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## **Investigation of Secondary School Students' Views on the Distance Education in the Pandemic Process**

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**Abstract:** In this study, it is aimed to reveal the evaluations of secondary school students regarding the distance education process in the pandemic process. For this research, phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs, was used. 32 students studying in the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades of a secondary school in Diyarbakır participated in the research. In the determination of the students participating in the research, the easily accessible and criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used. Students' views on distance education during the pandemic process were collected through a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. The interview form consisted of 17 open-ended questions. In the interview form, there were questions about thoughts on the distance education process, distance access opportunities, teaching practices, communication, time, precautions and expectations. Content analysis was used in the analysis of the data. When the findings of the study were examined, the students mostly emphasized that face-to-face education is good and distance education is boring. The students stated that they participated in distance education by using television at home, they found the course content sufficient in teaching practices, they evaluated the communication in the distance education process negatively, and they mostly communicated with their teachers in this process. While the students mostly stated that the course duration is not enough, they expressed the opinion that the broadcasting times prepared for distance education are appropriate. Students stated that they mostly experienced problems related to equipment and materials in this process, and that they solved these problems with the supply of equipment. Students mostly expressed their opinions about external expectations. Among the external expectations, the views on expectations from the teacher were mostly emphasized. In line with the results of the research, suggestions that are thought to contribute to distance education are included. Improvements can be made in internet infrastructure and base stations in rural areas. Internet service can be provided free of charge to all teachers and students through the Ministry of National Education. Different strategies, methods and techniques can be used in teachers' lessons so that students do not get bored with distance education.

**Keywords:** Pandemic process, Distance education, Secondary school students

### **Introduction**

The covid- 19, which started with the first case in Wuhan, China in the last month of 2019, firstly affected China and then the whole world. The World Health Organization declared this epidemic diseases to the whole world as a pandemic due to its spread all over the world and the rapid increase in the number of cases (WHO 2020). The covid- 19 is transmitted very quickly from person to person through droplets (Deniz et. al., 2020). In order to minimize this rate of transmission, it should slow down human movement. In studies conducted, it is stated that closing school, forcing people to stay at home, restricting the use of communal living spaces is the most effective approach in the number of covid-19 cases (Deniz et. al., 2020). This disease has caused many

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institutions, especially health, to become inoperable. One of these institutions is an educational institutions. One of the institutions undertaking in Türkiye is the Ministry of National Education. It undertakes this task with formal and non- formal education institutions. Since the education process is a service that the state provides equally to all citizens, it is an important process that should continue uninterrupted (Karaman, 2020, s.45). In order to cope with this situation in Turkey as in every country, the effect of pandemics on education and today's experiences of countries. In these epidemic periods, one of the methods used in places where educational institutions cannot be opened or when students do not have the opportunity to access education is distant education.

Distance education refers to an education system model in which students and teachers in different environment carry out their learning and teaching activities with communication technologies and postal service (İşman, 2001). According to Horzum(2003), distance education is an education model which the lesson that can be applied in a virtual environment can be taught live by using information technologies without the time and place restrictions of teachers and students. It is known that this training has advantages and disadvantages. Flexibility, access to the same subject multiple time, low cost, practicality and dissemination of education, being able to benefit from the comfort of out of school environment, the prominent advantages offered by distance education to students, while the necessity to have learning discipline health problem that may arise due to the use of technology for a long time, not being able to benefit from the process with the desired efficiency due to infrastructure and technology inadequacies is one of the main disadvantages the process for students (Koç, 2021).

The main concept in distance education that should be emphasized is the concept of distance teaching. According to Topraklı and Ersoy distance education is define as teaching activities which offered by means of telephony, radio, letter, television, internet, video, computer through channel that provide communication via wired- wireless and mail and students and teachers. Come together physically and asynchronously and perform their learning and teaching activities partially and completely. In our country, distance education is carried out with wired and wireless internet, Eba tv, online live lessons and sosyal networks. Thus, the learning activity can be carried out independently of time and place. Digitizing education also includes factors effecting distance education. Teacher student interactions, distance learning tools, level of use, safety of the learning environment and health measures are the prominent effects. In the distance education process, healthy communication between the teacher and the student, the formation of a virtual learning environment, the emergence of the need for technology, the lack of digital literacy, the decrease in the duration of the lessons, and the fact that the practice-based courses do not serve the purpose, has brought a new dimension to the lives of teachers and students.

