



The COVID-19 Pandemic: The Experiences of Children Aged 11-14 Years in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, many countries imposed curfews, suspended classes, and switched to distance learning applications. In line with these developments, this study explored the daily life experiences, thoughts and feelings, support needs, and metaphors about staying home during this time of children aged 11-14 years in Turkey. The phenomenological method, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the study. Categories and themes were formed from the data obtained through interviews with a total of 14 children, eight male and six female, from different cities in Turkey using an online application during April and May 2020. The themes formed from the children's statements were "daily life experience during the Corona period", "thoughts and feelings about staying home", "support needs" and "metaphors about the pandemic process". Children indicated academic and leisure activities for their daily life on Corona days. They indicated that they felt it was necessary to stay home, but feelings such as longing, anxiety, and fear were intense, and some of the children needed emotional, academic, and economic support. In assessing their metaphors, the categories of space, animal, property, and situation, and these metaphors the children emphasized staying at home involuntarily, protection from the illness, and sedentary life.

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1. Introduction

Threatening human health and the world economy on a global scale, the global pandemic COVID-19 may develop feelings of intense fear, panic, and depression in individuals. It is a serious threat affecting individuals' behavior (Jiao et al., 2020). The effects of COVID-19 on children are not different from its effects on adults. In their study conducted with children aged 3-18 at the beginning of COVID-19, Jiao et al. (2020) reported that children showed reactions such as fear of asking questions about the pandemic, clinging to their caregivers, diverting attention, and irritability. Fear of asking questions about the pandemic and fear of something happening to their loved ones may lead to a decrease in sleep quality, separation anxiety, physical discomfort, and agitation (Jiao et al., 2020). Separation from caregivers due to COVID-19 may cause various concerns such as separation anxiety and feelings such as deep sadness. For these reasons, monitoring the psychological state of children is important in this context (Liu et al.2020). Even if the people who care for them are with them, uncertainty during the pandemic and the fear of what will happen to them can lead to behavioral consequences such as severe anger (Dalton et al., 2020).

The local studies put forth that Turkish children also experience some difficulties. Especially in curfew period, children express the need for mental health support (Kaplan, Kürümlüoğlugil, & Bütün, 2021). Although Turkish children' fear of COVID-19 is found under the average scores, children with a higher level of fear of

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COVID-19 have a higher level of social anxiety (Şingir, Ayvaz, & Tonga, 2021). Other studies also reveal that children experience loneliness (Bulucu Büyüksoy, Özdil, & Çatiker, 2021), anger, sleeping problems (Bulucu Büyüksoy, Özdil, & Çatiker, 2021; İlbasmış et al., 2021; Öztürk et al., 2021) and anxiety (İlbasmış et al., 2021). Having relatives infected by COVID-19 affects children' level of psychological resilience and hope adversely (Söner & Gültekin, 2021).

Ferguson et al. (2020) argued that school and college closures could also be among the preventive measures taken in addition to the those taken to reduce the rate of the spread of pandemic among population during COVID -19 (isolation of suspected cases at home, domestic quarantine of those living in the same house with suspected cases, and social distancing of the elderly and others at risk of becoming seriously ill from the pandemic). Considering that the World Health Organization recommends at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day for children aged 5-17 years, closing schools during COVID-19 and isolating children at home put them at risk for possible future physical illness and may negatively impact their mental well-being (Editorial, 2020; Ferguson et al., 2020).

In the early adolescence period, which includes the 11-14 age period, peer relationships increase, and emotional, intellectual, and behavioral exchanges gain importance for the child's development. Independence from the parents and time spent with peers affect identity formation (Bee & Boyd, 2009; Santrock, 2010). Based on this, it is believed that these developmental experiences of children in early adolescence who spend the COVID-19 pandemic at home may differ. In this context, this study aimed to examine what children (11-14 years old) experience when staying home on corona days. Exploring what children experience at home with their family members or other contexts they deal with when they do not go to school during the pandemic will shed light on future studies on their feelings, thoughts, and psychological situations.

