INVESTIGATION OF PARENTS' VIEWS ON THE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROCESS DURING THE PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to reveal the views of primary school grade 1 students' parents regarding the distance education process during the pandemic. For this purpose, a phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research approaches, was employed. The research was carried out with the parents of 12 primary school students studying in public schools in Adana. In the study, a criterion sampling type was chosen from purposeful sampling methods. The data were collected online using a semi-structured form and analyzed using a descriptive analysis method. Within the scope of the research findings, it was concluded that students experienced adaptation problems during the distance education process, parents were ignored by the students, this process caused health problems, and led to inequality of opportunity. In contrast, it was determined that this process created sincere relationships, and they had an opportunity to get to know their children closely. They stated that equal opportunities should be provided to students regarding this process, the infrastructure of EBA should be improved, and effective audio and video opportunities should be provided.

Keywords: Covid-19; pandemic; distance education; parent; views

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PANDEMİ SÜRECİNDE VELİLERİN UZAKTAN EĞİTİM SÜRECİNE İLİŞKİN GÖRÜŞLERİNİN İNCELENMESİ

ÖZET

Bu araştırma pandemi sürecinde ilkokul 1. sınıf velilerinin uzaktan eğitim sürecine ilişkin görüşlerini ortaya çıkarmak amacıyla yapılmıştır. Bu amaçla nitel araştırma yaklaşımlarından fenomenolojik desenden yararlanılmıştır. Araştırma Adana ilinde devlet okullarında öğrenim gören 12 ilkokul öğrenci velisi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmada amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden ölçüt örneklemesi türü seçilmiştir. Araştırmadaki veriler online ortamda yarı yapılandırılmış form ile toplanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler betimsel analiz yöntemiyle çözümlenmiştir. Araştırma bulguları kapsamında uzaktan eğitim sürecinde öğrenciler uyum sorunu yaşadıkları, ebevyn olarak önemsenmediklerini, bu sürecin sağlık sorunları oluşturduğu ve fırsat eşitsizliği yarattığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Buna karşın bu sürecin samimi ilişkiler oluşturduğu ve ve öğrencilerini yakından tanıma fırsatı buldukları belirlenmiştir. Bu sürece ilişkin öğrencilere eşit imkanlar sunulması gerektiğini, Eba altyapınsın geliştirilmesi ve etkili ses ve görüntü imkanının sunulması gerektiğini ifade etmişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Covid-19; pandemic; uzaktan eğitim; veli; görüşler

INTRODUCTION

When we look into world history, humanity has struggled with epidemic diseases in various periods. One of them was the Covid-19 virus, which was identified in mid-December 2019 that caused severe respiratory syndromes. The World Health Organization declared a global pandemic because of this virus, which spread throughout the world with an unprecedented speed (T.C Sağlık Bakanlığı, 2020). Epidemic periods affect not only the health sector but also many other sectors.

The effects of this ongoing pandemic process in our country, which has been closely monitoring the situation with the occurrence of Covid-19 cases throughout the world, were felt in the field of education as in all other fields, when the first case was seen on March 11.2020 In order to reduce the contagion rate, the authorities took quick and radical decisions and suspended face-to-face education. The fact that Turkey has a young structure and a total of 25 million students, including 16.5 million students in primary and secondary schools (UNESCO, 2020b), reveals the importance of the measures taken in the field of education during the outbreak. In this context, our and we schools started conducting distance education activities in primary and secondary schools on March 23, 2020 (MEB, 2020). Along with the measures taken to suspend face-to-face education, it was aimed for individuals to keep in touch by avoiding physical contact and containing the outbreak. By switching to distance education, it was attempted to control the physical contact of students (Vallance, 2020).

Societies have redesigned their education systems according to changing conditions and needs throughout history. This change has evolved into different dimensions in the process of obligatory needs

as well as with scientific and technological developments (Yıldız, 2006, p. 302). In this process, ıt can be said that that the most appropriate method in terms of responding to the needs of the period is distance education. Distance education could be described as a system approach that can bring different learning environments together and present interrelated parts as a whole (Moore & Kearsley, 2011). Although distance education has been a method used in the past periods, it has become functional all over the world. Distance education has some advantages and disadvantages. Its positive aspects such as providing an educational environment for individuals with disabilities, reaching large masses, providing educational opportunities at an individualized pace, and offering students repetition opportunities stand out the most. Contrarily, difficulty in preparing the course content, students' discipline issues, and investment and infrastructural issues are among its advantages (Altıparmak, Kurt, & Kapıdere, 2011).

