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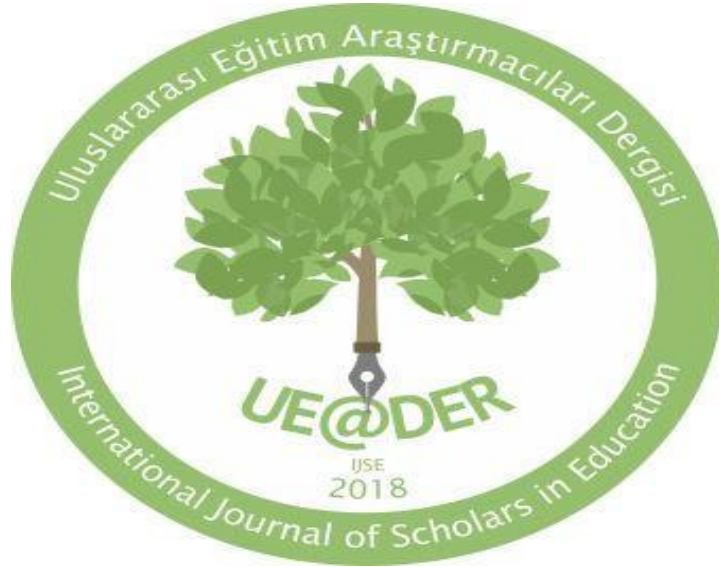
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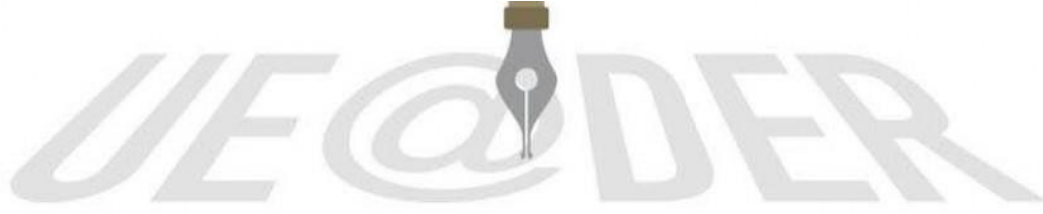
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Second Chances: Exploring the Philippine Alternative Learning System

Abel V. ALVAREZ, JR.*

Abstract: Education for all has been a campaign of education advocates over the years. But despite having various education initiatives and programs that promote inclusivity, there are still learners who have left the traditional teaching and learning environment. In the Philippines, the Alternative Learning System (ALS), which is considered to be a parallel learning program, serves as a bridge for those who are unable to attend the formal education system due to various circumstances. Hence, this paper aims to deeply understand the reasons behind students' dropping out of formal education. Additionally, using a qualitative case study research design, this attempts to examine the authentic experiences of out-of-school youths and adults that led them leave the four corners of classroom. Interestingly, the results of this study revealed that ALS students left the formal education system due to problems with family, personal conflicts, financial concerns, and accessibility concerns. Nevertheless, the narratives shared by the participants served as a way of deeply understanding the root cause that impedes their learning journey as they navigate the path of alternative education.

Keywords: Adult education, Alternative Learning System, Education for all, Inclusive education, Out-of-school youths and adults

Introduction

The word education, for the most part, appears to be a social opportunity as its aim. It is portrayed as an equalizer of many factors including socioeconomic mobilizations and producing socially responsive and productive citizens (Davis, 2014; Conger et al., 2010). Unfortunately, not everyone has the chance to continue their formal schooling because of primarily social and economic circumstances, which include family conflicts, financial constraints, environmental pressures, and access to education (Department of Education, 2019).

In the Philippines, this phenomenon is seen to be rooted in the endemic problem of poverty which stems from larger social issues that plague the capability of individuals to become educated (Sani et al., 2019). In the situational analysis released by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) and UNICEF (2018), the agencies emphasized that the Philippines has persistent poverty problems that remain high, especially in areas like the regions of Mindanao. The problem of poverty creates slow human productivity and development, uneven socio-economic growth, and disruption to other essential sectors of the national and local government like education services due to inadequate and uneven funding (National Economic Development Authority, & United Nations Children's Fund, 2018).

Consequently, this problem results in new and larger challenges where access to education is far from being achieved by the majority of Filipino learners. It creates educational disparity resulting in a high incidence of drop-out rates in the country. While the Philippines had made significant efforts in increase the participation or enrollment rate of Filipino school learners from 84.60% to 91.10%, however, it was reported that the country failed to attain its goal of a 100% completion rate for primary schooling and literacy completion rate for ages 15-24 years old (National Economic Development Authority, 2014). UNESCO (2015) believes that education serves as a reliable path to escape poverty which will eventually help in the promotion of productive and stronger communities.

Ebora and Guillo (2018) argue that one way to alleviate poverty and leave no one behind is through eradicating illiteracy and expanding basic education services and life skills for out-of-school children, youth, and adults. The birth of alternative education or Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippine education context has been seen to be a panacea to cover the need for achieving access to education. To illustrate the early years of the Philippine ALS, it can be traced back to the year 1936. According to Doronila (1997), the passage of Commonwealth Act no. 80 which created the Office of Adult Education during the American colonial period served as a hallmark and was "recorded as the first formal institution of adult education (called non-formal education) in the country" (p. 11). The establishment of community learning centers and their separation from traditional schools have been noticeable and continue to this day. During the post-war period in 1947, the governance of Philippine education was restructured and the office of Adult Education was renamed into the Adult and Community Education Division and put under the Bureau of Public Schools (Doronila, 1997). This was in line with integrating schools with the community and ensuring literacy among children, youths, and adults. As a response of the Philippine government to the continuous decline of participation and enrollment rate in schools, non-formal education (NFE) was massively introduced and campaigned in 1968 to intervene in the educational challenges during that time (Rogers, 2004). The enactment of the Education Act of 1982 served as a milestone for NFE to reconstruct the government's aspirations towards eradicating the persistent increase of drop-out rates in the country.

Arzadon and Nato (2015) point out that one of the ways to expand basic educational services was through widening access to education in the community setting, providing skills training for future employment, and inculcating rightful attitudes and social values. While the

Department of Education or DepEd sees the importance of rebuilding the ALS program, it was also reported that several bottlenecks need to be examined on the grounds to better grasp the situation of the ALS program in various parts of the country (Albert & Raymundo, 2016).

In a nutshell, the findings of this study can contribute to deepening one's understanding of the learning journey of OSYA learners in the Philippine ALS program. Significantly, this case study provided opportunities for the urban ALS learners to express and share their experiences which are beneficial for policymakers, curriculum designers, educators, and school stakeholders in exploring the parallel learning of the Philippine education system. To illustrate, this provides opportunities for policymakers and educators to rethink the way they plan, assess, implement, and evaluate alternative education in the country. This fills the gaps about alternative education in the Philippine context and adds to the existing reference in redesigning the parallel learning system program by aligning to the Philippines' K-12 curriculum and qualifications framework. As such, this ensures that the ALS learners are still at par with the educational demands of globalization.

Therefore, this paper aims to answer the research question of "Why did ALS learners decide to drop out from formal education in the Philippines?". This pertains to the literature reviews where the reasons for drop-out rates are concentrated on numerical descriptions. The need to deeply understand the reasons behind these statistical data is timely and necessary (Albert et al., 2016). Their authentic experiences greatly serve as an opportunity to deepen one's understanding about their ALS learning journey which is considered to be a second chance learning.

Theoretical Framework

This paper focuses on investigating the case of experiences of ALS students in an urban community in Manila, Philippines. The alternative school movement was developed through the desire of alternative education advocates to provide interventions for students who were academically and socially disengaged due to various circumstances. Central to this understanding, this study is guided by social reproduction theory which originates from the idea of Marxist theory. The theory argues how social inequalities are reproduced and influenced by socioeconomic and cultural systems which affect the ability of individuals to have access to education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Willis, 1977).

To illustrate, Gilleard (2020) identified the concept of economic or financial capital as a factor for educational opportunities. Students from middle-class status have an advantage over those who belong to lower income status in terms of access to education. In the same manner, students from poor families are more vulnerable to drop-out as compared to upper-class students due to lack of financial support. This suggests the idea that wealth transfers from one generation to another, and it can greatly affect the ability of individuals to have educational access (Ikpur, 2023).

Additionally, cultural capital which is defined as the ability of the family to influence their children's knowledge, skills, and cultural practices (Doob, 2019; Gilleard, 2020). This presents that families who belong to middle-income status are more capable and inclined to send their children to schools since they value investing in good education. A good example is the concept of so-called objectified cultural capital where they teach and promote the value of education through investing in books and educational materials as compared to families of lower income status who lacked in this aspect (Ikpur, 2023).