1.1. Developments about Children During the Pandemic in Turkey

The first case of COVID-19 in Turkey was reported on March 10, 2020. On March 16, 2020, the Presidency of the Republic of Turkish announced the closure of elementary, middle, and high schools and universities (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2020a). To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the use of masks in public places became mandatory, and intercity travel was banned in 31 cities. A curfew was imposed for citizens under 20 and over 65 on April 3, 2020 (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2020b).

The decision to relax restrictions for citizens under 20 and over 65 for certain periods on a given day of the week was announced on May 4, 2020 (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2020c). Furthermore, it was announced that the normalization process has started and the measures taken were lifted as of June 1 (Official Gazette of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2020). However, it was decided that the activities of educational institutions (except day care centers) would not start until August. Distance education processes were started through EBA TV (Education Informatic Network) in August, but the opening of the schools was gradual. For certain grades, school operations began on certain days of the week on September 21, 2020, but, it was announced that the schools that were closed on 16 November would continue their instruction via distance learning from November 23 (MoNE, 2020a).

1.2. Purpose of the Present Study

This study aimed to explore what children aged 11-14 years experience staying home on corona days due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The answers to the following questions were sought:

- How do children aged 11-14 years spend their days during the COVID-19 Pandemic?
- What are the feelings and thoughts of children aged 11-14 years during the COVID-19 Pandemic?
- What kind of support is needed for children aged 11-14 years during the COVID-19 Pandemic?
- What are the metaphors children aged 11-14 years produced regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic process?

2. Methodology

To examine the experiences of children aged 11-14 years during corona days, this study employed the phenomenological method, one of the qualitative research designs. Creswell (2018) stated that this method integrates and describes how the phenomenon, which is the subject of the study, is experienced by the

participants. He emphasized that the results may be valuable to therapists, teachers, healthcare professionals, and politicians.

2.1. Research Sample

Participants were selected using widely-used convenience sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods (Creswell, 2018). The participants were aged between 11-14 years old. A total of 14 children, eight boys and six girls, were interviewed. Eight of the 14 participants lived in the major cities (Bursa, Istanbul, Mersin, Samsun). All of the participants were middle school students. Six of the participants were in 6th grade, three were in 7th grade, and five were in 8th grade. Table 1 provides information about the gender, age, grade level, and cities where participants lived.

Table 1. Information on Participants' Gender, Age, Grade Level, and the Cities They Lived in

Participant number	Gender	Age	Grade	City
P 1	Male	14	8	Çorum
P 2	Male	12	6	Bursa
P 3	Male	14	8	Siirt
P 4	Female	12	6	Amasya
P 5	Female	14	8	Osmaniye
P 6	Female	12	7	Amasya
P 7	Female	11	6	Mersin
P 8	Female	12	6	Samsun
P 9	Male	11	6	İstanbul
P 10	Male	14	8	Amasya
P 11	Male	13	7	Bursa
P 12	Female	14	8	Samsun
P 13	Male	12	6	İstanbul
P 14	Male	12	7	Hakkari

Note: Istanbul, Bursa, Samsun, and Mersin are among the metropolitan cities in Turkey. Amasya, Çorum, Hakkari and Siirt are non-metropolitan cities. Metropolitan cities in Turkey have a population of over 750,000. Non-metropolitan cities have a population of less than 750,000.

2.2. Data Collection Tools and Procedure

The researchers used a semi-structured interview form to determine children's experiences. In addition to demographic information, this form included four study questions developed to examine participants' daily lives during the pandemic period, their family relationships, their feelings and thoughts about the pandemic, and metaphors about the pandemic period.

First, the Ethics committee approval of the study was obtained. Informed consent of the participants and their parents were also obtained before the interviews. Then, the researchers conducted the interviews using the participants' cell phones via video calls over WhatsApp during April and May, 2020. During these interviews, voice recordings of the interviews were taken, and then these voice recordings were written down by the researchers. Afterwards, they were developed to be used in the data analysis process. The duration of the interviews varied between 25-30 minutes on average.