In this process, the preexisting EBA (Education Information Network) infrastructure and content were enriched and offered to primary, secondary, and high school students (MEB, 2020). In addition, for students having difficulties with the internet and computers, educational broadcasts were provided over three TV channels. In addition, Zoom, one of the lesson tools that enable teachers to teach their students (Degges-White, 2020; Wiederhold, 2020), was actively utilized by teachers, parents, and school administrations.

Considering the literature on distance education (Çoruk & Çakır, 2017; Karaman & Akgül, 2015; Kumalar & Pürtaş, 2012), distance education is complementary to face-to-face education whose importance will grow in the future. Although distance education studies have been conducted at university levels, there are an insufficient number of studies examining this subject at primary school levels (Simonson et al., 2019; Allen & Seaman, 2005). Transition to distance education within the scope of the measures taken in this period also affected the parents considerably (Kırmızıgül, 2020). Since the educational environment was home, students spent more time with their families, causing a change in classical parental roles (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Although students of all levels experienced challenges in adapting to distance education processes, the biggest challenge was experienced by the first-year students who switched to distance education without ever seeing the school environment. In this context, it is important to reveal the experiences of the parents of students attending the first grade in distance education processes. It is of great significance to reveal the views of parents, who had the opportunity to closely monitor all stages of education during the distance education and were a component of this process both about the effectiveness of the current situation and in terms of revealing its shortcomings. Therefore, this study will be significant considering the limited number of studies exploring the views of parents on the outbreak in the literature to present an idea to decision-makers. In this context, it was aimed to examine the views of parents on distance education during the pandemic.

The Main Research Question

What are the views of the first grade students' parents on distance education process during the pandemic?

Sub-Research Questions

1. How did the distance education process affect student-parent communication?
2. What are the views of parents on the positive/negative effects of technology on the education process during distance education?
3. What are the views of parents on problems experienced during distance education and their suggestive solutions?

METHOD

This study was conducted to determine whether there were differences in educational experiences of primary school grade 1 students' parents during the Covid-19 outbreak and what these differences were if any. Therefore, qualitative research was used, as it enables revealing perceptions, being sensitive to the natural environment, having flexibility in the research design, and performing inductive analysis with qualitative data. In line with the purpose of the study, phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs, was employed. The phenomenological research design, which is preferred to explain the views and experiences of individuals, focuses on the phenomena that we are aware of but we do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

Study Group

The study was conducted with 12 parents in the 2020-2021 academic year. The depth and the extensiveness of the data considered to be collected in qualitative studies are inversely proportional to the sample size. Working with a large number of individuals is not healthy because of the peculiarity of information collection and analysis methods, the amount of data, and the limited resources (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). The participants consist of 12 parents, eight men and four women. Of purposive sampling methods, a criterion sampling method was chosen. Criterion sampling is used when the study group consists of people, events, objects, or situations with desired characteristics related to the problem under study (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012). The purpose of this sampling method is to work with study groups that meet the criteria created by the researcher or created previously (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). When determining the participants, the main criterion was to have grade 1 students attending distance education during the pandemic. In order to collect effective data, information collected from volunteer parents attending distance education was included. As a result of the selection, interviews were conducted with 12 parents. The participants were coded as P1, P2… P12. Information regarding the participating parents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Information on Study Participants

Code	Age	Gender	Education
P1	38	Female	Primary School
P2	42	Female	University
P3	37	Male	High School
P4	39	Female	High School
P5	43	Female	Secondary School
P6	40	Female	University
P7	41	Male	High School
P8	35	Female	Secondary School
P9	37	Female	University
P10	44	Male	University
P11	36	Female	High School
P12	39	Male	Primary School

Data Collection Tool

Main and alternative questions on the subject were prepared in the study to determine the views of parents on the experiences they had during the pandemic period distance education processes of students who had started the primary school grade 1 in the 2020-2021 academic year. A semi-structured interview form was used in the study. In order to prepare the semi-structured interview form, the existing literature related to the subject and the interviews with the subject experts were used. The main data collection tool in phenomenological studies is interview. To reveal the experiences and meanings related to the phenomena, it is necessary to use the study features through the interaction and flexibility offered by the interview to the researchers (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). The semi-structured interview form consists of two sections. In the first section, there are questions about the personal information of the interviewed participants. In the second part, there are questions to determine the views of the parents of primary school grade 1 students about their experiences during the distance education process. Responses to the questions in the interview form were collected through Zoom. During the preparation of these questions, preliminary interviews were held with teachers and parents and opinions were obtained from two content experts.