The position of social reproduction theory served as a guide in exploring the case of experiences of ALS students about the factors that led them to leave the formal education

system. Their collective voices paved the way to understand how social inequalities or challenges influenced their learning journey making them decide to take the alternative pathway of education. Finally, this framework served as a guide to deeply understand where they are coming from.

Literature Review

Economic and societal problem: The phenomenon of students' educational drop-out

The problems of students' leaving traditional teaching and learning environment have been associated with various challenges which often leads to generational inequalities (Dupere et al., 2018). Some scholars have agreed that students left schooling due to economic hardships, family matters, early marriage, and peer influences (Albert & Raymundo, 2016; Chenge et al., 2017; Department of Education, 2019; Dupere et al., 2018; Felisilda & Torreon, 2020; Omollo & Yambo, 2017).

In the study conducted by Chenge et al. (2017), they investigated the family factors that contribute to school dropouts. Using a mixed research method on 55 purposive selected students in the Rushinga district, the researchers found out that there was a high incidence of secondary school dropout rate in the area. The poverty problem significantly affects the learning condition of the students where 70% of the respondents strongly agreed that financial limitations impede them to continue their educational pursuits. This reflects that people living in poverty are in a disadvantaged situation since they are more likely to leave school than those who are living above the poverty threshold.

Aside from the financial problems that most families are experiencing in the district of Rushinga, the separation of students' parents contributed to one of the main factors that led students to stop schooling. There were 73% of the respondents accumulatively emphasized that parental divorce is a family issue that affects the students' learning process due to weak family structure and support. This, in turn, creates an emerging issue where female students, at most, become vulnerable to early marriage or unexpected family settling. This phenomenon, as discussed by Chenge et al. (2017), is a crucial factor that one must look into since parental involvement in students' academic journey plays an important role in a child's successful completion and educational achievement.

Challenges in the family as a root cause of students' dropping out

The low levels of educational attainment of parents also served as the main factor as to the reasons for students' incidence of school dropout (Chenge et al., 2017). The researchers of this study agreed that parents who have high educational background are more likely to influence and guide accordingly their children towards attaining a path for educational completion, however, those who have not able to complete education are also in danger of being trapped in social disparities (Conger et al., 2010).

Moreover, it was found out by Chenge et al. (2017) that the death of parents is another variable that contributes to redefining family structures which results in various unexpected challenges. Family changes are important determinants for school dropouts because it affects the way the child behaves in school (Ainsworth, 2005; Basumatary, 2012; Chenge et al., 2017). Thus, this only shows that those students who are living in good social and economic conditions have more likely to remain and finish school, while those who are in challenging situations are more likely not to attend school.

Albert and Raymundo (2016) also reported numerous factors that influence students being not in school. The authors reiterated that uneventful situations experienced by a student

like having been raised in a broken family contribute to student absenteeism and eventually dropping out from school. This is because that family separation creates family gaps, broken structures, and malfunctions of responsibilities. It was pointed out, for example, that a parent has to work and perform either the task of being a father or a mother in the family which results in poor to lack of parental care. Having been in a dysfunctional family results in family role imbalance. There were also instances where the child has to step up and take the role of being a financial provider. These situational gaps are crucial since, according to some scholars, those youths are highly emotionally dependent and they easily react to the situation through their feelings (Dupere et al., 2017; Felisilda & Torreon, 2020; Omollo & Yambo, 2017).

Peers as roadblock towards educational continuity

The influence of peer pressure has also been revealed as one of the factors for students' absenteeism and eventually leading to dropping out from formal education (Albert & Raymundo, 2016; Omollo & Yambo, 2017). In many cases, peer influence has been noted to be a driver for students to be out of focus on their school tasks.

To illustrate, Albert and Raymundo (2016) identified that there were situations where students spend their school hours in computer shops to play computer games, and their parents would later find out from the teachers about the absences incurred by their child. While Omollo and Yambo (2017) emphasized that students who were influenced by negative peer pressure were the products of poor socio-economic status and family problems. This portrays that those students from poor demographic and socio-economic backgrounds learned to renavigate their attention to others because of the lack of support they felt from their parents or family.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative case study research design (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). The use of a case study as a research design allowed me to conduct an in-depth analysis of the ALS program. It provided me an opportunity to immerse and learn from their authentic experiences which involved the subjective reality of the participants about their past experiences as to why they dropped-out from formal education prior to entering in an alternative education. Creswell (2014), in fact, specified that the use of a case study research design is essential for exploring and presenting the ALS learners' perspectives in their context.

Participants and Locale

There were eight participants who were purposively selected. The following were the criteria in the selection of the participants, such as they must be age 18 years old and above, must have a history of dropping out from formal education, and willing to participate and share their prior experiences. Further, this research was conducted in an urban community learning center in the first district of Tondo, Manila, Philippines. The said area of focus or locale of the study was chosen considering its geographical and strategic location where a huge number of the urban poor population is residing (Gamboa, Rivera, & Reyes, 2019), and that it offers alternative education to out-of-school youths and adults (OSYA) learners in the populous area in Tondo, Manila, Philippines.

Data Collection, Ethical Considerations and Trustworthiness

Prior to my data collection, I ensured that all necessary documents and permission to conduct study were processed and approved by the authorities from division office and school. Moreover, I requested the assistance of the ALS teacher in identifying the target participants. This process helped me to maximize my time and effort, and focus on my research aim. At the same time, the use of a semi-structured interview facilitated good flow of conversation where my participants had the opportunity to freely express their past experiences and insights about the factors that led them to dropped out from formal education. I was also reminded by the ALS teacher to be more sensitive in asking questions and not forcing them to answers since some of them have baggage of bad experiences which can trigger their emotions. Part of establishing rapport and confidence with the participants was through the process of introducing myself, my purpose, and creating an informal conversation.

Additionally, I discussed with the participants the content of the informed consent, and asked for their permission that the interview process to be audio recorded for accuracy of the data transcriptions. All the participants have agreed and have no questions; hence, they signed the informed consent indicating their willingness to participate. Follow-up questions and informal conversations were also employed to deepen their shared experiences until I can no longer get new information, hence, it saturates (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Faulkner & Trotter, 2017).

I transcribed verbatim all the gathered data using a Microsoft software and application. The transcribed results were kept confidential using codes/aliases to ensure the participants' anonymity (e.g., use of pseudonyms or aliases). The transcriptions were audit trailed for validity check through the assistance and guidance of my colleague in the field who are considered experts in the area of alternative education. Likewise, All raw data were deleted after the study had been completed in compliance with ethical and data privacy purposes.

Data Analysis

Using Saldaña's (2009) coding process, I utilized this as a form of data interpretation and analysis which serves as a critical link between the qualitative data and its meaningful explanation (Creswell, 2015; Saldaña, 2009). In this way, all gathered data were analyzed methodologically. Firstly, I employed intimacy with the collected data (Esterberg, 2002). This represents that being the primary instrument of the data collection process, I am directly immersed in deeply understanding my collected data by systematically reading and re-reading the transcripts wherein the important words or statements from the interview transcripts were highlighted and captured accordingly.

Secondly, I employed a direct coding method by providing descriptive labels of the participant-generated shared statements (Saldaña, 2009). In this way, it facilitated a comprehensive understanding of information through reviewing subjectively the data and writing comments on the information found in the participant's transcripts (Saldaña, 2009).

Table 1
Process of analysis

Themes	Initial codes	Sample Responses
Family concerns	Family conflicting issues	"I had a problem with my parents. My dad had another family. Hence, what I did was not to attend my school classes. It was my form of punishment to them. That I will not study anymore. After all, it was nothing. That's why I stopped formal schooling." (P1)

	Untimely family settling	“I married early...I stopped schooling. Then went to the province... when we went there, I got pregnant.” (P4)
Personal conflicting concerns	Environmental influence	“I was influenced by my classmates and friends not go to school anymore. Just drink and hang out.” (P1)
	Low self-esteem	“I was being bullied by my classmates since I am older than them. I experienced repeating grade levels and it affected my self-confidence and interaction with my peers” (P5)
Financial concerns	Financial issues	“I need to work at an early age for my family because our financial resources are not enough for us. Since my sister is also studying, I have to give way for her to maximize our family’s financial budget.” (P6)
		“Due to poverty and lack of financial support from my family, I have to stop schooling. Although, my elder sister and my mom support me financially, however, it was not enough to sustain my needs in school which resulted me to leave the formal schooling.” (P8)
Accessibility concerns	Institutional policies	“I experienced difficulty enrolling and transferring to secondary school since the institution is requiring me to submit first my transfer credentials which include my birth certificate. However, I have a problem with my birth certificate since I am an adopted.” (P2)

The last phase employed putting the segments of categories into central themes. This stage is critical as it reflects the categorization of codes. It provided me the opportunity to reflect on the category of codes that emerged then reanalyzed these sub-categories to come up with overarching themes through employing the “most analytic sense” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). The themes that developed pass through the rigorous process of reading, reflecting, reanalyzing, and reorganizing of codes which facilitated the researcher’s goal to give voice to the country’s parallel learning program. The subsection below shows the processes on how the data were analyzed from codes to categories to the refinement of main themes. Likewise, observation notes and/or document reviews were also presented to support the interview transcripts.