The emergence of the epidemic caused the closure of educational institutions and the transition to distance education. The Ministry of National Education has decided to continue education on 3 television channels and Eba within the scope of open and distance education applications at primary and secondary education levels ( MEB, 2020). Distance education, which was initially made in compulsory courses, started to be held in all courses with the change of course of the epidemic. The Ministry of National Education has established Eba TV channels and Eba support points over TRT in order to provide students with access to education and to provide equal opportunities for students. Live lessons have been started on the Eba Platform. Tablets were provided to low-income students along with the internet.

During the pandemic process, countries have new needs as they go through a new formation and transformation. There are factors such as the opportunity, equipment, the student's ability to use technology, the attitudes developed towards distance education, the family and the teachers who provide education (Kaynar et. al., 2020). Undoubtedly, there are students at the center of education. Students are faced with an experience that has never been experienced before. It can be seen that the pandemic period causes students' learning losses, stays away from peer education, prevents socialization, causes psychological disorders and causes a decrease in teacher-student communication by staying away from their teachers. In addition, students gain self-learning and digital skills.

When we look at the studies on this subject, in line with the findings obtained in the research, the participants stated that there are beneficial aspects about the distance education system made in order not to disrupt the education within the scope of the pandemic process but, they stated that there were shortcomings in terms of limited interaction, students' active participation in the lesson, not being suitable for individual differences, and problems in entering the lesson, and that it should be developed and improved in terms of infrastructure inequality of opportunity and content material. Kaynar researched secondary school students' views on distance education. The study group of this research consisted of 565 secondary school students who received distance

education due to coronavirus and mixed method design was used. According to the data obtained from the research, it shows that the students listen carefully to the lessons related to distance education, follow the lessons regularly, make preparations for their needs before the lesson, keep the notes of what is explained in the lessons, ask questions about the subjects explained and know how to solve the problems they encounter or may encounter in the system. Baz (2021) is an evaluation of students on possible learning losses during the covid 19 epidemic. For this purpose, studies on learning losses in the domestic and international literature were examined. The examinations made show that the learning losses deepened due to the difficulties experienced in accessing distance education activities and supporting the learning performance of students during the COVID 19 epidemic. In a study called distance education applications in the covid-19 process carried out by Sözen, the distance education process applied for the sustainability of education and training in Turkey and in the world has been examined in all its aspects. Various suggestions were made in the light of the information obtained. In addition, research has been conducted on other stakeholders of education, such as teachers, school administration and parents. In the international literature on this subject, Nadeak aims to analyze the effectiveness of distance learning by using social media. By applying an online questionnaire to 250 students, he reached the following conclusion: Distance education using social media is only effective in theoretical and theoretical training. In a study by Kochan, secondary school students' views on the quality of distance education in Poland were discussed and underlined that instructors are unprepared and sometimes unwilling to switch to an effective online teaching mode. stated that the lack of interpersonal relationships and the incompatibility of digital resources among peers have other effects of online learning, such as the impact on education and student morale.

When these studies are examined, it is seen that many studies have been carried out on the distance education process during the pandemic process. In these studies, studies were carried out in terms of student losses in distance education, student perceptions in distance education, teacher problems and parent problems. This study differs from other studies because it is examined in terms of secondary school students' thoughts on distance education in the pandemic process, access opportunities, teaching practices, communication timing, pandemic measures and expectations. In addition, this research may differ from other studies in terms of revealing the perspectives of students studying at a school in Diyarbakir, Turkey, regarding the distance education process in the pandemic process. Students, who are the subject of distance education during the pandemic process, have a great role in the process. Students have adapted to distance education in a short time and have been in constant communication with teachers, parents, school administration and their own circle of friends. It is thought that determining the opinions of the students who are in the distance education process about the distance education process during the pandemic period will make important contributions to the studies for distance education.

In this research, it is aimed to examine the views of secondary school students on the distance education process in the pandemic process. Based on this research, answers are sought to the following questions.

- What are the thoughts of secondary school students about distance education in the pandemic process?
- How are secondary school students' views on distance education in the pandemic process in terms of access opportunities?
- What are the evaluations of secondary school students regarding teaching practices in distance education during the pandemic process?
- How are the views of secondary school students on distance education in the pandemic process in terms of communication?
- How are the views of secondary school students on distance education in the pandemic process in terms of time?
- How are secondary school students' views on distance education in the pandemic process in terms of pandemic measures?
- What are the expectations of secondary school regarding distance education during the pandemic process?

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

In this research, one of the qualitative methods, the phenomenology design, was used. Qualitative method is a method that tries to describe how people interpret what they experience (Merriam,2009). Phenomenology involves describing, understanding and interpreting the phenomena that we encounter in our daily lives but that

we do not have a detailed understanding of (Bloir & Wood, 2006; Creswell, 2016). This research focused on the views on distance education in the pandemic process.