Data Analysis

Online interviews were conducted with parents via Zoom using the questions in the interview form in the study. Information collected from the interview form was analyzed using a content analysis method. In the content analysis method, the main sections of all the collected data are determined, their

conceptual meanings are found, and coding is performed for the sections that are formed (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In qualitative studies, after the data prepared for analysis are brought together, the collected data are analyzed, codes are created, and these codes are put into tables (Creswell, 2013). The collected audio and video recordings were transcribed by the researcher without interfering and the codes were then created. As a result of the analysis, codes were created and codes expressing the same ideas were combined under specific themes. As a result of the analysis, the frequencies of the codes were revealed and the findings were presented by associating them with the sub-research questions. In addition, the views expressed by the participants during the study were supported by quotations.

Validity and Reliability in the Study

Validity and reliability are of great significance in studies. In this context, the reliability of categories created through coding was calculated using the reliability formula of Miles and Huberman (2016). Interview recordings prepared for each parent were transcribed and codes were created by the researcher. Then, the generated data were sent to another domain expert who coded them independently. The expert and the researcher examined each response one by one during the meetings they held via zoom. After this process, a consensus was reached between the researcher and the expert, and the analyzed data were finalized. After determining the number of "Agreements" and "Disagreements" from the researcher and expert, the reliability coefficient was calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the sum of agreements and disagreements and multiplying it by 100. The computed value should be at least 0.80 (Miles & Huberman, 2016). At the end of this process, the reliability coefficient was 0.92, showing high inter-coder reliability between the researcher and the expert. In the findings sections, the views of the participating parents are presented with the method of direct quotation.

FINDINGS

Parent Views on Student-Parent Communication during Distance Education

The views of parents on student-parent communication throughout the distance education during the pandemic are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Student-Parent Communication during Distance Education

Themes	Codes	Frequency (N)
Positive Effects	Establishment of an effective communication environment	8
	Development of an educational environment	7
	Opportunity for one-to-one paying of attention	10
	Opportunity to get to know students closely	9
	Formation of sincere relationships	6

	Adaptation Issues	7
	Student Dissatisfaction	6
Negative Effects	Getting neglected as a parent	9
	Formation of future anxiety	5
	Getting inadequate education	5
	Being unable to be motivated	6
	Formation of an inefficient learning process	7

Table 2 shows that the views of parents about student-parent communication during the pandemic are categorized under two themes of positive and negative effects. Under the theme of positive effects, eight parents expressed their views as "Establishment of an effective communication environment", seven as "Development of an educational environment", ten as "Opportunity for one-to-one paying of attention", nine as "Opportunity to get to know students closely", and six as "Formation of sincere relationships". Under the theme of negative effects, seven parents expressed their views as "Adaptation issues", six as "Student dissatisfaction", nine as "Getting neglected as parents", five as "Formation of future anxiety", five as "Getting inadequate education", six as "Being unable to be motivated", and seven as "Formation of an inefficient learning process". Below are some views on parent-student communication:

"I never knew about my children's conditions and how much they had progressed in their lessons. In this process, I had the opportunity to spend a lot of time with my kid. I closely observed what my kid liked and disliked. I feel the bond between us has become stronger." (P3)

"I think I have lost my motherhood spirit. My kid and I were quarrelling with each other. Normally, my kid used to listen to me, but in this period, he started ignoring me, which makes very upset." (P5)

"My child couldn't get used to this process. She always complains and doesn't want to attend the class. At start, we used to do it together. Then, when I left her alone, she used to get angry when she couldn't do it and closed her door and cried. Generally, we are not satisfied at all." (P7)

The views of parents on positive/negative effects of technology on education in distance education process during the pandemic are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Parent Views on the Effect of Technology on Education Process during the Distance Education

Themes	Codes	Frequency (N)
Effective Technology Utilization	Acquiring technology utilization skills	8
	Acquiring research skills	7
	Embracing technology-supported education environments	9
	Offering an opportunity to repeat the subject matter	10

	Being unable to attend the class	8
Negative	Not providing socialization opportunities	9
Effects of	Causing health problems	7
Technology	Having physical adverse effects	6
	Leading to inequality of opportunity	11

When Table 3 is examined, parent views on the effect of technology on the education process in distance education are categorized under two themes, Effective Technology Utilization and Negative Effects of Technology. Under the theme of effective technology utilization, eight parents expressed their opinions as "acquiring technology utilization skills", seven as "acquiring research skills", nine as "embracing technology-supported education environments", and ten as "offering an opportunity to repeat the subject matter". However, under the theme of negative effects of technology, eight parents expressed their opinions as "being unable to attend the class", nine as "not providing socialization opportunities", and eleven as "leading to inequality of opportunity".