Findings and Discussion

The unique experiences entailed diverse voices as to the reasons why they have to stop attending school. While it seems that this question creates an open wound to reminisce, however, it also represents a time to go back and to reflect on the journey of ALS students in navigating their dreams in an unfamiliarized approach to education. Understanding the journey from the time they left formal school allows one to become culturally and socially sensitive individuals about learning from the past experiences of students’ life journey. This subsection presents four main themes or concerns that emerged after the transcribed data. These concerns were thematized as family, personal conflicts, financial, and access.

The theme family concerns talk about the unexpected happenings to the life of each participant that affected not only their family but also themselves. It portrays the realities of life and the issues that surround their family resulting for the participants to look for an escape route and become wanderers. It also represents the family conflicts that arose and experienced by ALS students which influenced their capability to pursue their journey in formal school. The obstacles brought about the issues within their family created a zone of concern due to its effect on their lives and school matters. To illustrate the narrations that were raised by students who have been in a broken family, it highlighted that their situation was challenged not only their socio-emotional wellbeing, but it also resulted to rebel against their parents. For instance, P1

was emotional when she reminisced about the reason for leaving the formal school. In fact, both P1's mother and stepmother were present when the researcher interviewed P1. As P1 verbalized:

"I had a problem with my parents. When I learned that they were separated, I started skipping my classes until I dropped-out." (P1)

The absence of P5's father has also triggered him to leave the four corners of the classroom. P5's shared that his father is a womanizer and always promises that their family will be fixed and back again together. However, it remained as a promise of hope and dream because P5's father continues to have an affair with his other woman.

"I left schooling because my parents separated. I thought they were okay, but it changed. My dad left us." (P5)

In the case of P3, he was a bit shy when asked about the reasons for leaving formal school. His narration about having been in a broken family impedes him to continue his study since P3's parents had parted their ways and built their own family. The incarceration of P3's father has also affected not only his way of living but also his education journey. This unfortunate event of P3, where his father was imprisoned and no one will take care of him, made him think to withdraw from a formal school. P3 worked for quite some time as a tricycle driver in their community and was later adopted by his grandparents.

These statements reflect that conflicts within the family structure such as problems of being in a broken family can affect the education pathway of students. The Department of Education (2019) emphasized that students leave formal education because of early marriage and family matters. The notion also of poor parental care put students in a zone of concern where a high risk for absenteeism might happen resulting in dropping out of school. In a discussion paper published by Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), David et al. (2018) argued that:

"Take a hypothetical of a child in Grade 2 whose parents separate, she would be affected emotionally by the absence of one parent. If the father leaves, it usually means that the mother is left without an income source and children have to work, the mother would then work and lose the time to guide children through school as a solo parent in a poor family."

Moreover, P4 and P8's academic journeys were disrupted due to teenage pregnancy. The influence brought about by untimely family settling affected not only their personal life but also their education. In this case, they have no choice but to recalibrate their role from being a student to becoming a teenage mother. This unexpected event created disparity among them which they have to focus on building their family at an early age. Hence, this hindered their aspiration to continue learning in a formal school. Both of them shared that:

"I did not finish my studies because I got pregnant when I was 18 years old. I left school and went to our province. I was thinking of going back to school that time, but there's no one to take care of my child." (4)

"I was a 3rd year high student when I accidentally got pregnant. I left our house and lived with my boyfriend that time. I have no time to continue schooling since I have to attend to the needs of my growing family back then." (P8)

Examining the theme of family concerns posits the notion that family significantly influences the way individuals act and behave in school (Chenge et al., 2017; Felisilda & Torreón, 2020). This also pertains to the idea that one of the central roles of the family is to guide and to hone their child's psychological, moral, and spiritual development (Omuruyi,

2014). However, from the findings that were shared by the ALS students, the brokenness and emptiness they felt due to stressors or areas of concerns focusing on family-related issues such as parental separation, parental loss and death, parental incarceration, and teen pregnancy (David et al., 2018; Department of Education, 2019; Dupere et al., 2015; Sahin et al., 2016) made it more difficult for them to absorb and handle the stressful situation or environment they lived into. The lack of attention, parental care, and support contributed to the participants to leave the hallways of the school and chose another path outside being a student. Family matters and marriage are seen to be the main reasons why students dropped out from formal education (Department of Education, 2019).

The issues or problems that surround the family put students at risk of absenteeism because of the stressors or conflicts that arise which becomes an area of concern. The study habits and conditions of the students in school are being affected due to the disparity or gaps that were created within their family structure (David et al., 2018). This only shows that the existence of a whole family and the presence of parental care and affection to the child are necessary motivators to drive them in dealing with life's challenges and a proactive approach for academic sustenance. But in such cases, the unexpected happenings and events that thrive on the family of the participants made them agitated to continue their academic journey. The effect of family conflicts is detrimental to one's wellbeing resulting in a negative impact on students' academic performance because they are generally deprived of love and attention which they began to search for others, thus, resulting in unwanted pregnancy and early family marriage (David et al., 2018; Dupere et al., 2018; Sahin et al., 2016). In essence, this synthesizes that those students who came from an unhealthy family environment is vulnerable in leaving formal school because of the excess baggage they carried on and the emptiness they feel hindered their education journey.

Compare to the previous theme, the theme of personal conflicting concerns reflect the participant's poor self-confidence in pursuing their educational aspirations. At the same time, it pertains to the influence brought about by their environment or surrounding that pull them back in not attending formal school. While the former area of concern is focused on the conflicts within their family, this theme illustrates how having low self-esteem and peer pressure challenge the inner self of the participants or their motivational pursuit for education. P5 narrates that having been bullied by his classmates due to personal problems affected his education. In fact, it came to a point where P5 have to repeat the school year because of poor performance in school.

"I was being bullied in school and it really affected my eagerness to continue schooling. I tried several times to go to traditional school, but it really made me demotivated." (P5)

This confirmation from P5 supported the arguments stated by Albert et al. (2020). The said authors highlighted that students tend to repeat the same grade level several times because of the emotional impact brought about, for instance, of personal conflicts that affected the students' motivation. In a news article released by Manila Bulletin, it was also stated that students who have poor performance in school have a high incidence of dropping out since they are demotivated (Gonzales, 2019). This claims that personal conflicts, such as poor to absence of self-motivation and confidence in moving forward in relation to personal problems, can result to a low level of school interest. Some students might also think of being overaged for a particular grade level due to frequent repetition in school, thus, this might lead students to leave the four walls of the classroom.

In the case of P1, the conflict she was experiencing made her vulnerable where she was influenced by her classmates and friends not to go to class and just hang out instead of studying.

The impact of peer pressure put P1 in an inopportune situation where she has to choose whether to go to school or not. But due to various problems she carried that time, P1 had an inner conflict with herself that resulted in leaving school. For P3, he was influenced by his environment on the path of using illegal drugs. Since P3's parents were separated and parental care was transferred to his grandparents and siblings, the influence of his environment greatly impacted him to try vices, such as the use of illegal drugs.

There were claims that students who focused most of their time with their peers are products of poor or lack of parental care (David et al., 2018). In fact, learning from the stories of students who ended up dropping out of school, like in the case of P1 and P3, would tell that one main reason was the negative influence of peers. To wit:

“The “barkada” is a unit, a group of peers who spend time together and do things together, peer influence can be positive, in the cases of those who eventually left school this is negative. As a group, they would leave the school premises and spend the day in computer shops playing games, or they would hang around outside without any real activity, or they would go drinking.” (David et al., 2018, p. 19)

Additionally, the impact of peer pressure would often result in inner self conflicts. As the students learn to divert their focus from school matters to pressures from peers, the chance of students learning to drink and smoke and even trying to use illegal drugs is high (David et al., 2018). Their curiosity about learning its surroundings and continuous building of friendships and groups are two of the most important components in the teenage life of students which sometimes oversee by parents. These negative vices affect students' study habits that result in frequent absenteeism and eventually demotivation to go to school.

Looking at the theme of personal conflicting concerns, it presents that low self-esteem can cause individuals to lose motivation to proceed on their academic journey. The challenge, for instance, of bullying, grade repetition, and overaged discourage the students to go back to the classroom because of a feeling of personal isolation (Albert et al., 2018; Sahin et al., 2016). This also reflects that school becomes a personal conflict environment where they feel that they do not belong and are not accepted. Most often than not, these students tend to slow down their momentum in school engagements until they come to think of ways to escape education since they feel that formal education is exclusive for selected students.

