

Participatory Educational Research (PER)
Vol.10(2), pp. 236-254, March 2023
Available online at <http://www.perjournal.com>
ISSN: 2148-6123
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17275/per.23.38.10.2>

Id: 1240897

Conducting Social Studies Course with Distance Education: Reviewing the Literature and Experiences of Classroom Teachers

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Article history

Received:
23.11.2022

Received in revised form:
03.03.2023

Accepted:
08.03.2023

Key words:

Social studies; distance education; classroom teachers; literature review

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic affecting all over the world, the social studies course, like all other courses, has started to be given via distance education. Although there are many studies aiming to reveal classroom teachers' distance education experiences in other disciplines (i.e., sciences mathematics, physical education), no study has been encountered on distance social studies teaching. Therefore, in the present study it was both aimed to examine the experiences of classroom teachers' on conducting social studies courses in distance education and review the relevant studies systematically. In this way, the research findings will be interpreted in a more comprehensive way. The case study design and systematic review were utilized to conduct the present study. Data were collected through literature review and semi-structured interview form. Interviews were held with seven classroom teachers who conducted the social studies courses with distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Both criterion sampling and convenience sampling techniques were utilized to determine the participants. The data were analysed via content analysis technique. To ensure inter-rater reliability, inter-coder reliability was calculated and a detail description on the research stages was provided to increase the credibility of the study. The findings addressing the problems and the benefits classroom teachers experienced while conducting social studies courses in distance education substantially overlap with literature review findings. The challenges experienced by classroom teachers in distance education are more than the benefits. Classroom management, interaction and assessment and evaluation were the most complained issues by classroom teachers. It was also determined that advanced technology literacy skill, positive attitude towards distance education and dedication are crucial to success in distance education.

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Introduction

Rapid developments in scientific and technological fields cause individuals to encounter more complex problems in daily lives compared to previous years (Taş & Kiroğlu, 2018; Yılmaz et al., 2021). In social studies, in which the contents of different disciplines are handled with an interdisciplinary approach, it is aimed to help students cope with these problems by providing them the knowledge, attitudes, skills and experiences they will need throughout the life. Therefore, it is aimed to increase the interaction of children with their physical and social environment, to equip them with basic democratic values, to create a perception of identity and citizenship, to create and develop social personality, to gain the skills necessary to keep up with the changing conditions of the time, and to make conscious decisions by making sense of their own world through social studies course (National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), 2017; Öztürk & Kafadar, 2020; Türkcan & Bozkurt, 2015).

The need to prepare children for the epoch they lived in and to equip them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need necessitates keeping the social studies curriculum up to date. With a thematic approach in which a student-centered education, the acquisitions, values, and skills that are aimed to be gained by the students have also been updated. However, with the "COVID 19" epidemic that emerged in China and then affected the whole world, major changes had to be made in education systems. As in other courses, the social studies course has started to be taught in virtual classrooms through distance education in order to prevent the spread of the disease (Payne & Falkner, 2022).

Distance education was a method of teaching mostly applied in higher education throughout the world, while teachers at all education levels (including primary schools) had to meet with distance education with the pandemic. Classroom teachers who do not have experience teaching in distance education are left alone with many questions such as what distance education is, how is teaching carried out through distance education, how distance education material is prepared, how to manage virtual lessons, and how to provide synchronous or asynchronous interaction. A study conducted by Şahan & Parlar (2021) points up the importance of the situation by reporting that 13 of the 16 participant classroom teachers felt fear, anxiety and uneasiness during the emergency distance education process. The problems experienced by the teachers in the process have been a matter of curiosity for many researchers. One of the most common problems experienced by classroom teachers in emergency distance education was "control difficulty". Controlling the students' products (i.e., homework), connection problems, simultaneous conversation of the students, and difficulties in classroom management were mentioned as tough sides of the distance education by classroom teachers (Bulut & Susar-Kırmızı, 2021; Dinler & Dündar, 2019; Duban et al., 2022).

Moore (1989), one of the best-known theorists in distance education, claims that interaction should be examined in three categorizations which are student-teacher, student-content, and student-student interaction, and that education without interaction would only consist of information transfer. However, there are many studies reporting insufficient interaction between teacher-student, student-student and student-content (Champeaux et al., 2020; Erbil et al., 2021; Gezen & Efendioğlu, 2021; Kruszewska et al., 2020; Uştu et al., 2021) and individual differences of students that ignored (Yurtbakan & Akyıldız, 2020) in distance education. Conformably, it was reported that teaching in distance education was inefficient due to lack of interaction (Batmaz et al., 2021; Erbil et al., 2021).

Technical issues were considered another important obstacle in distance education. In many

studies addressing the classroom teacher' views on distance education (Batmaz et al., 2021; Bulut & Susar-Kırmızı, 2021; Kruszewska vd., 2020; Dinler & Dündar, 2019; Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Şahan & Parlar, 2021) it was concluded that technological disruptions and inadequacies reduce the quality of distance education. Considering that technology is the main communication channel in online distance education, it can be said that these deficiencies and inadequacies also prevent interaction. Parents' direct (*i.e. talking to the child or teacher*) or indirect interference (*i.e. making noise or watching TV in the place where their children attend the course*) during the teaching process are other important factors limiting the interaction (Mohan et al., 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020).