2.3. Data Analysis

Content analysis was used in the study to analyze the views of the participating children. In line with Creswell's (2018) recommendations first, key phrases were listed, and then meaning clusters were formed by using these phrases. Meaning clusters are merged together to form the subcategories. In this context, themes, categories, and subcategories were developed using the data obtained from children's views. After this process, the researchers shared their findings with a field expert to ensure the reliability of the present study. In addition, to increase the external validity of the study, quotes from children are presented in each category.

2.4. Ethics Committee Approval

Ethical Committee Approval is required by applying to Amasya University Social Sciences Ethical Committee in the present study. Ethical Committee Approval's information are presented below:

- Date of decision: 25.12.2020
- The number of the approval document: E-30640013-108.01-

3. Findings

After examining the results, four themes were formed, namely “daily life experience during the during the COVID-19 pandemic”, “thoughts and feelings regarding staying home during the COVID-19 pandemic”, “support needs during the COVID-19 pandemic”, and “metaphors about the COVID-19 pandemic”. Each theme and its subcategories are explained below.

3.1. Daily Life Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The categories formed for a daily life experience during the COVID-19 pandemic were “academic activities” and “leisure activities”.

Academic Activities: All of the children expressed views on academic activities in their daily life experience during the corona process. Most of the children talked about “online course follow-up” and “individual study” regarding the academic activities, whereas some of them told that they individually followed the lectures on TV and one participant said that she did her homework with her parents. The lessons watched on television were EBA broadcasts made by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). Some example statements about these are presented below.

P13: “My friends watch EBA, I watch EBA’s replays or we are doing the Morpa campus thing. Since accessing EBA is a little difficult, our teachers did something like that to us. ... I enter the class. Our class starts at 10:30 in the morning. We have face-to-face lessons with the teachers as a class; the lessons take a little longer.”

P1: “I get up in the morning, well ... I watch a little TV, then I get up, I start studying, I get up, I play on the phone because there is nothing to do at home, then I sit down again, I solve tests, it gets dark, I watch a movie.”

Leisure Activities: Regarding leisure time activities, all of the students said they spend their time individually. In addition, most of them spend time with their parents and siblings, whereas a small part of them spend time with their grandparents and friends.

Based on the participants’ experiences regarding individual leisure time, it was revealed that students had more experience with watching TV or movies, reading books, spending time on computers and phones.

P5: “... I already wake up late in the morning, like 12 o’clock, then I spend time on the phone or computer for about an hour, then I study and read for 2-3 hours, then we usually eat and watch TV or something. It passes like this ... ”

P 11: “... Well, I play with the phone after studying, I tidy my room, for example, then I play with the phone a little bit more, then I start my lessons again, then I get to the computer or something at home ... I watch some videos from there, then I do my lessons again ...”

P8: “... I mean, I study, when I take a break I spend time on the phone. Well, I have a book, I’m trying to finish it ... hmmm, it’s a science fiction book. Our teacher gave us homework, we have to finish it. Yes, it is a normal book, I love reading books, especially science fiction interests me.”

Participants mentioned the following leisure activities only once: going out to the yard, reading the Qur’an, painting, watching research videos, resting, making dessert, tidying up his/her room, playing ball, listening to music, and learning how to cook.

P13: “These days are actually open for stuff, hmmm open for scientific research. We can research these things more, I usually watch channels such as “Barış Özcan” or I research. I research from universal sources. The time passes lively like this ... Well, I try to learn a lot during the days when I stay home, I constantly check things, I try to learn how to cook and so on.”

P6: “I try to learn a lot during the days I stay home, I constantly check things, try to learn how to cook, and so on.”

P3: "Sir, I get up at 1 o'clock. I study from 1 to 4, and from 4 to 5 prep school teachers teach online. After that, I read one Quran chapter. Then, I break my fast, and I study until sahur time late into the night."

Half of the children who talked about leisure time activities spent with their mother mentioned chatting and cooking together. A few of them played board games and watched movies together. One child talked about role-playing and online games.

P1: "We sit, we talk, we cook or something with my mother ..."

P9: "... together with my mother we make dessertst and such, we cook, we play games and such..."

Similar activities were also revealed in the time spent with the fathers.