The influence also of the people around them can be a source of losing their focus and purpose as to why it is necessary to go and finish school. It synthesizes the notion of the influence of peers which has a major contribution in shaping the lives of adolescent students' behavior in making decisions (David et al., 2018; Dupere et al., 2018; Omollo & Yambo, 2017). It cannot be denied that during this stage, adolescent students are becoming closer to their peers. The idea of environmental pressure creates conflict within one's self either accepting the negative pressures from peers or not. However, most of the time, the decisions of adolescent students are based and influenced by their friends and colleagues around them. It also becomes a problem when an individual is surrounded by negative peers who are inclined to various social vices and illegal activities. They often feel helpless in deciphering whether to accept or reject the pressures from others since the majority of ALS students are also carrying other burdens that might inhibit the proper processing of decisions in life. As a result, they become opponents of their own decision-making process which is usually driven in the other way around.

The next area of concern highlights the struggles of students with regard to their financial capacity. It projects the economic hardships of students' families just to send them to school. The threat of unemployment and better opportunities hindered their parents and relatives to support their education. The high cost of education also left students to become wanderers whether to pursue their schooling versus securing their daily needs. From the field notes of the

researcher, it was observed that the community where the participants belong is depressive. Bystanders can be seen everywhere. Children were outside playing as if no health protocols were being imposed. The majority of houses are made of wood which is combustible and can easily be destroyed. To narrate the shared experiences of the participants, P4 shared that she came from a poor family where her mother worked as a household helper and her father served as a delivery boy. P4 also experienced moving from one house to another because they can no longer pay their house rental. P4 looked back on her past experiences, and she verbalized:

“Life is really unfair. We cannot go to school due to financial problems. My parents do not have regular income and jobs. My mom is a house maid and my dad is a laborer. We keep on living from place to another. We do not have a permanent address.” (P4)

In the case of P5, P6, and P7, they have to leave school in order to help in providing for the needs of their family. Thus, they assumed the role of being a financial provider by working as a blue-collar worker. For P5, since his father had left them, he realized that he must stepped up and look for a job that could support his family. Likewise, P6 has no other choice but to leave school and work at an early age to support her family’s daily needs. Their house is too small for family members of 7. They also live with their uncles and aunts which makes their house congested for an extended family. I also noticed poor ventilation and the house structure is purely made up of woods.

The statements shared by the participants were related to the document which was released by the Department of Education (2019) where 17.90% of surveyed out-of-school children and youth emphasized financial resources as a problem for not finishing education. The capability of students to pursue their educational aspirations is hampered by their social and economic conditions.

The theme of financial concerns synthesizes that even if education is being offered free for all students in the Philippine public school setting, some are still confronted with a high cost of education, such as school expenses, which made it difficult for parents to budget their daily household expenses. David et al. (2018) emphasized the idea that poor families who lived in largely poor communities are much vulnerable to social collapse. This situation is most likely to expose students to work at an early age because they have to help in supporting to feed their families. There are also instances that a child has to step up because their parent or their financial provider left them or died unexpectedly (Mughal et al., 2019). From these lenses, it is seen as a detrimental factor for a child to focus his or her attention on learning because he or she carries a burden of reality where financial problems continue to hamper their daily lives. This uneventful situation puts the child at an unrest and disadvantage level to continue life in school.

More so, the impact of the shared participants’ experiences provides us a glimpse of financial incapacity as a barrier for students like them to continue education. Even if the Philippines has various education initiatives but if economic opportunities are not in place, hence, there would always be gaps within the system. Unfortunately, the children or students are also affected by the impact of lack of economic opportunities in the country where students have to leave school resulting in developmental delays in moving up to the academic ladder. David et al. (2018) argued that those family who belongs to below poverty line have a high possibility of dropping out from formal school because they have to look for ways to feed their stomach than sustaining food for their brain. Further, this echoes students’ changing roles in order to help to support their family from being a student to becoming a financial provider role. This phenomenon projects that the issue of financial resources remained as a problem over the years where poor students impede access to education (Albert et al., 2018).

The last theme presents compliance of students in passing and/or completing school admission requirements, such as birth certificate, as an accessibility concern that prohibit students from an opportunity to be enrolled in school. It also pertains as a barrier for students to be admitted since they lack necessary documents. These documents are sometimes seen as too costly for some students to get and process legal documents. In the case of P2, who was considered an orphan, her adopted family doesn't have any document to prove regarding her birth. When P2 was moving to junior high school, she could no longer be granted by the school to be admitted and was asked for necessary documents such as P2's birth certificate so she can proceed in Grade 7. However, since they could not show any documents, P2 and her adopted family decided not to enroll for the meantime in school. P2 verbalized:

"I cannot proceed enrolling to high school because the school requires to submit my original birth certificate. After graduating elementary, I stopped schooling since I do not have the necessary admission requirements that the school asks us. My aunt do not have any knowledge about it since I was just left by my mom to them." (P2)

Looking at this aspect of students' reason for dropping out, it shows that inclusive education is really for everyone. The notion of administrative requirements impedes students to have access to education because of the absence of necessary documents for school admission like a certificate of live birth. Although there is no law that mandates schools in the Philippines that requires students to pass certificate of live birth as a child's basis for identification and admission to school (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015), however, the DepEd in 2018 released DepEd order no. 3, s. 2018 or the basic education enrollment policy where it emphasized that students who have no existing profile in the Learner Information System or LIS must accomplish the basic education enrollment form and submit a certificate of live birth from the PSA as part of enrollment requirements. In fact, the need to submit a birth certificate is the first thing that school teachers are asking for students upon enrollment (Villasis & Abante, 2020). In effect, this kind of administrative barrier has been seen as a problem why some students leave formal education.

As such, this presents that passing of birth certificate document as a requirement in school admission is identified as a classical barrier because not all students have the capacity to provide birth certificate especially those who are in a disadvantaged situation like the orphans whose parents passed away. In summary, while it seems that it is good to set standards in school admissions like submissions of documentary requirements to ensure proper identification of the students, however, it is also important to provide the students an alternative pathway to process the admission requirements if the government aims for inclusive education for all.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The narratives expressed by the ALS learners signify that more than the numerical information that is being published, there are underlying unique experiences that are worth being listened to and shared by giving them voices. Every ALS student's learning journey has its own stories and reasons to tell as to why they left formal education. The influences brought about by various uneventful circumstances have allowed students to leave formal education, thus, they became and tagged as OSYA in their community. It is interesting to note that these OSYA learners were also victims of life hardships. They dropped out not because they wanted to, but because they had to. The importance of listening to the walks of every student's experience, which are beyond numerical or statistical findings, served as a gateway to deeply reflect and explore the root cause of students leaving in the four corners of the classroom.

From the findings that emerged in this study, it would be suggested that policymakers and educators could proactively consider the factors that caused students to leave the formal education System. For instance, they could provide and intensify educational programs, such as home visitations for students who have incurred multiple absences to know their status. Additionally, despite the basic education in the Philippines being offered free for all, it would be good to provide financial subsidies to cover other fees like strengthening the policies, such as no fee collection and provisions of nutritional programs, so it would address other educational expenses.

In a nutshell, this reflects that despite the difficulties and challenges of leaving the formal education to returning to school under the ALS program, it shows that the Philippine ALS responds and services as a bridge of hope in providing second-chance learning. While it might take a lot of courage to move forward, there is also a need to have strong motivation and inspiration in taking the less path traveled since alternative education is not common and unfamiliar to the general population.

Limitations of the Study

Considering the nature of this thesis where it is bounded by an area of focus, , thus, the researcher followed specified characteristics in deeply understanding the experiences of the ALS students about their learning journey in alternative education. This, in turn, limits the scope of the researcher in examining various lenses of out-of-school youth and adults regarding their reflections and viewpoints on the Philippines' parallel learning program. The findings are also confined to ALS students' experiences, insights, and reflections which might be interpreted by other researchers or scholars in different viewpoints or perspectives.

Additionally, it is not hidden from the knowledge of others that the purpose of this thesis is not to make any generalizations in answering the research questions, hence, it only has eight participants who agreed to participate. In fact, Creswell (2014) pointed out that these numbers are already good for a qualitative case study since the objective is not to generalize the results but to ensure that the data being collected are saturated. Aside from that, the researcher also set criteria to be followed to ensure the purposive selection of the participants.

Moreover, there are scarcity of literature about the Philippine ALS which made it difficult for the researcher to gather, compare, and analyze the challenges, opportunities, and practices of alternative education in the country. Even alternative education studies in a global context seem to be limited considering that much of the resources are being devoted to the traditional or formal education system. This difficulty of searching for various academic peer-reviewed journal articles and online published theses has been the biggest challenge for the researcher.

Despite these limitations that the researcher faced before, during, and after the conduct of this thesis, it was still a good attempt journeying to the unfamiliar face of the Philippine education system. After all, these limitations have contributed to ensuring that the voiceless face of the Philippine education system is heard and listened through reflecting their voices in this study.