Previous studies have revealed the lack of sufficient prior experience of classroom teachers in distance education is another main reason for many educational problems (Erbil, 2021; Palaz, 2022). Lack of experience leads teachers to fear and anxiety towards the distance education process. In addition, there is a positive relationship between digital literacy skills and attitudes towards distance education (Karagözoğlu & Gezer, 2022). Increasing classroom teachers' self-confidence by training and informing them in distance education undoubtedly will help them to overcome this anxiety and fear (Gobbi et al., 2021). During the pandemic period, classroom teachers' continuing responsibilities at home and their willingness to provide distance education also affected the quality of the distance education provided (Rasmitadila et al., 2020).

However, gaining experience in distance education during the pandemic period provided new talents to classroom teachers such as improvement in technological skills, learning new teaching methods and techniques, learning virtual classroom management, realizing the importance of face-to-face education, time management, and multiple perspectives (Dinler & Dündar, 2019). In addition, providing the continuity of education, contributing to the cooperation between parents, students, and teachers, re-using of teaching materials, and providing interaction between students were other advantages of distance education that classroom teachers have reported (Kurt et al., 2021).

In the literature, although there are many studies aiming to have classroom teachers' attitudes or experiences towards conducting mathematics, physical education, sciences and reading and writing courses (Batmaz et al., 2021; Ergen et al., 2022; Gobbi et al., 2021; Kargın & Karataş, 2021) or to have social studies teachers' experiences (Çakmak & Kaçar, 2021; Osmanoğlu, 2020; Palaz, 2022) in distance education, no study has been encountered addressing the distance social studies teaching in primary school education. This study is considered important in terms of filling this gap in the field. Furthermore, it was also aimed to present a more comprehensive study by compiling studies examining classroom teachers' experiences in emergency distance education process. In this way, both the current situation in distance education will be revealed and the research findings will be interpreted in a more comprehensive way. Answers to the following questions were sought throughout the study to achieve the aim of the present study.

- What are the current findings on classroom teachers' experiences in distance education?
- How are the thoughts of classroom teachers on teaching social studies courses in distance education?
- Do the study findings overlap with the existing literature results?

Method

Study design

In the present study, the situation of conducting social studies courses with emergency distance education due to the COVID-19 pandemic has been examined based on the case study design principles. In the case study design, one of the qualitative research designs, it is aimed to examine the situation or event in a comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth manner (Patton, 2014, p.447). In addition, the studies (18 studies) aiming to examine classroom teachers' experiences on distance education have been reviewed through content analysis method to reveal the current structure.

Participants

Interviews were held with seven classroom teachers (three men) working in public schools in various provinces of Türkiye. Both criterion sampling and convenience sampling methods were used to determine the participants. In criterion sampling method, the certain criteria (the fact that participants had social studies courses during the pandemic period) are regarded in the selection of participants and the convenience sample method is considered practical in terms of time, cost and effort (Patton, 2014, pp. 243-244). Participants' ages ranged from 36 to 53 ($M_{age}=42.4$, $sd=6.8$) while their professional experience ranged from 13 to 32 ($M_{exp.}=19.7$, $sd=7.3$) years. Five of them are primary school teacher graduates, one participant is biology graduate and the remaining one is chemistry graduate. However, participants who are not primary school teacher graduates had pedagogical formation education. None of participants had any prior experience in distance education. All of them had personal computers and they have been using computers for more than ten years. Two participants identified their technology literacy as good, four participants as moderate and one participant as weak level.

Data Collection

The data were collected by following two stages. First, the relevant literature was reviewed via "Google Scholar" search engine. "Classroom teacher" OR "primary schools" OR "primary school children" AND "distance education" "distance education in primary school" search terms were used to reach studies published between January 2019 and September 2022. After the preliminary examination based on the title and abstract, 63 studies were identified as being potentially relevant. 45 of them were excluded due to not including classroom teacher's thoughts and not being empirical study. Data were collected from participants during the beginning of the 2021-2022 academic year (September). Data from participants were collected through personal information and semi-structured interview forms. The personal information form contains some variables (age, gender, professional experience, technology literacy, etc.) that are thought to affect the social studies teaching processes of the participants through distance education. Through the semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers, the social studies teaching processes carried out with distance education were tried to examine in depth. To ensure content validity of the semi-structured form, the scope of the interview questions was determined by scanning the relevant literature and similar measurement tools. Then, the developed form was examined by three subject area experts, and requested editions were made in line with the feedback. It was re-sent to the experts, and after having the approval, the semi-structured interview form was finalized. Interviews were conducted online via video conferences. Each interview lasted an average of 30-40 minutes.

