountered by working students during education and what do you suggest to resolve these problems?" in the interview and the themes determined based on the study data are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. The Problems Experienced by Working Students in Education and Recommendations**

Problems and Recommendations	
Problems	Recommendations
Negative role model	Parental education
Absenteeism	Financial support
Fatigue	Vocational training
Academic failure	

According to the participants, one of the most important problems was the fact that working students mentally distance themselves from school and accept the workplace and the individuals in the workplace as a role model. WA6 stated that *“working students does not consider school but the workplace as a model, they internally discredit the school, I think this is the most important problem.”*

Participants stated that working students are more likely to arrive late for school and be absentee. For example, WA7 stated that *“one of the most important problems is absenteeism”*.

Participants also stated that working students do not arrive to school rested. On this problem, WA33 stated that *“one of the important problems is the fact that the student is tired, could not wake up, and arrives late. There are even students who came to the school after early work in the morning”*.

Participants also mentioned the low academic performance of working students as one of the problems. For example, WA4 stated that *“academic failure is at the highest level among working students”*.

Participants suggested certain solutions for the problems experienced by working students in education. Most participants proposed parental education. They suggested to communicate with the parents of working students to emphasize the significance and necessity of education. Participant WA2 stated the following: *“The problem has parental, economic and social dimensions. There are separated parents. These parents force their children to work. There are also those who are forced work to keep bad habits at bay, so not all are obliged to work. The education level and awareness of these parents is quite low, they should be educated, their awareness should be raised”*.

Participants suggested that the improvement of the income of working student parents to a regular and adequate level would be effective financially and certain financial assistance could be provided. WA2 stated that *“the problem had an economic dimension, so families should have a certain level of regular income”*.

According to the participants, vocational training could be popularized for financial assistance to the students, and they could remain at school and without experiencing problems. Thus, WA6 recommended that *“if the child needs to work, it should be more controlled like in vocational high schools, it could be in the form of internship, but it should be short-term and more formal”*.

All of the parents of the working students stated that there was no problem with their children working after school and that the children could carry out both the school and working after school together. For example, ÇV2: *“There is no problem, my child goes to school in the morning and after school, he goes to work. He is not very successful in his lessons anyway”*.

The last interview question was *“What are the expectations of stakeholders about the active employment of educational services by working students?”* and the themes based on the collected data are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. The Expectations Related to Active Employment of Educational Services by Working Students**

Expectations
Financial support
Parental education
Planned work

Participants stated that financial aid for the parents of working students would improve the economic welfare; and thus, the tendency to work might decrease among students. WA9 stated that *“most families forced their children to work for financial reasons, the academic performance of the child is also a factor”*, ÇV3 stated that *“Financial support can be given to families”*.

The educational expectations for the parents of working children were also expressed. WA12 stated that *“the awareness of the parents of working children could be raised, and sometimes separated parents trigger this activity. Parents may be separated, the father may be sick or in prison, there is a need for social support projects that would strengthen the family ties”*, and WT11 stated the following: *“The problem is multidimensional, financial factors are significant and if the parents are educated, the problem could be alleviated. The importance of education should be explained to the parents”*.

According to the participants, the work of the children should be more planned and controlled since students work for several reasons. WA6 stated the following: *“Even though these students need to work, this activity should be controlled by the cooperation between schools, chambers of small business, municipalities, etc., the child should know that the school would contribute to this activity, this activity should be more planned”*.

## DISCUSSION

The problem of academic failure associated with the access of working students to educational services was a prominent finding in the present study. Most participants stated that the academic performances of working students were inadequate. Based on these views and related studies (Osment, 2014; Goulart, 2011; Goulart & Bedi, 2008; et al. 2004; Heady, 2003; Tyler, 2001), it could be suggested that academic failure and child labor were associated. Previous studies reported that especially long-term work could affect school performance. Furthermore, certain studies suggested that planned and short-term work did not significantly affect school performance in working students (Omokhodion, et al. 2006; Ravallion & Wodon, 2000). These studies argued that children worked to contribute to family income, for school expenses and allowance, and the correlation between education and work was quite insignificant (Osment, 2014; Bezerra, et al. 2007). Bezerra et al. (2007) reported that work had negative effects on academic performance of working students; however, working for 2 hours or less per day did not significantly

affect their academic performance. Orkin (2012) also claimed that long-term and hard work reduced the time that should be devoted to educational activities.

It was often stated that financial aid for the parents of working students would reduce the tendency of children to work, and the requirement could decrease when the parents have regular and sufficient income. Based on these views, it could be suggested that the parental income is one of the factors that play a role in child labor. The findings of several studies were consistent with this finding (Gun, 2017; Boyden, et al. 2016; Duyar & Ozener, 2003). When the child works due to economical reasons, a child under dire conditions could support the parents by working, and sometimes the child could work to finance educational expenditures (Bourdillon, 2017). Thus, working under 2 hours per day to fulfill the basic household needs may make a difference (Bezerra et al., 2007).

The study findings also underlined that child labor contributed to the acquisition of a vocation. Participants especially supported the cases where students with poor academic performance and who exhibited undesirable behavior and worked to acquire a vocation by working as they attend school. Some participants stated that vocational education should be popularized starting from the middle school. Expectations for children to acquire a vocation could be explained by the lack of a belief that children would acquire a vocation through school. Because, guiding children to a job to acquire a vocation could be considered as an response to the low expectations about the benefits of education (Kuepie, 2018; Okusluk Capur, 2006; Myrstad, 1999). It could be argued that if individuals could both attend the school and acquire a vocation through vocational education, the demand for child labor would decrease especially among young children and for longer work shifts. Cangur et al. (2013) recommended to improve vocational programs in educational institutions.