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Turkish Primary School EFL Teachers' Use of Supplementary Materials: A Case Study on Problems and Solutions*

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Abstract: The teachers who teach English as a foreign language in Turkish state primary schools often create or use supplementary materials to promote concrete learning. However, the use of supplementary materials leads to several problems in some cases. The main purpose of this study is to define these problems and to develop strategies for overcoming them. This study employed a case study research design. Two primary school EFL teachers participated in the study. A purposive sampling technique was applied to determine the participant teachers. The data of the study were gathered through classroom observations, interviews, and self-evaluation reports. Analysis of the data was conducted through the methods of coding and theming. The findings of the study have revealed that while using supplementary materials teachers encountered some problems such as students' being distracted, students' not understanding the instructions for using the supplementary materials, technological issues, insufficient class time, slowness of young learners, damage to the supplementary materials, and lack of materials for students. The study also provides some strategies employed by teachers to overcome these problems (e.g., modelling, making explanations, monitoring students, etc.).

Keywords: Turkish EFL teachers, Supplementary material use, Supplementary material problems, Supplementary material solutions.

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Introduction

Materials are any kind of equipment applied by students or teachers to make language learning more accessible and improve foreign language learning. Any types of instruments used to enrich the learners' language experiences are called as materials (Sarıçoban & Tavail, 2012). According to Kessler (1992), anything that supplements the present materials and supplies chances for learners are called as supplementary materials. In other words, supplementary materials are any extra materials that can be used besides coursebooks (Spratt et al., 2012). Flashcards, pictures, photographs, songs, videos, and worksheets may be considered as some remarkable examples of supplementary materials which are preferred by students and teachers for being enjoyable (Tomlinson, 2013, pp. 147).

The most important components of foreign language learning are teachers, students and materials (Ekşi, 2015). Thus, using supplementary materials in English classes may be something of a necessity since teachers may need additional materials to help learners explore, comprehend, and encounter a foreign language (Tomlinson, 2013, p.108-109). However, these materials should not be designed at random; rather, they should be designed in accordance with certain principles. While designing these materials teachers should consider the needs and interests of the students. Foremost, the materials should be authentic by providing learners with an opportunity to have interaction in the target language. As the use of materials boosts students' motivation and performance in English language classes (Dodd et al., 2015), teachers often take advantage of various kinds of materials in the classroom other than course books to strengthen their students' learning. Moreover, teachers are responsible for encouraging their students' interests and curiosity, directing them to experience rich input, and providing feedback (Tomlinson, 2020). The correct selection and use of supplementary materials boost students' involvement and performance in the classroom (Peña & Sarmiento, 2012).

In the EFL context, numerous studies have dealt with the need and use of supplementary materials in high school (e.g., Cherrez, Montalvan, Brito & Ochoa, 2018; Işık, 2018; Nguyen, 2022), middle school (e.g., Dodd et al., 2015; Karki, 2018; Nurliana, 2019; Surtikanti, 2014), and primary school levels (e.g., Cherrez, Montalvan, Brito & Ochoa, 2018; Le & Polikoff, 2021; Olpińska-Szkiełko, 2015; Quigley, 2021). Numerous studies which analysed the application of supplementary materials in high school context highlighted that the use of supplementary materials should be in accordance with a thorough needs analysis (Salehi & Zamanian, 2012), teachers should ask for feedback from both their students and colleagues on used materials to acknowledge their appropriateness to the context and learner needs (Nyugen, 2022), and after being specified and piloted, these materials can be employed in EFL classrooms (Işık, 2018). Previous research conducted in the secondary school level showed that the use of complementary materials has an important role in enhancing student motivation (Dodd et al., 2015), improving their basic skills such as reading and writing (Kaki, 2018), and meeting individual learning needs and styles (Nurliana, 2013). Studies conducted in the primary school level mostly focused on supplementary material development and use by language teachers and they aligned with the idea that teachers' opinions, beliefs, and practices affect which concrete materials are used in the classrooms (Le & Polikoff, 2021; Olpińska-Szkiełko, 2015; Quigley, 2021).

The literature displays that the correct selection and use of supplementary materials boost students' involvement and performance in language classrooms (Peña & Sarmiento, 2012; Tomlinson, 2013). However, during the phases of designing and implementing these additional materials, teachers may face several challenges. These difficulties may be related to teachers themselves such as lack of ability and knowledge in creating materials, inadequate planning, inappropriate implementation, and being incapable of organizing technological learning materials (Wahyuningsih et al., 2021). Some other concerns may also arise in the classroom,

including problems related to the classroom environment, course books, students' unwillingness or anxiety, lack of equipment, ineffective use of time, culture, lack of pair or group work, unsuitableness of activities, and other factors (Adil, 2022).

In Turkish context, a few studies have examined the challenges that EFL teachers face while using supplementary materials (e.g., Çulha, 2018; Işık, 2018). For instance, Çulha (2018) examined the English language teaching curriculum-based material use of primary and secondary schools (from grade 2 to 8) published by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MONE) (2018). In this descriptive qualitative study, the researcher applied document analysis and found that the programme and course books provide different useful contexts to learners, such as advertisements, fairy tales, menus, poems, songs, stories, websites, various tasks, and activities. However, most of the content is intertwined with the technology and teachers' digital literacy level and proficiency are crucial for efficient integration and use of these materials in language classes. Similarly, Işık (2018) investigated the efficiency of curriculum materials applied in Turkish EFL high schools. One hundred-forty-four English teachers and 811 EFL students at private high schools, state high schools, and state Anatolian high schools took part in the study. A questionnaire with thirty-seven items and an interview protocol were used as to collect data with the aim of eliciting the participants' opinions about the EFL materials. The results presented that the participants of state high schools were glad about the EFL curriculum materials used. On the other hand, teachers and students at private high schools and state Anatolian high schools had serious problems with the materials. They listed the problems they experienced with the materials as being boring, impractical, not original, and not responding to the student's interests and needs.

As the literature shows, it is important for teachers to actively develop and use EFL supplementary teaching materials, since it is beneficial to promote interaction, motivate students, and increase students' achievement (Jimenez, 2020). Previous research suggests that more research is needed concerning the application and development of English language teaching (ELT) supplementary education tools and researchers should share the results of such studies with English teachers (Tomlinson, 2013). Especially choosing and employing suitable learning materials is crucial for elementary school teachers as their students are in a sensitive and critical learning period and students in this period need concrete objects and materials to support their learning (Olpińska-Szkielko, 2015). EFL teachers' skills of effective materials use can be enhanced by examining current supplementary material design and use in real contexts (Milal et al., 2020). Thus, it is assumed that results and implications of might increase awareness of EFL teachers about using supplementary materials and contribute to their professional development. Also, both in Turkish context and other contexts, there is a need for further research regarding use of supplementary material use and challenges faced by EFL teachers. In this regard, the main objective of this study is to define main challenges that Turkish primary level EFL teachers and students face while using EFL supplementary materials in the classroom and to suggest practical solutions to these problems. The following questions guided the study:

- 1) What difficulties do EFL teachers face while using supplementary materials in English lessons in Turkish primary schools?
- 2) What are the main solutions preferred by EFL primary school teachers to overcome the challenges they faced?

Methodology

Study Design

A case study design was employed in this research. Case study is a term that includes several research methods in which an instance is focused on. Researchers in case studies explore issues within a bounded system (case) or start with an issue or problem and bound the case through the research process. In concordance with this, case study methodology is eclectic although the data collection tools mainly are document collection, note-taking, interview, and observation. In line with purpose of the study, the cases in this study were two English language teachers from two state primary schools. The researcher of current study observed the teachers' lessons and how they used numerous types of supplementary materials in lessons through a six-week period. The schedule of this case study is briefly outlined in Figure 1.