Validity and Reliability Studies

Content analysis technique was performed to review 18 studies and the data derived through interviews. The analysis was carried out by both researchers and based on the literature. After analysing the interviews, the codes and categories created from the literature review analysis were adjusted. To ensure inter-rater reliability, almost one-third of the data (30%) were coded by two experienced encoders. During the process, 90 codes were obtained. Consensus was achieved in 81 of them, while disagreements had on nine codes. The inter-rater reliability coefficient was calculated via the reliability formula (Reliability = Consensus / (Consensus + Dissidence) proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994) to validate the coding process. The reliability index was found to be 90% which is higher than the recommended ($\alpha=70\%$). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that for the reliability of the research, it should be proved that the findings and interpretations are not the imagination of the researcher but are clearly obtained from the data. To increase the credibility of the study, data collection, application, analysis processes and the participants were described in detail. Besides, the suggestions made by Gibbs (2007) to ensure that the transcripts for single-research studies do not contain errors and to constantly compare the codes and data in the process were also applied in this study. To increase the validity of the study, resource diversification was used (Creswell, 2009). Accordingly, the study was strengthened by making comments based on both the data obtained from the literature review and the data obtained directly from the teachers.

Analysis

The data obtained from 18 studies that help ensure the source diversity and obtained from the participants were analyzed by content analysis technique. In the content analysis, all the findings of the aforementioned studies, including the views/thoughts of teachers on distance education, were listed, coded, and categorized by a researcher. The other researcher checked the compatibility of these codes and categories. MAXQDA Analytics Pro (version 2020) was utilized to analyse the data obtained from the participants and to create the outputs.

Researchers' experiences and observations in the process

Although, all researchers are currently studying as academic staff, they had experience on teaching in primary school. In addition, while one of the researchers has experience in teaching through distance education, the other one has experience on social studies courses. Both researchers have many publications conducted with qualitative research design. Researchers also have the ability and knowledge to use qualitative data analysis software.

Findings

The present study comprises two stages. In the first stage, the thoughts and experiences of classroom teachers were determined by reviewing the existing literature. In the second stage, the thoughts of participant classroom teachers on distance social studies courses were examined. Findings addressing both stages are given below.

1. The current findings on classroom teachers' experiences in distance education

In the literature, it is seen that the thoughts of classroom teachers on distance education were gathered under two main sub-dimension which are negative and positive attitudes and experiences towards teaching in distance education. While classroom teachers mainly focused on the negative sides of distance education (Table 1=235 codes), the positive



sides (Table 2=69 codes) were also emphasized by them. Table 1 shows the categorizations comprising the negative codes.

Table 1. Classroom teachers' negative thoughts and experiences on distance education

Categorization	<i>f</i>	Codes
Classroom management	71	Classroom setting (10), attention deficit/ distractibility (8), having many lessons (7), lack of motivation (7), short course duration (5), technology literacy (4), insufficient content (2), not taking it seriously (2), indifference (2), not being familiar with distance education (2), not being competent in distance education (2), not being able to give everyone a voice (1)
Inequality of opportunity	44	Lack of technological infrastructure (16), Education-Information Network (EBA) (8), internet connection (9), ignoring individual differences (2), students with special needs (2), other (3)
Interaction problems	36	Student-teacher interaction (11), inadequate interaction (8), student-student interaction(7), insufficient participation(7), student-content interaction (3)
Ineffective education	30	Inefficiency (6), learning through experience (6), inability to do group work (4), challenge in applied course (4), inability to concretize (2), not being suitable for high-level skills (1), challenge in understanding the subject (1), inability to repeat the course (2), not being suitable for the student level (4)
Family	16	Lack of interest (7), technology literacy (2), insensitiveness (2), excessive intervention (2), lack of communication (1), socio-economic level (2)
Health	15	Screen addiction (4), prolonged screen time (3), radiation (1), failure in perception and speech (1), headache and eye pain (1)
Teacher	13	Lack of in-service training (4), need for preparation - workload (4), unsuitable course hours (2), insufficient guidance (1), anxiety (1), pressure (1)
Assessment and evaluation	10	Assessment and evaluation (5), homework control (5)
Total	235	

Table 1 shows that the negative thoughts of classroom teachers on teaching in distance education were gathered under “classroom management, inequality of opportunity, interaction problems, ineffective education, family, health, teacher, and assessment and evaluation” categories. It is seen that the problems arising from classroom management (i.e. attention deficit/ distractibility, lack of motivation, low technology literacy) were considered one of the biggest obstacles in distance education by classroom teachers. In addition, inequality of opportunity (i.e. lack of technological infrastructure, internet connection, ignoring individual differences) and interaction problems (i.e. inadequate student-teacher or student-student interaction, insufficient participation) were addressed as other important issues by them. The measurement and evaluation was the area where the least negative thoughts were reported.