P11: "... hmmm what else? ... We play ball with my father on the balcony. He goes in goal, I shoot ..."

P13: "We watch a lot of movies with my father, we always watch movies. We look at things together, we read. We look at stuff on social media. We spend more, I mean, effective time with my father ..."

P11 talked about playing games with both parents as follows: "We play online games with my parents ..."

P12: "... We usually sit together with the people at home after breaking up the fast ... I mean, we usually prefer to sit down and watch a movie, but we sometimes chat, too ..."

P10: "Hmmm, watching movies, board games, and similar activities ... No, I mean, we do every activity as a family."

A participant who spend time with her mother but emphasizes the workload on her mother expressed her feelings and thoughts as follows:

P13: "... My mom works a lot at home. I mean the housework. I don't know how to explain but she tries to help a lot with our schoolwork, too because we are two kids at home and they think we have a lot of time and teachers give a lot of homework ... That's why this is a bit difficult time for my mom. That's why we can't do much with my mother. But if we do, I usually have a lot of fun solving tests with my mother, she always teaches me something, we have a lot of fun with my mother while solving tests, and then, as I said, we watch movies. Our most effective activity is watching movies. Then we chat about the movie..."

Similarly, there were participants who stated that they could not spend time with their father from time to time because of his workload.

P8: "I don't spend much time with my dad, so I mean, I don't know, I don't spend much time with him, but I can go to chat with him when I get bored. Since he usually has his students, he has to do live classes and such ..."

Leisure activities spent with siblings include watching movies, chatting, playing computer games, and riddle games. I few of them watched videos and played with toys together. One child talked about cooking together, and another about reading a book. Another child played hide and seek, whereas another played football.

P4: There are intelligence games at home, sometimes we play them with my brother ...

P7: We usually sit with my sister, watch TV with her ... We sit down and watch TV in the same way with my brother, together.

P5: I help my sister when she makes cake, cookies or something in the evenings, then sometimes we watch TV series with my sister ...

P14: ... (in the garden) We play football, only football ...

P9: We play online games with my sister on the phone or play with our toys. We play hide-and-seek (at home) or something ...

Regarding the leisure time activities spent with grandparents, a child mentioned chatting and watching TV.

P2: ... With my grandmother. Hmmm, I chat with her while she is cleaning. Then with my grandfather, he tells me his memories while we are watching TV together. Memories of his childhood. That's it.

Regarding the leisure time activities spent with friends, some of the children mentioned chatting over the phone. One child talked about playing online games and another talked about playing football.

P12: ... Hmmm, I have a group of friends. We sometimes talk on the Zoom ... We are in different schools, I mean, we were at the same schools last year, so we have familiar friends or something, so it's not bad, we generally talk about school or something ...

P13: ... We do a group chat and she comes with her tablet. We found a drawing game together, we guess what we draw, we play it all together, we become a pretty crowded group, we are 5-6 people or something. My brother also comes to join us, we have fun. We watch TV series ...

3.2. Thoughts and Feelings Regarding Staying Home during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Statements about the “feeling’ and “thought’” categories regarding staying home during the Covid-19 pandemic are presented below.

Thoughts: Under the thought category, a small portion of the children “thought that it is a problem-free process”, a few of them stated that “it is a process requiring obligation”. One participant said, “it is an advantage for himself but it is boring for others”, whereas another said, “there is more time to rest”. Sample views on children’s thoughts are presented below.

P3, who considered staying home as an advantage for himself but boring for others, said, “For our age, for my age, it is an advantage for the LGS (high-school entrance exam in Turkey), but others may get bored at home. It’s a bit bad for them”. P4 believed staying home was a trouble-free time and said, “Actually, staying home is not that unusual in my opinion. We were usually. So, it was not very difficult, but of course I also miss being outside ...”. P8 said, “I mean, staying at home, hmmm, I mean, everyone has to stay at home. I even get upset when I see some people not staying at home. Of course, everyone has to stay at home to stop this disease. Well, I think that’s normal, I am someone who does not go out much in my normal daily life. Of course, people want to oxygenate, they want to go out, they want to walk around, but staying home does not bother me too much, it does not feel too strange ...”