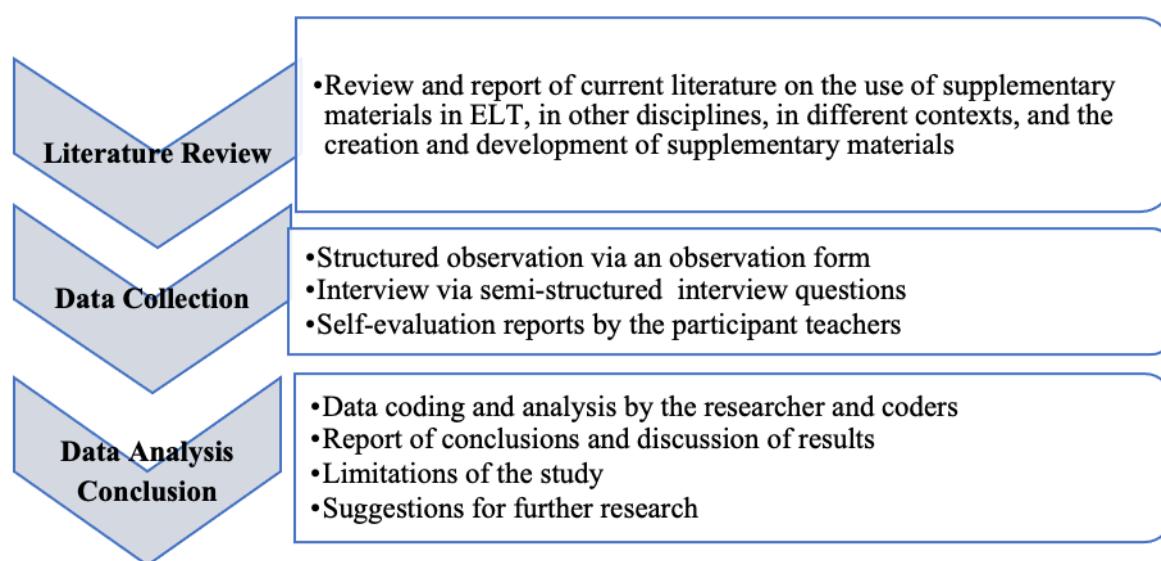


Figure 1 Schedule of the Study

Participants

Teacher Participants

The participants and cases of this study were 2 female English teachers working at two different primary schools. These teachers were determined in terms of purposive sampling method and their voluntariness to participate in the study. Teacher A is thirty-two years old and an English language teacher for more than eight years. Teacher A also graduated from English Language Teaching Programme of a Turkish state university. The teacher received training on materials design and development in ELT during BA programme, as well. Teacher B is thirty-nine years old. The teacher graduated from the ELT program of a Turkish state university, and has sixteen years of experience in teaching English in various schools of the Ministry of National Education in Turkey. Unfortunately, Teacher B claimed to have no training on materials design and development during her BA program. Both of the teacher participants took a course for teaching English to young learners during their bachelor's programs in ELT.

Student Participants

The student participants were in the 2nd and 3rd grades. The second-grade students were at the first year of learning English, and the third-grade students were at the second year of

learning English. The total number of 2nd grade students was 17 (female=7 and male=10), and the total number of the 3rd grade students was 33 (female=20 and male=13). It is also noteworthy that Teacher A's students lived in the same neighbourhood with the school, while most of Teacher B's students came to the school by bus from the surrounding villages.

Procedures

In the first step of the study, the schools and teacher participants were identified. The study was applied in two nearest primary schools in the same district. Necessary permissions were obtained from the Institute of Social Sciences of Ordu University, the provincial directorate of national education, and the English teacher participants. Secondly, the teacher participants were informed about the research and data collection (classroom observation, interviews, and self-evaluation reports). The dates that were convenient for the researcher and the teacher participants were determined for classroom observation. When all the data collection tools were ready, one of the researchers started to attend the English lessons and observe the application of ELT supplementary materials in the classroom for six weeks.

Supplementary Materials Used in the Study

All the supplementary materials applied by the participating teachers during the lessons are shown in Table 1. Each week includes two English lessons.

Table 1
The Supplementary Materials Used by the Teachers and Students in the Classroom

Weeks	Teacher A		Teacher B	
	Theme	Supplementary materials	Theme	Supplementary materials
Week 1	Ability and Inability Feelings	Interactive presentation, IWB, video, posters, pictures	Numbers	IWB, a paper birthday cake, party hats, number cards, an online game
Week 2	Feelings	Interactive presentation, IWB, pictures, cards, word box	Classroom objects	Song, IWB, Real objects, Hand-out
Week 3	Feelings and Actions	Interactive presentation, IWB, flashcards, card, posters	Numbers	Interactive presentation, IWB
Week 4	Toys and Games	Interactive presentation, IWB, word box, toys (ball, car, cartoon characters, doll, race car, teddy bear) cards	Colours	Interactive presentation, IWB, colourful cards, box, balloons, handmade windmill, songs
Week 5	Toys and Games	Cards, colourful cards, a poster of colours, toys and toy boxes	Colours	Interactive presentation, IWB, worksheet
Week 6	Toys and Games	Colourful cards, Interactive presentation, IWB, a poster of numbers, 3 paper cups	Colours	Interactive presentation, IWB

Data Collection Tools

The researchers in this case study collected the data through direct observation, interviews, and self-evaluation reports. Direct observations provide a good insight in education (Best & Kahn, 2006). As the teachers spent a great deal of time observing the students and the learning atmosphere (Tomlinson, 2013), interviews and self-evaluation reports were chosen for

this study. The classroom observation form and the self-evaluation reports were created as Word documents each week. The interview questions were shared with the teacher participants via an online application, and the self-evaluation reports were given to the teachers each week.

Classroom Observations

Quigley (2021) suggests that classroom observation is an effective way to see how teachers and students include materials in the classroom. Furthermore, direct observation has been emphasized as providing more realistic results (Büyüköztürk, 2020) and may be helpful in handling the situation (Best & Khan, 2006). Therefore, the observation technique was applied in this study. The observations were made by one of the researchers using a simply structured classroom observation form (adapted from an available form in the literature with the help of an expert researcher in assessment and evaluation). The form included eight items and these items questioned the types of supplementary materials used in the classroom; use of instruction; teachers' checking the understanding of the students; concreteness of the materials; time; feedback; difficulties and handling with the difficulties. Each item on the classroom observation form served to examine one consideration during the use of supplementary materials in the classroom. The classroom observation lasted six weeks, and each week included 2 English lessons. To sum, it included 12 lessons.

Interviews

The interviews with the teacher participants were conducted using open-ended questions adapted by the researchers from Nureldeen (2020) in line with the purpose and the research questions of this study. The interview included seven questions and each question had an aim to analyse one point for the application of the EFL supplementary materials during the lessons. The questions included in the interviews were as follows:

- 1- What types of supplementary materials did you use in your lesson? Why did you choose them?
- 2- How did your students engage with the materials you created for them?
- 3- Did you give recognition to your learners' voices, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences in the classroom? How did you apply this recognition when designing your supplementary materials?
- 4- Do you think the supplementary materials you used typically addressed the specific needs of your learners? How did they address them?
- 5- Do you think the materials had cultural content that was relevant to your students? How was it relevant?
- 6- Do you think any items in your supplementary materials were vital for your students? Why were they vital?
- 7- Did you have any difficulties using your supplementary materials in your lesson? What were these difficulties?

The teacher participants answered the questions and talked about their experiences after each lesson in their mother tongue, recorded their answers, and sent the voice recordings via a mobile application to the researcher. This allowed the teachers to answer the questions at any place they preferred. Moreover, the voice recordings could be replayed by the researcher multiple times during the data analysis phase. Using a mobile application to send the recordings was also easier and faster. Unfortunately, the researcher could not observe the teachers' non-linguistic features such as body language and gestures during the interviews.

Self-evaluation Reports

The researchers created a self-evaluation report template with the help of two experts in the field. That evaluation report had some guiding questions in concordance with the main purposes of the study. Through six weeks, the researcher handed one copy of this template to the participant teachers after each observed lesson, the researchers wrote the reports in their L1 and delivered them to the researcher the following week.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the classroom observation, interviews, and self-evaluation reports were read, examined, coded, and analysed by the researchers according to a coding scheme by Creswell (2017). For description of the codes JAMOVI program was used. Firstly, the notes on the observation forms taken by the researcher, self-evaluation reports and recorded interviews were transcribed and coded. It was made through categorization of the recurring themes in the participants' answers. After coding, suitable themes were identified and given in frequencies transferring on Jamovi. Following that, two other coders revised the themes and categories and gave feedback. The researchers edited the themes and categories until there is a consensus among all the coders. Finally, the themes with frequencies or numbers were presented in tables or charts in cohesion with the items of each collection tool. The codes generated were similar and consistent for all the three types of data collection, such as the type of supplementary materials, the reason why the supplementary materials selected, the problems faced, and what the overcoming strategies are.

Research Ethics

The requirements of research ethics were fulfilled by the researchers throughout the study. The necessary official permissions were taken from the Ethics Committee of Institute of Social Sciences in Ordu University, and Provincial Directorate of National Education. The headmasters of schools and teacher participants were interviewed before the study. After getting permissions, the participant teachers were provided with necessary information and responsibilities of the study. The teacher participants were voluntary to take part in this study, so they signed a form of consent approval stating they were aware of their rights and the potential risks of the research and may leave whenever they would like to. For confidentiality, the study did not include the participants' names or any private information.

Findings

Findings Related to the Classroom Observations

Concreteness and Content of the Supplementary Materials

The types of used supplementary materials and how often they were used are used in the lessons in Figure 2.