Table 2. Classroom teachers' positive thoughts and experiences on distance education

Categorization	<i>f</i>	Codes
Classroom management	15	Content-material (10), able to mute the sound (3), other (2)
Interaction	12	Interaction with parents (9), student-teacher interaction (2), student-student interaction (1)
Affective effects	10	Student (6), teacher (3)
Occupational influences	10	Increase in technology literacy (8), Occupational cooperation (1)
Assessment and evaluation	7	To be able to make measurement and evaluation easily (7)
Flexibility	7	Time saving (4), comfort (2), time and place flexibility (1)
Continuity of education	5	Ensuring continuity of education (5)
Health	2	Protection from pandemic (2)
Total	69	

The positive thoughts of classroom teachers on teaching in distance education were gathered under “classroom management, interaction, affective effects, occupational influences, assessment and evaluation, flexibility, continuity of education, and health” categories (Table 2). The indispensable use of technology during the pandemic period contributed to the education process for material-content diversity. The tools provided by the learning management systems used in the pandemic period gave teachers a significant advantage in terms of classroom management. While the teachers complained about the inadequacy of the student-teacher interaction as a negative side of distance education, they thought that the interaction between teacher and parents increased. The affective effects category includes many expressions such as making students feel good when they attend the courses at home or make the teacher feel freer and change their perspective on distance education. It has been determined that the pandemic process provides occupational effects such as increasing the technology literacy of both students and teachers and enabling them to experience different learning environments (online). Ensuring the continuity of education at home and at appropriate time during the pandemic period is seen as other important advantages of distance education.

2. The thoughts of classroom teachers on teaching social studies courses in distance education

Similar to the literature, the thoughts of the participants on conducting the social studies courses in distance education were grouped under two themes as negative (Fig. 1) and positive (Fig. 2).

2.1. The negative thoughts of classroom teachers.

The negative thoughts of classroom teachers were gathered under “classroom management, interaction, family, inequality of opportunity, assessment and evaluation, and

health” categorizations (Fig. 1). The findings obtained show similarities with the literature presented in Table 1.

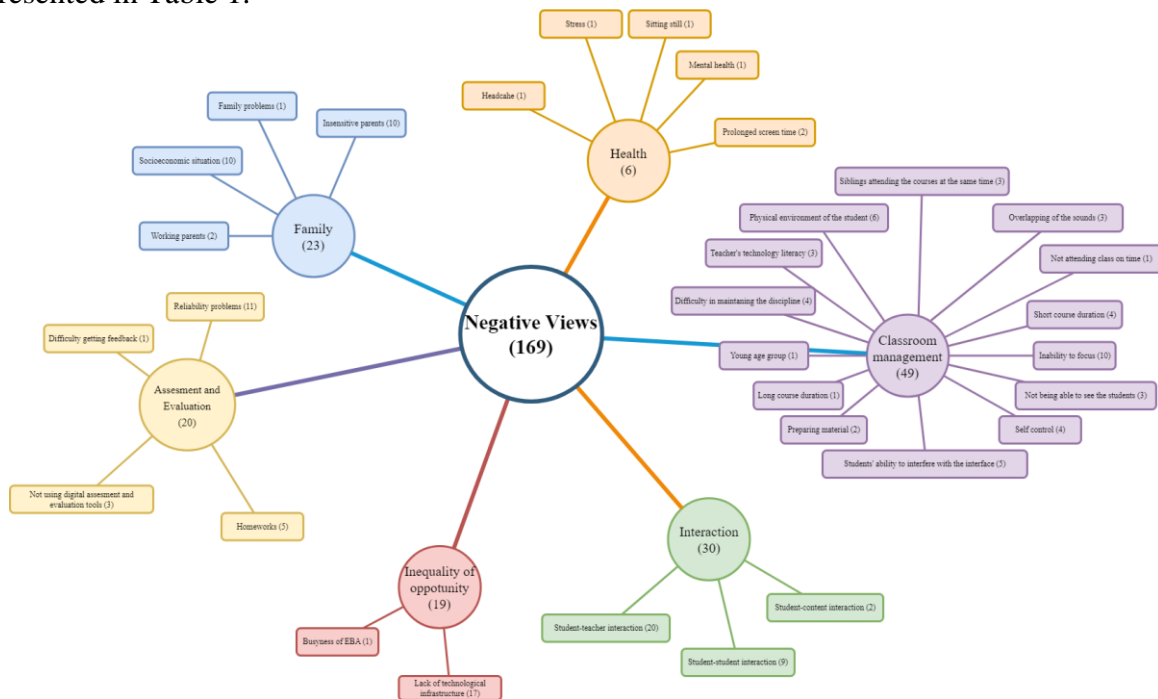


Figure 1. The negative sides of conducting social science courses in distance education

Classroom management

It is seen that the participants put emphasis on the dimension of classroom management which is composed of 14 codes. The prominent codes of the category were inability to focus on the course (10), physical environment of the student (6), students' ability to interfere with the interface (5), difficulty in maintaining discipline (4) and self-control (4). Apart from the literature, “siblings attending the courses at the same time, overlapping sounds, preparing material, not being able to see the student, self-control, student intervention in the interface, long course duration and young age group” codes were newly emerged in the present study.

Two situations that teachers suffer the most were that student’s inability to focus on the subject during the course and the inappropriate physical environment they are in. For example, it may be tough for a student who does not have his own room to attend the course compared to a counterpart who has this opportunity. However, if the student who attends the course in their own private environment and does not have self-control, it is possible to have a focusing problem. In addition, the students' ability to interfere with the interface such as turning the sound and camera on and off also negatively affected the classroom management. Here are sample participant examples regarding the situations experienced.