"My child has learned to use computers. I think it turned out very well. My child does research. For example, she was interested in something about space and researched it on the computer, which I liked a lot." (P1)

"My child gets very bored at home. I think this period had a negative effect on socialization. Even in the two days that he goes to school, he misses playing games at recess." (K4)

"In this period, severe problems started appearing in my daughter's eyes. There was no problem in my daughter's eyes when we went for a checkup six months ago. They gave her glasses because her eyes were damaged from looking at the tablet and computer for a long time." (K11)

Table 4 presents the major problems experienced by parents in the distance education process from parents' perspectives.

Table 4. Majors Problems Experienced in the Distance Education Process

Themes	Codes	Frequency (N)
	Teachers' not using technology	8
	Shortage of technological tools	9
Major	Internet access	11
Problems	Inadequate internet infrastructure	10
	Not getting effective feedback on homework	6
Suggestive	Equal opportunities should be provided for students	12

Solutions	Virtual classroom environments should be established	5
	Classrooms should not be crowded	7
	Effective audio and video opportunities should be provided	8
	The EBA infrastructure should be improved	9
	The teacher should be authoritarian	5

When Table 4 is examined, the major problems experienced by parents during the distance education process and their suggestive solutions are reported under two themes, namely Major Problems and Suggestive Solutions. Under the theme of major problems, eight parents expressed their opinions as "teachers' not using technology", eleven as "internet access", ten as "inadequate internet infrastructure", and six as "not getting effective feedback on homework". However, under the theme of suggestive solutions, twelve parents expressed their opinions as "equal opportunities should be provided for students", seven as "virtual classrooms should be established", eight as "effective audio and video opportunities should be provided", nine as "the EBA infrastructure should be improved", and five as "the teacher should be authoritarian".

"Our teacher did not know how to share the screen. It was a big problem for us. We lost a lot of time. Also, our teacher did not know how erase the screen. The kids used to constantly scribble on the screen." (P8)

"There was only an old computer in our house. Its camera was broken down. Therefore, the teacher didn't see my daughter for a whole semester. Even the teacher told I see you for my daughter not to get upset. Now I bought a new tablet, and my daughter became the first in the EBA ranking." (P12)

"There are many people in an economically desperate situation. I applied to the municipality and the neighborhood representative but I couldn't get a tablet anywhere. We had no tablet at first and had a hard time. Some students even don't have it now. I think they should give it to those in bad conditions right away." (P4)

"I think the distance education should be improved. For example, there could be virtual classroom environments. There could be holograms. They are very costly but I think technology advances continuously." (K10)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, which was conducted to reveal the views of grade 1 students' parents during distance education, the parents' views were expressed under three questions and six themes. The parent-student interaction in the distance education process gathered under two headings of positive and negative effects. In this process, the most important impact was the opportunity for one-to-one paying of attention.

In this period, parents had the opportunity to get to know their children more closely. In addition, sincere relationships were established between the students and parents. From the parents' perspectives, an effective learning environment was established. In contrast to this positive interaction, there were also several problems. Suspending face-to-face education and switching to distance education created significant problems for students, teachers, and parents (Chang & Satako, 2020). When student-parent communication is examined in terms of its negative effects, parents seem to have lost their authority over their children. The parents stated that they were taken less seriously by the students. Students who stay away from schools designed for education during the pandemic try to overcome their deficiencies with the help of their parents (OECD, 2020A; OECD, 2020b). One of the important pillars of education is its teacher-parent aspect, which is very important in the distance education process as in face-to-face education (Murray, 2009). In addition, from parents' perspectives, students failed to be motivated and experienced problems in terms of adapting to the lessons. Motivation is emphasized as an essential element in the distance education process (Hobson & Puruhito, 2018). In this context, there are also studies reporting students' unwillingness to attend the classes and experiencing adaptation problems in the distance education process (Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020). In addition, parents stated that students could not receive adequate education whereby they were concerned about students' future. Also, distance education created an inefficient learning environment compared to face-to-face education.