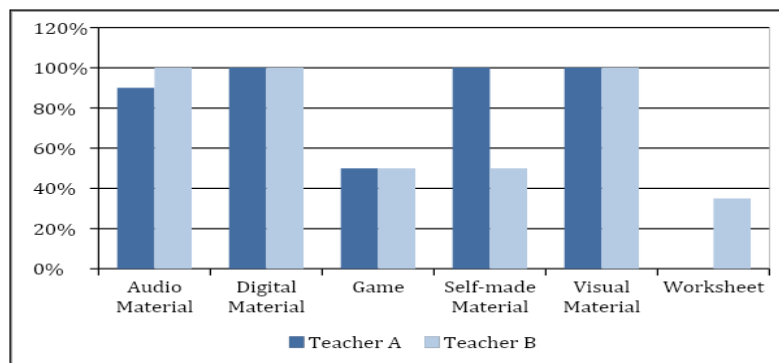


Figure 2 Frequencies of the use of supplementary materials in the classroom

Figure 2 demonstrates that the teachers used various supplementary materials in teaching. The supplementary materials introduced to the students by Teacher A were generally colourful and vivid. There were many colours, thanks to this the students were able to pronounce the colours they had learnt. Also, the flashcards and visual aids applied were of high quality. The pictures had their texts on their backs, so the teacher generally demonstrated the pictures with their written forms to the class. Furthermore, the cardboards created by the teacher were large enough and the text was readable. The materials were attractive for the young learners. The real objects (e.g., balls, cars, dolls, and toys) were big enough to be seen clearly in the classroom. The three cups activity included the students' acting out. The interactive presentation of the coursebook was touch-operated and colourful. It also included the music and videos. However, only the teacher used interactive presentation.

Teacher B used colourful materials (balloons, boxes, and toys) all the time. The interactive presentation of the coursebook included many colourful elements. These elements were mostly appropriate for visual learners. In one of the lessons, the student participants took the paper birthday cake, walked around the classroom, and stated how old they were. The students listened to the song, danced together, and did some activities on the interactive presentation using the Web 2.0 tool. They cut, coloured, and stuck the pictures. These types of tasks were mainly suitable for bodily-kinaesthetic learners. Moreover, the teacher taped some of the supplementary materials on the white board so that they could be clearly seen by all of the students. The teacher always wandered around the classroom to demonstrate the supplementary materials to everyone in the classroom. Finally, the students completed some activities including visuals and songs from the interactive presentation on the IWB.

The students' Use of Supplementary Materials

The students' interaction with each other during the use of supplementary materials is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

The Ways of Students' Interaction

Type of Work	Teacher A's students	Teacher B's students
Individual work	100%	83.3%
Pair work	.0	16.6%
Group work	.0	.0

Table 2 indicates that Teacher A's students used the supplementary materials individually all the time. As a notable instance, the students created, painted, and labelled their toy boxes, and brought their toys and toy boxes to the classroom. Then, the students introduced

their toys. Fortunately, most students introduced their toy boxes and toys in the lesson. The teacher also presented the visuals, flashcards, and toys to all the students. The students made some inquiries and named the colours and toys individually. When the teacher raised a few questions, several volunteer students raised their fingers to answer, and the teacher recognised a volunteer student to answer. Teacher B's students also used the supplementary materials independently and individually. All the students put some birthday hats on their heads, and the teacher asked to each of them how old they were. Later, all the students listened to a song about colours, danced together, and told the class their favourite colours. They also worked in pairs.

Challenges and Overcoming Strategies

Challenges faced by teachers and students during the implementation of supplementary materials and the ways they used to cope with these difficulties are given in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Challenges and Overcoming Strategies by the Teachers during the Use of Supplementary Materials

Challenges	Overcoming Strategies
Misperception of instructions	Use of cue words, Translation, Related visuals
Intervention of L1	Demanding English version of the target language
Noise in the classroom	Walking around the classroom and asking students to be quiet
Challenging tasks	Being model for completing the task and making explanations
Problems related to the supplementary materials	Explaining the problems to the students
Students' incorrect answers	Elicitation of the correct answers

Both the teachers and students faced some difficulties during the lessons (e.g., misperception of instruction, intervention of L1, noise in the classroom, challenging tasks, errors with supplementary materials, and students' wrong answers) and numerous overcoming strategies to handle with the challenges (e.g., giving instruction one by one, demonstrating, eliciting, changing or modifying the materials).

Misperception of instruction

When the students did not clearly understand what to do, Teacher A usually gave explanation in Turkish or elicited the instruction from other students in the classroom. Occasionally, the teacher said the instruction again louder, or gave the instructions step by step pointing the required materials. To exemplify, the teacher cut, coloured, and stuck the visuals of school materials on her own first, asked the students to watch it, do their own work while preparing a mini book. Also, the teacher reminded some vocabularies that the students did not remember during the activities. Also, the teacher advised the students not to choose the same friends in pair or group works.

Intervention of L1

When any student gave an answer in their mother tongue, the teacher wanted the student to say it in English. In this way, the teacher tried to make students establish communication in the target language.

Noise in the classroom

When students talked about loudly or made noise during the activities, the teacher often walked around the students and asked them to be quiet.

Challenging tasks

The students were observed to have difficulty in doing True-False activity, because it was the first time they had encountered this kind of activity. Therefore, the teacher attempted to predigest the activity through showing, making explanations and giving motivational feedback.

Errors related to supplementary materials

The interactive presentation sometimes included errors, because of this the teacher explained that "There are some problems with the presentation. That is not a problem. It is OK."

Students' incorrect answers

The teacher tried to elicit the correct answers first from the student, and then from the other students in the classroom. In addition to this, the presentation on IWBs alerted the students with a sound automatically as soon as there were incorrect answers, and congratulated them right after they gave the correct answers.

Findings Related to the Interviews

The teacher participants noted that there was not much difficulty in using the supplementary materials. Teacher A stated:

As the supplementary materials used were enjoyable and interesting, there were few challenges. The students participated in the activities and had a good time, for the materials I applied were mostly suitable for their ages, interests, and levels.

Likewise, Teacher B said "There was no difficultness in use of our supplementary materials, rather using these materials made our lessons more straightforward."

Lastly, the teachers did cite some difficulties they faced while using supplementary materials and they indicated that they applied some strategies to overcome these challenges. These difficulties are seen in Table 4.

Table 4
Some Difficulties in the Use of Supplementary Materials

Problems	Teacher A	Teacher B
Internet problems	25%	12.5%
Problems related to the IWB	12.5%	25%
Insufficient time	.0	12.5%
Damage to supplementary materials	.0	12.5%

According to Table 4, the problems are mainly related to use of IWB, technology, and the internet. One such challenge was problems with technology. In this regard, Teacher A put forward:

There might be some technical problems. As an example, I could not have used the IWB or interactive presentation if the electricity went off. Therefore, the course books, visuals, worksheets, and the assignments did by the students could be included in the lessons. I would talk with the students then. Several speaking activities or role-plays would also be included in the lesson, as well. We may sometimes face this problem but fortunately there were no power cuts during the six weeks.

Teacher B also reported:

There occasionally may be technological problems with the IWB, such as working slowly, not working properly, or some internet connection problems. I let the students

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play games, organize a competition among the students, or give handouts as a solution. We may also go on with the course book.

Another problem mentioned by the teachers was the inadequacy of teaching hours. The student participants have two teaching hours of English per week, and this is seen as a problem by the participant EFL teachers. Teacher A elaborated:

The time was not enough to include all of the students to the activities, as they had only 2 English language lessons a week. Therefore, I usually preferred the use of colourful, enjoyable, and interesting supplementary materials. My students took parts in the lessons and did the activities more readily when some interesting supplementary materials were used.

Teacher B also said that some students worked at a slow pace while doing some activities, and as a result, the activities were left incomplete in the classroom. As she revealed:

The lack of time was a problem, because the students were unable to carry out the work, such as colouring and cutting. For this reason, I asked the students to complete the work at home and to send a photo of the completed work to me through their mobile phones.

Damage to the supplementary materials used in the classroom was also one of the challenges. In this regard, Teacher B expressed:

There were tiny problems, such as the blowout of the balloons, but these problems did not matter very much. These types of problems may be handled easily, in my view. An example of this is that the supplementary materials may be replaced with other similar materials in the classroom.

To summarize the findings of this question, there were some challenges for the teacher participants during the use of supplementary materials in the classroom. These challenges were put in order; internet problems and problems related to IWB (technological problems), damage given to the supplementary materials; and insufficient time.

Findings Related to the Self-Evaluation Reports

The self-evaluation Report of Teacher A

Teacher A said that the IWB and interactive presentations were the most advantageous supplementary materials in the classroom and stated:

The interactive presentations of the course book are the most effective supplementary materials in the classroom, for they contribute to the students' auditory and visual skills.