P1: For example, they (students) tried to correspond in the chat section to disrupt the course... Of course, I turned it off. However, this time there were those who tried to disrupt the course verbally. Then I was muting the sound (students can interfere with the interface).

P3: There are a lot of stimuli in the room. As I said, because they did not have a private room. For example, there was a student living in a house heated by the stove. During the course, the mother was knitting on the sofa, the younger sister was playing with her toys,

the older sister was reading a book in the corner, but the student could not speak, his voice was muted. Because he did not have a chance to attend the course in another room (inability to focus on the course, the physical environment of the student).

Given that primary school students' self-control skills have not developed enough due to the age they are in, has also caused teachers to have discipline problems in the classroom. Students had difficulty in listening and respecting each other (P1 and P6- self-control) and even students who took off their clothes in front of the camera were encountered (P5- self-control). Some students whose parents had to go to work and had no control-mechanism did not attend the course adequately (P7- self-control).

Interaction

The concept of interaction has been the most mentioned subject after classroom management in distance social studies teaching. Classroom teachers indicated that situations such as not being able to make eye contact with students, students not turning on the camera, and not being in the face-to-face classroom setting prevent teacher-student interaction.

P7: Education is a very dynamic process, first of all, it is very important to make eye contact with students and to control them. However, our education ministry's decision, which was that students did not have to open their camera unless they wanted, left us passive in this process. Some students were turning off their cameras to ensure that we could not detect what they were doing (Inability to make eye contact with the student).

Classroom teachers think that student-student interaction in distance education has also been limited. P6 reported that "Their interactions among themselves were quite tough as they were not in the same place (like classroom)." Teachers expressed negative thoughts on student-content interaction least. According to them, students did not have any difficulties to reach the content. It has been observed that students can obtain digital resources from EBA, various websites and social media platforms.

Family

Family situation has become prominent as one of the factors negatively affecting the social studies process in distance education. The codes gathered under this category showed similarity with the literature. In particular, some negative situations arising from socio-economic status or insensitive behaviors of families, family problems, and the fact that both parents had to go to work caused teachers to complain. Here is an example statement for this situation.

P2: Although we (me and administration) contacted the parents of the students who did not attend the course, and had promised them, still these students did not participate. In families where both parents are working, the child stays alone at home, and they may not participate in the course (Insensitive family, working parents).

Assessment and evaluation

In the literature review, while the homework check was emphasized by teachers, the current findings showed that classroom teachers mostly focus on the reliability problem in the assessment and evaluation process. Classroom teachers reported that objective evaluation is not possible in distance education as students may receive support from their families or peers during online assessment-evaluation activities. Furthermore, some participants pointed out the



difficulties of checking homework assignments and the insufficient level of fulfilment of homework. Some teachers also had problems due to insufficient use of digital measurement and evaluation tools.

P4: Frankly, the exam setting was relying entirely on the words of the families. It was carried out on their initiative (Reliability problem).

Inequality of opportunity

Similar to literature findings, the thoughts of classroom teachers on inequality of opportunity were concentrated on the technological inequality of opportunity. In detail, the fact that not all students have the same technological devices and equal internet infrastructure, negatively affected the distance education process. The socio-economic situation is quite effective in this regard. For instance, classroom teachers working in primary schools located in high socio-economic regions complained less about technological issues. Here is a striking example: “I am currently working in a disadvantaged area. In this neighborhood three or four families who migrated from the east region may have to live together. Naturally there are many children in those houses (at least three or four siblings). One of these families, there was only one phone (mother’s phone). Just one of the siblings could attend the courses. The Internet connection was also weakened” (P3- Inadequacy of technological infrastructure).

Health

The health issue in negative thoughts was the least mentioned by teachers. Similar findings were also encountered in the literature review. Thoughts on this subject were mostly focused on the factors such as excessive exposure of children to the screen, sitting immobile in front of the screen, and headaches. Some teachers stated that their mental health was adversely affected in this process.

P1: It was a bad feeling not being able to get ready to leave the house when I got up in the morning. Sometimes I would sit in front of the computer and fix my sullen face with my hand. I was trying to grin at my students. Although they told me how energetic I was, I actually wasn't. I was just trying to look like that (mental health).

2.2. The positive thoughts of classroom teachers.

In this section, the findings on the positive sides of teaching the social studies in distance education and the factors that positively affect this process are included. For example, teachers reported that teaching in distance education provided them flexibility. Again, being able to turn off the microphones of the students and keep their cameras on in distance education reduces the problems experienced in classroom management. Figure 2 shows the positive thoughts of classroom teachers on teaching social science courses in distance education. 108 positive codes were reached from the thoughts of the classroom teachers, and these codes were gathered under 7 categories (classroom management, interaction, flexibility, teacher characteristics, assessment and evaluation, family and student characteristics).