Feelings: According to children’s views, all of the children felt longing, fear, and anxiety during this pandemic process. Most of them had the feeling of relaxation, and some of them were bored. Furthermore, a few of them experienced sadness.

The children talked about the feeling of longing in terms of longing for friends, other family members, school and teachers, and extra-curricular activities.

P11: I miss my friends. I miss my distant relatives ... I miss playing games... Calling my friends home and playing here on the phone or tablet, watching movies. For example, last year or something, we always went to each other’s house during Ramadan and broke our fast together, now we have corona and we can’t do it ...

P7: I miss my friends very much. I miss my friends the most anyway. My sister has not been coming to our house for a long time, I miss her.

P13: I missed riding my bike, I noticed that. I saw a bike down while I was looking from above ... I felt that longing ... going out with my friends is one of the things that I miss the most, it’s even in number one ... I usually go to shopping malls when I go out. Actually, I always go to shopping malls. It’s even more enjoyable when I go with my friends, and we do more activities together...When these days are over, I want to go to the theatre, I want to go to the cinema.

Regarding the feeling of fear, children mostly talked about their worries about their own health or the health of their loved ones. In addition, there were concerns about the interruption in their academic achievement and social relationships.

P7: Yeah, I am actually that I will get it, too myself because if I get it myself, it will infect everyone. For example, I have baby nieces and nephews. If they are infected, it will be bad. For instance, we will not be at home as we are now ... Everybody will be in a closed place for 14-20 days, and nobody will be able to see them. I am very afraid of this. God forbid if my mother has corona, for example, I will never be able to see her. I’m very attached to my mother and father. I mean, I love them so much ...

P6: ... The postponement of LGS ...and the virus harming Turkey a lot.

P8, on the other hand, shared her fear that her relationship with her friends would weaken. She said, "When I cannot talk to my friends too much, I fear that our social relationship will weaken ..."

Regarding the feeling of relaxation, the participants generally mentioned that engaging in academic and leisure activities relaxed them.

P10: "I can spare more time for myself, it really makes me happy and besides that, I spend more time with my family than before".

P4: "I mean, not much, but there are online lessons as you know. That is a little good. It made me happy because I can see my teachers from there. I can't see my friends or anything, but I can hear their voices and I understand the lessons the teachers teach better from there..."

3.3.Support Needs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Some of the participants stated that they did not need any support during the Covid-19 pandemic process. On the other hand, some of the children stated that they "needed emotional support" during this process, and a few stated that they "needed academic support". While one child "needed financial support", another "needed support to learn a hobby".

Some of the participants stated that their families met all their needs. Therefore, they did not need support.

P10: No, I mean, whatever I need is getting done ...

Sharing that his father needs economic help, P2 said, "My father is upset and I am sorry that my father is upset. If their job was reopened, if they could work bearing in mind social distancing ..."

Regarding the emotional support that can be provided for people staying home, P11 said, "Hmmm, a kind of support for people to stay home all the time. Staying home... ". In his previous statements, the same participant emphasized the importance of staying home and said, "... I think the best way is to stay home. Otherwise, it would have spread more, the deaths would be even more. Then, the country would be in a very difficult situation. Everyone is separated from their relatives and loved ones, but this is the best because the corona would have killed. That's why it's best to stay home."

In addition, some of the children emphasized the support they could have gotten from their families.

P4: ... Umm, I could have gotten support from my friends or mom or dad. Hmm, I don't know, they can help me pass the time, comfort me ...

P7: During this period, I definitely would have liked to get support from my family first because if I don't tell them anything, if I don't tell them I'm afraid, my psychology will be messed up after all. My parents are also afraid. She says what would happen if my psychology gets messed up. She says if you feel bad, come and say to me. Yeah, that's it. I would have liked to get support from my family.

Regarding her desire to meet and spend time with her relatives because she had been longing for them, P1 said, "... I just wish my sisters (cousins) were here ..." (crying). P8 stated that she needed emotional and academic support, and said, "I mean, I don't know, because I want to talk to my friends more, I don't know, I wish there was a person who could replace my friends. I don't quite understand my classes; it would be good support for me if there is someone to teach. I don't know; this support would be better, I don't understand my lessons anymore."