### **Study Group**

This research was conducted in the 5th,6th,7th and 8th grades of a secondary school in the Çermik district of Diyarbakır in the Southeastern Anatolia Region, in the 2020-2021 academic year. Since it is a disadvantaged region and the most socio-economically backward region, participants were selected from the Southeastern Anatolia Region. In the determination of the students participating in the research, the easily accessible and criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used. Purposive sampling allows for in-depth study of situations that are thought to have rich information( Yıldırım & Şimsek,2016) In order to determine the students, criterion sampling was used from easily accessible sampling. In the selection of the students participating in the research, being 5th, 6th and 8th grade students was taken as the basic criterion.

### **Data Collection Tools**

After the necessary permissions were obtained, the data from the secondary school students were collected using the interview form to evaluate the teaching during the pandemic period. The qualitative data of the research were collected with a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchersThe interview form consisted of 17 open-ended questions. In the interview form, there were questions in terms of student opinions, thoughts, access opportunities, evaluations of applications, communication, time, pandemic measures and expectations. Necessary arrangements were made in the interview form by taking the opinions of a field expert and a Turkish teacher. The interviews lasted for about 10-15 minutes. The researcher tried to be biased and empathize with the students throughout the research process.

### **Analysis of Data**

Content analysis was used in the analysis of the data obtained from student opinions. Content analysis is a technique that allows to study human behavior and nature in indirect ways (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020). Inductive analysis was used in the content analysis process. Inductive analysis is performed to reveal the facts about the determined situation and the relationships between the facts by coding the data (Miles et. al., 1994).

In this study, Miles-Huberman model (Miles et. al., 1994, p.12) was used for data analysis. In this model, there are three stages: data reduction, presentation of data, and formatting of results. These three phases are used for analysis, intertwined in parallel before data collection, during data collection, and after data collection.

The interviews made in this study were first written down for analysis and a 50-page text was obtained. In the first stage, the data was reduced and then coded and noted where necessary. Tables were used to make the visible relationships between the reduced and coded data. At the last stage, the relationships between the codes were reviewed and verified. In addition, in the data analysis, the data was divided into codes and certain categories were created by counting the separated codes, and then themes were formed from the categories consisting of grouped topics (Patton 2002). Code names were used for male and female students to keep the identities of the participants confidential.

While performing the qualitative analysis of the research, some criteria were taken into account to ensure credibility (Guba,1981; Guba et. al., 1982). These criteria were examined in terms of credibility, transferability, consistency and confirmability. In a study, it is recommended to specify one or more of these criteria to check the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2014). In this study, in order to increase the credibility, the researcher tried to provide an environment of trust by conducting long-term interviews with the students. In addition, the data of the research were examined at different times by experts in the field and the credibility was tried to be increased. In addition, in order to ensure the credibility of the data analysis among the researchers, the incompatibilities were resolved by looking at the stability between the codings. Formulas ( $\frac{\text{consensus}}{\text{consensus}+\text{disagreement}}\times 100$ ) were used for the agreement among the coders and the agreement between the coders was calculated as seventy-six percent. In order to increase the transferability, the research process was tried to be described in detail and researchers who conducted similar research were given the opportunity to evaluate their own work. In addition, in this context, it has been tried to benefit from the experiences of the students who participated in the research by using the purposeful sampling method. In order

to ensure confirmability, the researchers examined the obtained results with the data at different times and compared.

## Findings

Student views on distance education during the pandemic process, thoughts, access opportunities, teaching practices, communication process timing, pandemic measures and expectations were examined in terms of themes.



Figure 1. Student views on distance education during the pandemic process

In the theme of thoughts on distance education in the pandemic process, student's opinions were examined under the categories of thoughts, feelings and evaluation. : In the category of thoughts, the most of students stated that face-to-face education is better. This view was followed by codes about distance education being inefficient, problems caused by the internet and equipment, limited opportunities, and lack of participation in the course. In the category of feelings, students stated that distance education is boring. In the evaluation category, students evaluated distance education in terms of positive and negative educational activities and opportunities. In the evaluation category, most of the students expressed their opinions about educational activities. Student's views about this theme are as follows:

*It was a bad period for me, sometimes there was a problem with the internet and sometimes the voices of the teachers could not be heard, so we were not fully learning. Thus, the distance education process was bad for me. I think face to face education is better than distance education (P9-M).*

*Students who have the opportunity should attend, because we can't get any other education. Also this process was very boring, we couldn't have face-to-face education (P25-F).*