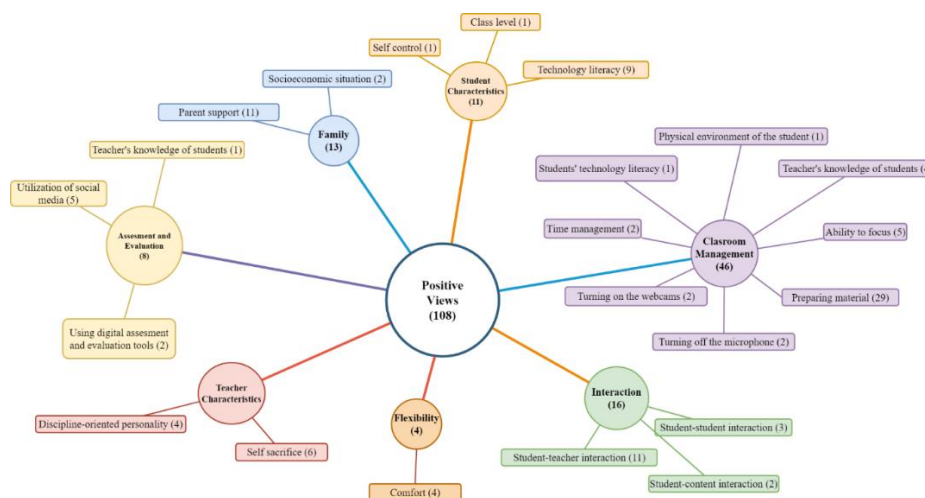


Figure 2. The positive sides of conducting social science courses in distance education.

Classroom management

Regarding negative thoughts indicated mostly on classroom management in distance education (Table 1, Figure 1), the solutions offered were addressing the classroom management more. Comparing the literature review, the codes which are "focus, getting to know the student, physical environment of the student, technology literacy of the student, time management, keeping the camera on" have been newly added to the classroom management category in the present study.

Classroom teachers solved the problems they experienced in distance education, such as students not listening to each other, and the overlapping of voices while students were speaking, by turning off the microphones of the students. **P2** reported an example situation as follows:

“In distance education, they were better motivated as they focused more on me individually. However, in the classroom setting, they are messing with each other, turn around, keep asking questions like can I go to the bathroom? Can I drink water? etc. But they have to give their attention to me in front of the open cameras. Furthermore, I can turn on their microphones if they want to speak, so we have better communication” (keeping the camera on, being able to turn off the microphone).

The most prominent code in the classroom management category was material design, as in the literature review. Teachers easily accessed materials and content in distance education via online platforms such as EBA, social media, and/or websites. Teachers emphasized that students could not focus on the course in negative opinions (Figure 1). However, some of them stated that due to short duration in distance education, students focused better on the course. In addition, some practical solutions such as using the question-answer technique, and arranging the course hours to make students more focused, have been produced by teachers.

P6: Course time is crucial. For example, courses between 10:00 and 15:00 are very effective. Hence, I was teaching the Social Studies course in these times after the Turkish course in which students have more knowledge and participate (Focus)

The importance of knowing the characteristics of the students in classroom management is one of the findings of the present study. Since the social studies course is given in the fourth

grade and up to this stage, both the teacher and students get to know each other, helping teachers in classroom management in distance education. **P7** reported that “*Since my students were in the fourth grade, and they knew me well, we never had any problems with discipline. I tried my best to get their attention* (teacher's knowledge of students). With parental support, the focus of the student was increased by making the physical environment of the students suitable for distance education.

P2: Our parents were conscious about it. During the course duration, they didn't leave any distractions in the room, siblings or toys. So our students could focus on the social science course, of course (Student's physical environment).

Family

The family is considered one of the key factors for primary school children in distance education by classroom teachers. They reported that distance education can become inefficient due to insensitive families or it can be quite effective with the support of families. Here is an illuminating example:

P1: I had a dynamic parent group. They were very supportive throughout the process. I was sure that the homework was pursued by them or whatever I asked it was ready for the next day. If I said napkin, the napkin was ready; If I said a pen, the pen was ready (family support).

Interaction

Classroom teachers discussed some of the factors that they think provide or increase interaction in distance education. Accordingly, the advanced technology literacy skills of teachers and students and getting to know each other positively facilitates interaction.

P2: We know each other very well as my students were third graders when the pandemic occurred. Hence, we also had a nice interaction in distance education. About 15-16 of 20 students attended the social science courses regularly. We have even carried out extra courses on my YouTube channel in the evenings to reinforce what they have learned. We had no problems with interaction.” (technology literacy, knowing each other).

Benefiting from alternative educational resources in distance education, allowing students free time to interact with peers, keeping the microphone and camera open, making eye contact with students, and the low number of students in the classroom are also factors that positively affect interaction.

P4: I've never told them to turn off their cameras. I should definitely be able to see and hear the students. I did not want them to be silent. Let everyone talk, express themselves freely, and gain self-confidence... This was how our social science courses were. It was a little tiring for me but it was nice for interaction (student-teacher interaction).

Student characteristics

Student characteristics category was not encountered in the literature review (Table 2). Classroom teachers believe that the qualifications of the students also determine the quality of the distance education process. Students' technology literacy, self-control and grade level are important in distance courses. In addition, the distance education process had a positive effect on students' technology literacy.

P6: Since the children's technology literacy skills were sufficient in that age we did not have much trouble in this regard. Children are much more curious about technology than we are (technology literacy).