Furthermore, regarding the academic support he needed, P1 stated, "I need something, a private teacher ... I am getting private math lessons; I am getting it now. I need in Turkish republic history, and I can't do much in English ..."

Stating that he could not do his hobby due to the pandemic, P13 said, "To be able to improve my cartoon stuff and to do animation. I want to get support for these. Because I draw a lot of cartoons and I love to draw cartoons. One day I enrolled in an animation course and I was going to start animating my cartoons. Everything was done, then they quarantined a few people, but at that time it was only a few... The next week the course was closed, then the school was closed, then the ban was imposed and I couldn't do anything so I would like to get support in animation ..."

3.4. Metaphors about the COVID-19 Pandemic

According to the children's' statements, their metaphor categories about the COVID-19 pandemic process were the categories of animal, place, object, and situation.

Animal: Some of the children compared the COVID-19 pandemic process they went through to an animal. These categories were then divided into sub-categories, namely sloth, pet, turtle, and parrot.

Comparing the process to a turtle who takes shelter in its shell to avoid damage, P11 said *"You know, turtles take shelter in their shells to avoid damage, just like that ... They stay inside their shells to avoid harm from outside. Well ... we stay home to avoid the corona effect."* P1 expressed the restriction of his movement area with the following sentences: *"Ma'am, I feel like a lazy animal ... I mean, I have been home for so long that I am too lazy to go from the living room to the salon."* P13 compared the process to the imprisonment of a parrot and said, *"Hmmm ... Parrot. The animal I can compare most right now is a parrot because it is such a free animal for me. After all, in our country and in others they are confined for commercial purposes, and their freedom of movement is severely restricted, but they are not as tightly confined as a budgie. Of course, because people know their condition, they allow them out of their cages. It is just like this situation. The worst thing a parrot could ever have in her life is similar to the worst thing we go through now."* Comparing the process to pets, P5 said, *"Actually, I compare this thing, I mean staying home, to pets. Like a cat, a dog. More like a cat. After all, we adopt them, then they stay home and can't go out in any way. Well, we are always at home right now and we can't do anything. Actually, I understand them better now."*

Place: Some of the children compared this process to places such as cages, prisons, and hospitals. Among them, cage was the most used metaphor.

P4: "For example, while birds are normally free, people put them in cages like they are microbes. So, it's like they're imprisoned in the house. I mean, while flying freely in nature, people put them in a cage. I think, just like the microbe put us home ..."

P8: "I mean, it made me very happy to come home from school, for example when we went to school, but since we are always at home, we couldn't go out too much, so the house is a cage now. It feels like it is a place where we should always stay inside and never communicate with the outside ..."

Comparing this process to a prison, P3 reported the following view, *"... so we are like in prison ... I mean, it's boring. We can't spend time outside and we get bored at home ..."*

P2, on the other hand, states that staying at home is important to protect people against the disease in this process and said, "Home? It isn't a prison but something else ... I mean ... I feel it as a safe space where we can be protected, I can think of home as a healthy space. So we would die if we went out, but if we stayed at home, we would be healthy. It could be a hospital ..."

Object: Few of the participants compared this process to an object and gave a kitchen cabinet, table, and household items as examples. P7 talked about people not getting out just like kitchen items do not get out the kitchen cabinet. P7 explained, *"If I were to compare it, I would definitely compare it to a kitchen cabinet. I'm sorry I compared it to a kitchen cabinet but there is a lot of stuff in the cabinet and those things don't get out much. I would definitely compare it to a kitchen cabinet."* P12 pointed out the similarity of household objects being stuck in the house: *"I think that's a very normal thing for all objects ... because they are stuck in the house, they are not alive either, but they are all in the same situation."*

Situation: P9 defined staying at home during the pandemic process as *"... restriction of freedoms for a certain time, restriction of everything desired (crying) ..."* Based on her affective mood, it was seen that P9 was quite unhappy about this situation and expressed longing feelings for her.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected all societies and all age groups and caused changes in their lives. Daily life has become quite different with many measures such as house confinement, curfew, suspension of work for employees or working at home, and suspension of schools (Wang, et.al, 2020). In this study, children's experiences aged 11-14 years regarding changes in their daily lives were examined.