*During the distance education process, I read more books and did tests. We used to do activities once in a while (P15-F).*

Student opinions on the theme of access opportunities in distance education during the pandemic process were evaluated under the categories of participation environment and participation tools. The most of the students stated that they participated in distance education in their home environment. The most of the students stated that they participated in distance education by using television. They stated that they use tablet, phones and computers together with television. Student views about this theme are as follows:

*I ensure participation from home with my tablet (P5-M).*

*I ensure participation from our home with Eba. There was internet so there was no need to go anywhere (P12-F).*

*I attended EBA TV Secondary School (P13-M).*

In the theme of teaching practices in distance education during the pandemic process, students found the course content sufficient, and expressed their opinions on the continuation of face-to-face education. Student views about this theme are as follows:

*The course contents were very good, they were explained in an understandable way, so we understood (P28-M).*

*No, I don't want to, because we can't get a full efficiency, and after you learn this subject, you won't have any repetitions. That's why school feels more productive (P20-F).*

In the theme of communication in distance education during the pandemic process, students evaluated communication in the distance education process negatively and they mostly communicated with their teachers in this process. Also they stated that they communicate with their friends along with their teachers. The students mentioned that they mostly communicated through the live lesson in this process. Students expressed their views on this theme as follows:

*I don't think too well. Because there may be students who can't attend. I believe that better communication is established in face-to-face education (P11-M).*

*I communicated with my teachers because of attending the live class (P17-F).*

*I communicated through the live lesson or a message (P16-F).*

In the theme of timing in distance education during the pandemic process, the most of the students complained about the lack of time. However, they stated that they approved the broadcast time prepared for distance education. Students expressed their views about this theme as follows:

*Lesson duration was half an hour, it would be better if the lesson duration was forty or fifty minutes (P1-M).*

*Lesson duration was 30 minutes. I think it should be extended a little more (P2-M).*

*The broadcast streaming of lessons on Eba tv was good. For instance, we could attend any topic on Eba TV whenever we wanted (P3-F).*

*I think timing was good, I don't think it should be changed (P11-M).*

In the theme of pandemic measures in distance education during the pandemic process, the most of the students had troubles about equipment and materials. These problems were followed by student-related problems. Among the measures related to distance education, mostly the supply of equipment took place. This measure was followed by measures about personal precautions and educational activities. Students mostly evaluated the measures as positive. Students shared their views about this theme as follows:

*During the distance education period, sometimes there were internet problems and power cut, so we couldn't attend lessons. Therefore, this process was a bit bad (P20-F).*

*There were problems in the during distance education. This problems were about the voice of teacher and phone, tablet. Some of the teachers could not attend the class (P21-M).*

*I bought a tablet (P31-M).*

*I bought a high quality tablet to avoid communication problems (P32-M).*

*I evaluated positively (P14-F).*

*I evaluated Eba TV, live lessons, zoom positively. We were impressed to spend our free time in distance education (P28-M).*

In the theme of expectations in distance education during the pandemic process, students mostly expressed their views about external expectations. Views on external expectations were followed by internal expectations. In addition, students mostly stated that they had expectations from their teachers. Expectations from teachers were followed by family, peer, officials and personal expectations.

*Distance education did'nt meet my expectations. Because my wishes were that teachers could attend classes faster and all the students could attend lesson. In addition all students should have internet (P6-F).*

*My expectation was met, because teachers gave good lectures (P22-M).*

Finally, students expressed additional opinions regarding distance education during the pandemic process. Students who presented their opinions expressed their wishes for face-to-face education. A student on this subject said that "I would like to add that it was much better that face-to-face education was opened (P22-M)".

## **Conclusion**

In this study, the themes of student views on distance education during the pandemic process, thoughts, access opportunities, teaching practices, communication process, timing, pandemic measures and expectations were examined. Most of the students who experience this process have the opinion that distance education will not be like face-to-face education. It is known that the best solution is distance education due to the conditions that occur during the pandemic process.

Students mostly stated that face-to-face education is better. Kaynar et al., (2020) concluded that students believe that face-to-face education is more beneficial than distance education and that face-to-face interaction is necessary for a good education. In the continuation of their thoughts, the students who participated in the interview stated that distance education is inefficient, there are problems due to the internet and equipment, the opportunities are limited and the lack of participation in the live lesson. This finding supports the finding of the research. The difficulties experienced by the teachers participating in the research were determined as the many distractions in the study environment of the students, disconnections caused by the internet connection at home, breaks in the camera and sound system, power cuts, problems in entering the EBA, and lack of technological equipment (Kavuk et. al., 2021). In the category of feelings, students stated that distance education is boring. In the evaluation category, students evaluated distance education in terms of positive, negative, educational activities and opportunities.