Teacher characteristics

Teacher characteristics is another category that was not determined as a result of the literature review (Table 2). Teacher characteristics as well as student characteristics played an important role in the process. It was determined both from the analysis of the data and the statements of the teachers during the interviews that since some classroom teachers do not believe in distance education, their motivations towards teaching in distance education was quite low and that the educational process of social science was negatively affected by this. For example, while P2 tried many activities, including carrying out extra courses on the YouTube channel to improve the process, P3, who thinks that distance education is not functional in primary school, easily gave up trying. However, P5 statements reveal once again how important self-sacrifice is:

P3: While the successful students did their homework, the unwilling students did not do it again. Honestly, I did not force the students who did not do their homework. Because the main factor that drives the fate of a child is the family. The teacher is just a mediator. I did not perform extra force to obligate them to do something. I believe that not everyone has to be successful in school.

P5: I care about the homework very much. Does not matter if it is face to face or distance education, I always give homework to my students and provide feedback to both my students and their parents after checking them. In this way, it becomes clearer whether the subject is understood by students or not. We were again focusing on the subjects in which they did not completely understand. Homework is also a way of communicating with parents.

Measurement and assessment

In the literature review, only the ease of evaluation in distance education was mentioned, while in the present study, the codes of using digital measurement-assessment tools, benefiting from social media, and getting to know the student were determined. The use of digital measurement and evaluation tools and social media in distance social studies courses has facilitated the measurement and evaluation process.

P4: Obviously the measurement and assessment process was almost the same in distance education. In face-to-face education, we used to benefit from various sources to prepare for the exams. It was not changed in distance education. The students even had online trial exams in distance social science courses periodically (Benefiting from digital measurement and assessment tools).

Flexibility

Teachers think that flexibility provided by distance education has been one of the greatest conveniences for them. Being able to teach in the comfort of home, not having to wear formal clothes and being able to handle both housework and personal affairs during the school time are some examples that teachers mentioned.

P3: It's also suitable for us. You can handle your affairs from home. It is a good thing for both teacher and student comfort. You can even hang or collect laundry between classes, or you can play with your child (Comfort).



3. Comparison of the findings obtained from the present study and the existing in the literature

The findings obtained from interviews were compared in detail with literature review findings up to here. Therefore, brief but collective comparison was presented in this section. It is seen that the findings obtained both in the studies reviewed and in the present study are grouped under two themes as positive and negative opinions. In this respect, the present study shows a great similarity with the literature in terms of theming. However, there are some differences as well as similarities in the categorizations. For example, the categorizations of negative thoughts of the classroom teachers created in the present study and existed in the literature almost overlap with each other (see Table 1 and Fig. 1). In the positive thoughts different categorizations such as “*teacher and student characteristics, affective effects, and occupational influences*” have been created apart from each other (see Table 2 and Fig. 2).

Discussion

In the present study, the experiences of classroom teachers in conducting the social studies course with distance education were examined in depth and the results obtained were compared with the existing findings in the literature. The findings obtained from both the literature review and the interviews show that classroom teachers had negative experiences (especially in classroom management) more than positive experiences in distance education. It was also revealed by Dinler and Dündar (2019) that classroom teachers had difficulties in providing classroom management in distance education. Not having a private room and the presence of many distractions (other family members, TV, etc.) that may affect students' motivations in the place where they attend the courses came forward as one of the main reasons for this situation. It has been reported by many studies (Kultaş & Çalışkan, 2021; Kurt et al., 2021; Mohan et al., 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020) that participation of students to the courses while they are in the same environment with their family members makes classroom management difficult in distance education as well as it becomes difficult for students to focus on the courses.

Bozkurt (2020) reported that since teachers and students are in separate environments in distance education, teachers should focus on the affective dimension. In a study conducted by Mascheroni et al. (2021), supportive findings have been obtained. Accordingly, it has been determined that the majority of primary school students feel nervous during online learning activities. However, considering that teachers also experience fear, anxiety and uneasiness and have to deal with many technical problems in distance education (Şahan & Parlar, 2021), it is quite tough for them to focus on the emotions of students. Therefore, it will be beneficial to train classroom teachers on classroom management in distance education with in-service training. Two participants (P1, P6) also emphasized their need for classroom management with in-service training during the interviews. Similarly, in the studies it was determined that classroom teachers experienced problems in distance education due to the lack of in-service training (Ergen et al., 2022; Karadağ et al., 2022).

The importance of the classroom teacher's technology literacy skill was also revealed. In the present study, it was observed that teachers who have confidence in the use of technology and be able to benefit from technology had less problems in distance social science courses than others. These teachers also had positive attitudes towards distance education. Similarly, the studies reported that teachers with high technology literacy have a positive attitude towards distance education as well as teaching in distance education has also provided an improvement in teachers' technology literacy (Dinler & Dündar, 2019; Karagözlü and Gezer,

2022; Palaz, 2022).