In line with the study findings, the themes of “daily life experience during the during the COVID-19 pandemic”, “thoughts and feelings regarding staying home during the COVID-19 pandemic”, “support needs during the COVID-19 pandemic” and “metaphors about the COVID-19 pandemic” were formed. For the theme of “daily life experience during the COVID-19 pandemic”, the categories of academic activities and leisure activities were formed. According to the academic activities category statements, the children spend most of their time participating in online lessons and watching lessons on TV. Most countries closed their educational institutions due to the spread of COVID-19, and approximately 1.5 billion students have been away from schools during this process (UNESCO, 2021). In Turkey, television broadcasts in distance education (TRT-EBA) was one of the most important tools used at the beginning of the epidemic. However, with the progress of the pandemic, the lessons began to be actively carried out via <http://www.eba.gov.tr> (MoNE, 2020b).

While very few of the children stated that they follow their lessons only from the TV, some of them said they participate in online lessons. Almost all children used technology as an important tool to access information. Apart from the lessons, most of the children reported that they study additionally. The fact that only about half of the children participating in the interview reported having participated in online education may be a result of the restart of the systematic introduction of online education, as it was a work in progress at the beginning of the pandemic period, and it may be an indicator of the profound inequality of opportunity in education caused by access to technology during the period COVID-19 (Anderson, 2020; Arik, 2020).

According to the leisure activities category statements, children stated that they mostly spend their time with technology such as watching television, watching movies, and using computers and phones. Some of the children also emphasized watching TV and playing online games with their father or siblings.

In this context, it can be interpreted that children in the early adolescence period spend most of their time using online networks and technology during the pandemic process. Similar to the present study’s findings, literature revealed that children connect with their peers and teachers via social media applications, cell phones, computer applications and games instead of face-to-face interaction and communication (Bhamani et al., 2020; Dunton et al. 2020).

In this study, some children engaged in activities such as cooking, baking dessert, and chatting at home with their mothers, some engaged in activities such as playing board games, watching TV with all family members and a small proportion of them played hide and seek and football at home. Other studies have found that children engaged in activities similar to those in the present study during the pandemic COVID-19 (Dunton et al., 2000; Farantika et al., 2020).

Engaging in activities like cooking and chatting with their mother suggest that children develop new routines to spend more quality time with their families. Farantika et al. (2020) stated that parents’ planning “fun, effective and creative” activities at home is related to their desire to spend more time at home and more meaningful time with their children, as children cannot perform physical and social activities outside during the pandemic process. Wang et al. (2020) stated that parents are the best and closest sources of support for children during the curfews. In cases such as the pandemic period, when parents and children are together at home, it is recommended to organize activities with the family to support the parent-child relationship and the development of the child (WHO, 2019).

In this study, some of the children also expressed activities such as painting, tidying up their room, reading the Qur’an (religious ritual), and going out to the yard. On the other hand, regarding their leisure activities with their friends, some children spent time chatting over the phone, whereas one child played online games and another played football. In this context, it can be said that the need to have close relationships and share with friends (Bee & Boyd, 2009) is partially fulfilled by technology in terms of emotional-social development witnessed during pre-adolescence.

When asked about their feelings and thoughts about the COVID-19 pandemic process, only a few children expressed their opinions. A few of the children “thought that it is a problem-free process”, and a few of them stated that “it is a process requiring obligation”. One participant said, “it is an advantage for himself but it is boring for others”, whereas another said, “there is more time to rest”. Some stated that they did not have any difficulty particularly because they did not normally spend too much time outside of school. However,

regarding children's feelings about the COVID-19 pandemic, all of the children felt a longing, fear, and anxiety. Most of them had the feeling of relaxation, and some of them were bored. Moreover, some of them have felt sadness. Among the feelings of fear and anxiety, the fear that something might happen to them and their loved ones was prominent. One of the children stated that she worried if she would be as close to her friends as she used to be. According to the researchers, children experience fear and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic due to contagion, disappointment, and change in daily routine (de Figueiredo et al., 2021). Similar to the findings of the present study, researchers have found that children are afraid that something will happen to them or their relatives and social isolation continues in this process (de Miranda et al., 2020; Filipova et al., 2020).