One of the important findings of the present study was that working students lose interest in school, do not do homework, come unprepared and out of obligation to the school. Other studies also reported similar findings (Gun, 2017; Cangur, 2013; Inal, 2010; Heady, 2003). The indifference towards education could be explained by the fact that short-term ideas such as the desire to live like adults, the increased self-confidence due to individual income, and a little improvement in their economic conditions (Gun, 2017; Inal, 2010). Goulart & Bedi (2008) also reported that work activities decreased among ambitious students with a will and higher motivation regardless of their parents and teachers, and in certain children, unwillingness and demotivation may become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It was also determined that working students did not have enough time to rest, and they were physically and mentally tired at school. The same findings was also reported in related studies (Gun, 2017; Orkin, 2012; Bezerra et al., 2007). These studies reported that hard and long-term work prevented students to allocate adequate time and energy to the courses and negatively affected their motivation. It is known that work hours of children are often long, they are exposed to excessive pressures and stress at work and negatively affected both physically and psychologically (Duyar & Ozener, 2003).

Also, views on parental education were frequently expressed. Participants emphasized the significance of parent education, provided recommendations, and stated their expectations for better communication with parents and parental guidance about the importance and necessity of education. The finding reported by Okusluk Capur (2006) that working students could communicate less with their teachers or school administrators when compared to other students was also consistent with this finding.

It was also determined that working students are more likely to arrive late to school or be absent when compared to other students. Previous studies reported that age and the length of the shifts of working children played a role in arriving late to school and absenteeism. In cases where the daily shift was long, the absenteeism tendency or even dropping out of school increased (Boyden et al., 2016, Gunnarsson et al., 2004). Especially young working children could not balance work and school activities and may tend to neglect the school activities (Orkin, 2012).

It was also determined in the study that working students exhibited higher levels of responsibility and reached matured faster. This finding could be explained by the fact that the experiences in work life could lead to early maturity. Because the experiences of the children affect their perceptions about the future and could lead to realistic perceptions due to their living conditions (Gun, 2017). Also, it was stated that when children work in minor jobs in certain periods such as helping out the family business or jobs that could provide pocket money for vacations could provide job experience, skills and productivity; thus, improving their sense of autonomy, self-confidence and responsibility (Mulugeta & Eriksen, 2019; ILO, 2019; Bourdillon, 2017; Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005). The development of the resilience of working children and the ability to manage social relationships while dealing with the difficulties in the job could also assist their maturity levels (Mulugeta & Eriksen, 2019). One of the prominent findings of the present study was the premise that working would protect the children from the negative environmental effects. Based on this finding, it could be suggested that certain parents observe the negative elements and risks in the environment and guide their children to work with a reflex to protect them from these negative elements and risks with an altruistic attitude. This finding revealed that the parents and internal parental dynamics were the determinants of child labor (Boyden et al., 2016; Cangur et al., 2013).

Participants expressed expectations that certain children could both attend school and work in a planned, schedules and controlled environment since they need to work for various reasons. This perspective can be considered as a more realistic and situational approach as opposed to the holistic approach that child labor is harmful for the children and a radical mistake. A child

in poverty could contribute to the improvement of the her or his own conditions as well as her or his parents by working, and working could be beneficial for the child and the society since it would improve individual skills, a sense of responsibility, and even support schooling by providing the financial requirements (Bourdillon, 2017). A flexible and coordinated approach could ensure school attendance and working and improve the child's performance in both spheres (Orkin, 2012). Certain studies suggested that short-term work that would not exceed 2 hours per day did not have a significant negative effect on schooling (Nelson & Quito, 2018; Omokhodion, et al. 2006; Ravallion & Wodon, 2000).

Finally, it was determined that working students were mentally detached from school, prioritized their work and perceived the workplace as the role model. This could be explained by the fact that children prioritize the work environment where they perceive themselves as more successful. When students exclude the image of the school from their minds, they may not spend an effort in educational activities even when they attend school, and they may detach themselves from school mentally (Glasser, 2016). Earning money at an early age could sometimes lead to a better focus on work rather than focusing on education (Pirzada, et al. 2020).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, based on all study findings, it could be argued that working students experience certain effects, problems and have certain expectations in educational activities. It could be suggested that the phenomenon of child labor has various dimensions, these dimensions interact with one another, and more realistic rather than holistic approaches, and those that do not ignore local realities could be effective in the reduction of the negative effects of this problem. It could be argued that especially young children should not be allowed to work, and in later ages, easy, short-term work or jobs during vacations could be planned for children with a flexible, planned and controlled approach based on the conditions of the parents and the child.

Based on the findings of the study, some recommendations were developed especially for policy makers. Academic support could be provided with distance education based on the experiences during the pandemic. School uniforms, notebooks and other equipment could be provided for children of low-income families. Financial expenses could be reduced by converting the free textbook application of the Ministry of National Education into a smart notebook application. Policies could be developed to ensure that children would work in a flexible and controlled environment based on their age, in cases where work is necessary to acquire a profession. Stronger communication and cooperation with students and their families could be recommended about absenteeism. Further studies could be conducted on parental education, especially the education of the mothers. For example, brochures could be printed, courses could be organized. It could be suggested that future studies should be conducted with comprehensive analyses and comparisons in other education levels.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Researchers' contribution rate

Since the study was produced from the doctoral thesis, the first author is responsible for the parts that form the basis of the research such as data collection, conceptual framework, discussion and conclusion. The second author guided the process and made some corrections at the point of maturation of the study.

## Statements of publication ethics

We hereby declare that the study has not unethical issues and that research and publication ethics have been observed carefully.

## Ethics Committee Approval Information

This study was carried out by considering ethical principles. Ethics committee approval was received from Inonu University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the dated 01.06.2020 numbered 2020/9-4.

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