In both the literature review and the interviews with the teachers, it was revealed that the students had focusing problems in distance education. Students may show their interest in other things during the online courses and teachers have difficulties in attracting student's attention due to their short attention span (Urhanoglu et al., 2021). However, the attitudes and competencies of teachers towards students and the distance education process are decisive. Teachers who use technology and teaching methods and techniques correctly and analyze the characteristics of their students well can attract the attention of students (Duban et al., 2022).

Interaction is one of the basic elements whose importance has been recognized in distance education (Moore, 1989). Participating teachers stated that there were serious problems in providing interaction (especially in student-teacher and student-student interaction) in the social studies courses conducted with distance education. It has been determined that lack of interaction (particularly student-teacher) is a big problem for distance education courses conducted with primary school children (Bulut & Susar-Kırmızı, 2021; Champeaux et al., 2020; Erbil et al. 2021; Kayalı et al., 2021; Kruszewska et al., 2020) and that the content of EBA does not provide sufficient interaction (Batmaz et al., 2021). However, Simonson (1999) theorized that interaction experiences in distance education and face-to-face education can be equated when necessary arrangements are made.

There were inequalities of opportunity in the social studies course conducted with emergency distance education. Technological inequalities were the most complained one by classroom teachers among them. It has been reported by many studies (Çakmak & Kaçar, 2021; Kruszewska et al., 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Şahan & Parlar, 2021) that technological problems in distance education are seen as an important obstacle by classroom teachers for distance education. The socio-economic status of the families is regarded as a decisive factor for this (Palaz, 2022). Therefore, such infrastructure inequality problems are more common in rural areas (Hebebcı et al., 2020). The research findings of the present study show that these kinds of problems can be overcome even in rural areas if enough dedication is shown by classroom teachers and good parent-teacher cooperation can be achieved.

The findings reveal that family has a great importance in distance education at primary school level. While sensitive and caring families are willing to create a suitable environment for their child and cooperate with the classroom teacher, attitudes of some families complicate the process. It has also been determined that some parental attitudes and qualifications such as indifference towards their child's education, lack of technological knowledge, interfering with the process, and trying to take control of the courses may have negative effects on distance education (Karadağ et al., 2022; Kruszewska et al., 2020; Uzun & Uzunöz, 2020). In addition, it has also been found that parent-teacher cooperation can increase through distance education and a more efficient distance education can be achieved with this cooperation. Similar findings have been reached by Kurt et al. (2021) and Erbil et al. (2021).

Although participating classroom teachers indicated that they had no trouble reaching social science course content in distance education, five of them (71%) reported that since the social studies includes abstract concepts, they had difficulty in getting the students to comprehend the subjects and they found the courses inefficient. This may be one of the consequences of not using the materials that teachers have accessed properly. Considering classroom teachers have difficulties in using appropriate methods and techniques and taking advantage of technology (aforementioned above) the importance of in-service training before distance



education becomes prominent once again.

Another issue emphasized by classroom teachers is assessment and evaluation. Teachers do not believe that objective and reliable measurement and evaluation can be made in distance education. Various studies have also shown that measurement and evaluation issue is insufficient and unreliable (Kargın & Karataş, 2021; Kayalı et al., 2021) and homework control is difficult in distance education (Bulut & Susar Kırmızı, 2021; Duban et al., 2022). However, it has been determined that using digital measurement and evaluation tools can contribute to the measurement and evaluation process.

Finally, teachers discussed the effects of distance education on the health dimension. Accordingly, distance education has been beneficial through protection from the pandemic. However, it has brought many problems such as body aches, stress, long-term exposure to the screen and deterioration in mental health. It has also been determined in different studies (Bağrıacık Yılmaz & Özcan, 2022; Champeaux et al., 2020; Karadağ et al. 2022; Xiang, 2020) that distance education has negative effects on health. As a solution to this problem, Bağrıacık Yılmaz and Özcan (2022) presented informing students and parents about ergonomics. They also suggested that distance education courses should be arranged in such a way as to prevent students from sitting in front of a screen for long periods of time.

Conclusions, Limitations and Suggestions

The findings addressing problems classroom teachers have encountered and the benefits they have experienced while teaching social studies courses in distance education substantially overlap with literature review findings. The challenges experienced by classroom teachers in distance education are more than the benefits. Classroom management, interaction, assessment and evaluation, and family subjects were the most complained issues by classroom teachers. The fact that teachers and families did not receive any training on distance education before the process stands out as the main problem here. In addition, family attitudes and knowledge towards distance education may affect the process negatively or positively. Classroom teachers especially need support on how they can teach abstract concepts related to social studies courses and how they can perform measurement and evaluation in distance education. Therefore, it is important to educate both classroom teachers but parents about distance education pedagogy. In addition, it is seen that there is a need for political moves to be taken in order to eliminate the inequalities of opportunity among students. The present study which reveals important determinations on conducting the social studies course with distance education has also some limitations. First, the data obtained were limited with the distance education experiences of classroom teachers working in the public schools in Turkey. Studies aiming to have private school experiences towards conducting social science courses in distance education will be helpful both in contributing to the literature and filling the gap. Another limitation is that only classroom teachers' thoughts on the process were discussed in the present study. It will be beneficial to have parents, students, and administrator's thoughts to be able to think outside of the box.

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