Under the positive effects dimension, it was stated that the use of technology in distance education positively affected students' technology utilization skills, and as result, their research skills improved. Distance education is a teaching method that can be implemented without time and space constraints. It was stated that students embraced technology-supported environments by adapting to them. Apart from that, research shows that conducting activities as a class during the distance education motivates students (Çakın & Akyavuz, 2020). It is stated that there is no opportunity to repeat a subject in face-to-face education, but the opportunity to watch it repeatedly as much as wanted in the distance education process is appraised positively from students' perspectives (Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

When the negative effects of technology were examined, the most expressed view was the inequality of opportunities it created in education. Most of the participants defended the view that education of the students who could not access the technological tools and infrastructure facilities due to their economic conditions was negatively affected and this circumstance created an inequality. It was stated that students had big problems in attending classes due to infrastructure facilities. One of the most important tasks of education is socialization. In this context, it was stated that students could not find the opportunity to socialize during the distance education process, and their personal development was negatively affected. In another study related to the socialization issue (Oosterhoff et al., 2020), it is argued that the pandemic process may lead to negative consequences for individuals from a mental perspective.

In addition, it was stated that students who had to sit in front of a computer or tablet for six hours a day experienced some health problems. It was reported that students' regular sleep patterns were disrupted during the pandemic process and health problems occurred due to long hours spent in front of the screen (Ghosh et al., 2020). It was stated that while some students had no problems in their eyes until a few months ago, they had to wear glasses during the distance education process. However, the courses were reportedly canceled due to technical problems and students received an education with shorter class hours. In addition, it was stated that the students could not gain sufficient skills in practicing and practical courses (Visual Arts, Music, Physical Education, and so on) in distance education (Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020).

When the major problems experienced in this process were examined, the biggest problem was internet access. Particularly, they experienced big problems in accessing the internet and those who had internet access complained of insufficient internet quota. Research studies support that the problems experienced due to internet speed, which is one of the most important stages of the distance education, negatively affect the education (Çığlık & Bayrak, 2015). One of the other critical problems mentioned was the problem of accessing technological tools. It was stated the number and the quality of computers, tablets, and telephones was inadequate. A study on the level of technological tools determined that 26.7% of the available tools in homes were tablets, 37.9% laptops, and 17.6% desktop computers (Tokyay, 2020). In addition, for students to make effective use of distance education, 50% of families need computers (Mutlu et al., 2020). In this context, effective education may not have occurred due to the lack of these tools, which make up the basis of distance education. Similar results were obtained in Baek et al. (2018), in which one of the most important problems of distance education was deprivation. In addition, it was mentioned that teachers were unable to make effective use of technology and did not have a comprehensive knowledge of the course. Teachers should have a grasp of technology and should maintain domination in terms of classroom management (Polat, 2016). Further, it was mentioned that students experienced problems in doing homework, submitting, and obtaining effective feedback. Therefore, the given homework in the distance education process should be checked effectively. Parents see homework as a tool for students to create self-discipline and understand the subject matter better (Ok & Çalışkan, 2019).

In addition, parents found significant shortcomings in technology utilization skills. In the similar studies, it is argued that parents do not have an adequate level of digital literacy skills to guide their children (Anderson, 2020). Another study supporting these parents reported that parents experienced significant problems in learning technology (Obiakor & Adeniran, 2020). Among the suggestive solutions expressed by parents to the problems identified in the current study, the common statement of all parents was that equal opportunities should be provided to the students. To carry out distance education more

effectively, the technology facilities must be developed (Erbil & Kocabaş, 2019). Although ministry has created EBA support rooms, this service may not be sufficient. Apart from that, it was stated that effective audio and video environments should be established for distance education. It was also mentioned that students' establishing communication with their teachers during the class was a factor that increased the quality of the lesson. In addition, it was mentioned that the class size should be smaller in distance education. To increase the quality (Uysal & Kuzu, 2011) and success (Volery & Lord, 2000) of distance education, improving the technological resources is of great significance. It was mentioned that there was no effective communication in crowded classrooms and teachers experienced severe problems in terms of classroom domination. Lastly, it is known that the influence of teachers on the child does not have a very important place. In this context, the teacher should be authoritarian for a child to acquire a study discipline.

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