Regarding the feeling of longing, this study put forth that most of the children had a longing for activities such as spending time with their friends, playing games, and cycling. Some of them missed their family members and teachers they could not meet. Filipova et al. (2020) conducted interviews with children aged 10-16 years. The participants in their study stated that their daily routines were always the same/monotonous at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, they could not go out and were bored because they could not do physical activities as before. In this study, most of the children stated that they experienced a sense of relaxation and that participating in academic and leisure activities, in general, relaxed them. Some of the children explained these activities by sharing the activities they did at home with their families. Similarly, Idoiaga et al. (2020) expressed that children's emotional interactions with their parents at home and their social sharing such as playing games together contributed to children experiencing feelings such as relaxation and happiness during the pandemic process.

When asked about the support they need, some of the participating children stated that they did not have any needs because their families met all their needs. In addition, a few of them expressed their emotional support needs and mentioned that people staying home during this process was an important need. They also talked about the need to spend time at home and consolation, express their fears to their family, the need to see relatives and the need for friendship. During the period of COVID-19, it was emphasized that especially children and young people might feel uncertainty, anxiety, boredom, grief, and isolation and that the emotional support of their parents is especially important to cope with such feelings (Gambin et al., 2020; Idoiaga et al., 2020). Furthermore, raising awareness of children and young people about the pandemic process by their parents in the light of accurate information is another important factor (WHO, 2019).

Academic support is another important theme that was highlighted by two of the children. According to the statements on this topic, the children indicated that they had difficulty understanding the lessons. Especially in the early months of the pandemic period, the unprepared transition to distance learning caused difficulties for both students and teachers. It was observed that there were some problems related to teaching. In examining the problems faced by teachers during distance education, Arslan and Şumuer (2020) found that many factors negatively affected teaching, such as equipment problems, lack of interaction with peer and the difficulty in participating in class, as well as the influence of other people in the environment in which the child is located.

In this study, one participant pointed out the need for economic support. During the period COVID-19, global unemployment gradually increased and working poverty among the employed also gradually increased (ILO, 2020). Based on these statements, it is believed that this need expressed by a participant will continue to increase in the near future. It is inevitable that this will lead to negative economic and psychological impacts on both working or unemployed people and their families (Mimoun et al., 2020).

According to the participants' metaphors regarding staying home during the period COVID-19, the metaphors were focused on the category of space. Some children in particular compared this process to living in a cage. In addition to the metaphors related to space, such as being in a cage and prison, metaphors such as being like a domesticated parrot and cat and the restriction of freedoms also explained a common need and emphasized the staying at home involuntarily due to COVID-19. In addition to metaphors about space such as the hospital, the turtle metaphor can also be considered a metaphor that emphasizes the need for protection. The metaphors about objects emphasize limited actions and inactions during this time. These metaphors produced by the children provide a general framework for their experiences during this process. Being unexpectedly and unwantedly forced to stay home has significant effects on the physical, mental, social, and psychological

developmental domains of adolescents ages of 11-14. According to studies, the pandemic COVID-19 is expressed by people with metaphors such as the invisible enemy, the invisible danger, or the mystery (Aykutalp & Karakurt, 2020).

5. Recommendations

The present study was conducted in Turkey in the first months of the pandemic COVID-19 and includes a limited number of experiences obtained from the interviews with children in early adolescence. Since the process of COVID-19 pandemic is believed to be a long-term process and experiences vary between countries in this process, the study is limited in this regard. As this study examined the experiences of children aged 11-14 years in the first few months of the first wave, a repeating the study during the second wave when the pandemic is much more advanced will reveal different experiences.

In addition, although the sample size for qualitative studies is not very large, the number of samples can be increased in future studies. The experiences of people living in cities or metropolitan areas can be studied in more detail.

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