Student opinions on the theme of access opportunities in distance education during the pandemic process were evaluated under the categories of participation environment and participation tools. Students mostly stated that they participated in distance education in their home environment. Students mostly stated that they participated in distance education by using television. They stated that they use tablet phones and computers together with television.

In the theme of teaching practices in distance education during the pandemic process, students stated that they found the course content sufficient. In a study examining the views of classroom teachers on distance education, it was concluded that EBA was sufficient in terms of content and infrastructure (Saygı, 2021). This finding is similar to the finding of the research. In a study conducted by Burak (2021), it was revealed that the difficulties experienced in accessing distance education activities and supporting of students' learning performance during the COVID-19 epidemic deepened learning losses.

In the research, while the students evaluated the communication in the distance education process negatively, they stated that they mostly communicated with their teachers in this process. They stated that they communicate with their friends along with their teachers. The students mentioned that they mostly communicated through the live lesson in this process. Çakın et. al. (2020) found in their research that teachers have problems with communication and students' learning. This finding is consistent with the finding of the research.

In the context of timing in distance education during the pandemic process, students mostly complained about the lack of time. In addition, they stated that they found the broadcast streaming of EBA TV prepared for

distance education appropriate. In a study conducted by Kavuk et. al. (2021), it was determined that the students followed the lessons on EBA TV. This finding supports the finding of the research.

In the theme of pandemic measures in distance education during the pandemic process, students mostly experienced problems related to equipment and materials. These problems were followed by student-related problems. Among the measures related to distance education, mostly the supply of equipment took place. This measure was followed by measures for personal precautions and educational activities. Students mostly evaluated the measures taken positively. In a study conducted by Batdal-Karaduman et al., (2021), it was determined that the reasons such as the lack of access to the technologies used in the distance education process, the lack of technology and internet infrastructure, the low attitudes and motivation of the stakeholders towards the process negatively affect the quality of the distance education process. This finding supports the finding of the research.

In the theme of expectations in distance education during the pandemic process, students mostly expressed their views on external expectations. The views on external expectations were followed by internal expectations. In addition, students mostly stated that they had expectations from their teachers. Expectations from teachers were followed by family, peers, officials and personal expectations. Finally, during the pandemic process, students mostly expressed additional opinions regarding distance education. The students who expressed their opinions expressed their wishes for face-to-face education.

## **Recommendations**

Students mostly stated that face-to-face education is better. This view was followed by opinions such as the inefficient distance education, the problems caused by the internet and equipment, the limited opportunities, and the lack of participation in the course. In addition, the students stated that the communication was negative, the course duration was not sufficient and they had external expectations. Improvements can be made in base stations in rural areas and internet service can be provided free of charge to all teachers and students through the Ministry of National Education. Different strategies, methods and techniques can be used in lessons so that students do not get bored with distance education. Especially when children's interest in games is considered, game-based course contents can be integrated into distance education courses. Tools such as tablets and computers can be provided to students by the Ministry of National Education. In-service training can be given to teachers so that they can use current technologies and online education environments more effectively.

## **Scientific Ethics Declaration**

The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPSS journal belongs to the authors.

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## Appendix 1. Semi-Structured Interview Form for Students' Opinions on Distance Education Process in the Pandemic Process

Thoughts on distance education

1. What are your thoughts on distance education?
2. What are your thoughts/feelings about attending live classes during the pandemic period?
3. How do you evaluate the distance education process?

Questions regarding access in distance education

4. Where did you participate in teaching activities during the distance education process?
5. Which channels did you participate in teaching activities during the distance education process? How did you join? How did you gain access?

Teaching practices in distance education

6. What are your views on the course content on the distance education platform during the pandemic period?
7. Do you want to continue your lessons remotely if the pandemic is over? Why?

Questions about communication in distance education

8. What do you think about the communication process in distance education?
9. Who did you communicate with in distance education? How did you communicate? Can you explain?

Questions about time in the distance education process

10. What do you think about the course duration in distance education courses?
11. What do you think about the broadcast streaming of the live lessons on EBA TV?

Questions about precautions in the distance education process

12. Did you experience any problems during the distance education process? If so, what kind of problems did you encounter?
13. What kind of measures have you taken to avoid problems in participating in distance education during the pandemic period?
14. How would you evaluate the measures taken for an effective education during the pandemic period?

Questions about expectations in the distance education process

15. Did distance education meet your expectations during the pandemic period? How?/What do you think about it?
16. What kind of expectations did you have from whom during the distance education process?

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