In addition, the teacher claimed that the use of colours in the classes was effective and reported:

I got the students' attention showing them some colourful cards. I asked them to tell the colours of the cards. As these colourful cards have a positive effect on the lessons, I am pleased with these materials and will go on using the colourful cards in the classroom. The posters of the colours and numbers were also effective materials. I hung these posters on the white board so that all the students were able to see the colours and numbers clearly.

The activities and games involving the supplementary materials were also viewed as entertaining to the students, and the teacher added:

In the three-paper cup game, I wrote "colours", "numbers", and "toys" on the cups and put some related words on the desk. The students picked a piece of paper and categorized the words. It is an interesting activity, specifically for young learners.

Different versions of this activity may be applied for some other words related to different subjects.

The teacher also talked about the assignments that the students did by using supplementary materials and expressed that:

I asked the students to do some assignments and worksheets related to the theme of the lesson, such as preparing a feelings poster, a superhero poster, and a toy box. These types of homework are necessary for the students' development, because they create a product and practice the grammar points and words they have learnt in this way.

The teacher also put emphasis on the use of real objects and reported:

I brought a lot of toys into the classroom for the unit "Toys and Games." The students got very excited when I showed them the toys.

Generally, the teacher was positive about the supplementary materials created, designed, and used in the classroom and did not report any challenges in regard to the use of supplementary materials.

The Self-evaluation Report of Teacher B

As with Teacher A, Teacher B put forward that the interactive presentations and IWB was a key element in the classes. The teacher attached importance to all of the students' active participation in the lessons and gave permission to the students to use the IWB for the activities. The teacher reasoned that:

The IWB is essential for English lessons, as it allows the students to learn English in an easier and more permanent way, supplementing the course book with audio and visuals. The IWB also encourages the students to compete with each other while doing the activities. It makes both the teachers' and the students' work smoother, saves time in the lessons, and gives an opportunity to see the answers and results of the activities, exercises, and games for all the students in the classroom. The students enjoy doing activities on the IWB much. Listening to the teacher constantly may be boring. Therefore, I would rather do some different activities periodically.

The teacher also proposed that the supplementary materials used in the class overall suit for the students:

I think English language lessons are more important than other lessons, because they so frequently require the use of supplementary materials. Diverse types of materials are also fundamental to make the learning environment richer and to allow the students to be eager to participate in the English lesson. For me, the supplementary materials used were mostly favourable for the students' ages, interests, levels, needs, and the aims of the lessons. These materials allowed the students to participate in the lesson actively and to experience permanent learning. Overall, I am pleased with the supplementary materials such as crafts, interactive presentations, real objects, songs, and worksheets used in the classroom.

The teacher sometimes needed more time in the classroom, as the young learners cut and coloured the pictures slowly and were not able to complete the tasks on time. Therefore, the teacher asked the students to complete the work at home and send a photo of it to the teacher through the online application. This technique may be used as a solution for lack of time. In final, the teacher impressed that the students had distance education during the pandemic Covid-19, therefore students have difficulties in adapting to the classroom and school.

On the other hand, the teacher said that there were not many challenges in using the supplementary materials and said:

There might be some problems related to the internet while using the interactive presentation of the course book. To use the interactive presentations requires a membership, therefore I became a member of a website to download and use these presentations in the classroom. For I believe that these presentations are useful for the learners as well as appealing to their eyes. But I think that the songs included in these presentations are not appropriate for the students. So, I suggest that these songs need to be changed.

In conclusion, this teacher was also glad with the supplementary materials used in the classroom and recommended their use in future lessons. The teacher also remarked that curiosity and interest kept the students' perceptions active and allowed them to listen carefully and remain engaged with the lessons. The supplementary materials were also seen to have multiple functions by the teacher, so she claimed that the same materials may be used again in future, yet some changes (e.g., writing the numbers on the party hats) may be applied.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research first sought answer to the question of what difficulties primary school EFL teachers encounter when using supplementary materials in English lessons. The findings obtained from the classroom observations revealed some challenges such as misperception of instruction, intervention of L1, noise in the classroom, challenging tasks, errors with supplementary materials, and students' wrong answers. In addition, the findings obtained from the interviews suggested that teachers experienced four different difficulties: problems with the internet, problems with the smart board, damage caused by students to additional materials and lack of time. However, in self-evaluation reports, teachers did not mention any challenges regarding the design and use of supplementary materials. Previous research in the literature support some of the challenges put forward in this study (Mehdipour & Zerehkafi, 2013; Rejeki, Kristina, & Wijayanto, 2022; Sultana & Ashrafuzzaman, 2016; Tekir & Akar, 2020). For example, in a study conducted by Mehdipour and Zerehkafi (2013), the researchers examined the challenges and barriers of using mobile phones as supplementary materials in secondary school English lessons and they determined that both teachers and students had some technical problems such as connectivity and battery life. The same problem was also determined in a similar study by Rejeki, Kristina, and Wijayanto (2022). Likewise, in a study (Sultana & Ashrafuzzaman, 2016) investigating primary school teachers' efficiency in using supplementary materials in English lessons, teachers claimed to have some problems such as limited time to design and implement materials, slow learners' consuming more time to complete tasks, and challenges in using IWBs. In another study carried out by Tekir and Akar (2020), the researchers categorised the difficulties encountered by EFL teachers under five main themes; teacher related, student related, material related, school related and ministry related factors. Among the difficulties in the relevant categories, limited time, difficulty in classroom management (noise), challenging tasks and technical problems overlap with some of the challenging factors identified in this study.

Secondly, this study attempted to answer the question of what are the basic solutions preferred by EFL primary school teachers to overcome the challenges they faced. The data gathered from classroom observations suggested six challenges encountered by the teachers: misperception of instruction, intervention of L1, noise in the classroom, challenging tasks, errors with supplementary materials, and students' wrong answers. In regard to the first problem teachers applied the strategies of modelling, simplifying (Tomlinson, 2013), repeating the instruction with different words, and explaining. When students talked in their native language, teachers encouraged them to use target language as much as possible. This strategy was determined to be used by teachers in a previous study conducted by Kabilan and Izzaham

(2008) on teaching practices of English teachers in Malaysia. Considering these two problems, primary school EFL students' limited proficiency in the vocabulary and grammar of the target language may have caused them to have difficulty in comprehending the meaning and expressing themselves in the target language (Chung, 2016; Songbatumis, 2017). When there was noise in the classrooms, participant teachers walked around, monitored, and warned the students to be quiet. As stated by Willis (1996), less controlled activities, especially in larger classes, give students more freedom, causing them to be distracted more easily. In addition, some disciplinary problems, such as noise, may arise when teachers allocate too much time for the completion of a task. In his study on English teachers' task-based practices, Carless (2004) found that participating teachers had problems with managing noise and monitoring students during the activities, and they could not handle with these challenges efficiently. For challenging tasks, teachers tried to help learners understand and accomplish tasks by demonstrating the tasks themselves first, making explanations in the target language and giving them motivational feedback. Errors with the supplementary materials were handled by teachers themselves (they made necessary adjustments on them). When it comes to the students' errors, teachers applied the strategies of self-correction, peer-correction and they also facilitated from IWBs to automatically react with sound to students' wrong answers.

Moreover, the data obtained from the interviews suggested that teachers experienced four different difficulties: problems with the internet, problems with the smart board, damage caused by students to additional materials and lack of time. To deal with the problems such as internet connection, power outages, and whiteboard not working properly, teachers implemented the strategy of switching to other activities that do not require electricity or internet use. The teachers in this study preferred to move on to other activities instead of solving the technical problems they encountered. Mollaei and Riasati (2013) argue that teachers' inability to use technological materials effectively in foreign language classes is due to insufficient teacher training, a lack of vision regarding the opportunities provided by technology in improving teaching and learning, and insufficient technical support in schools. A survey study conducted by Merç (2015) also revealed that the majority of Turkish teacher candidates do not have the necessary skills to use technology devices effectively in their foreign language classrooms. Another issue that teachers put forward as an obstacle to the application of supplementary materials was the damage caused by students to the materials. Teachers solved this problem by replacing damaged materials with similar ones. The last problem suggested by the teachers was insufficient lesson hours. Some activities required more time for students to do, but the time allocated to the lessons was not enough. Therefore, teachers asked their students to complete the tasks at home. However, this method used by teachers may cause students not to fully understand the given task. Additionally, students' inability to receive instant feedback from the teacher prevents them from experiencing a constructive learning process.

In their self-evaluation reports, both teachers did not indicate any specific difficulties with the design and implementation of supplementary materials. However, they pointed out some advantages of these materials such as attracting students' attention, engaging them, and contributing to their auditory and visual skills. They also claimed that involving students in design and development of materials helped them learn better by providing a more fun and motivating learning environment. Furthermore, materials designed specifically to suit students' ages, needs, interests and proficiency levels provided a more interactive teaching and learning environment. Previous studies also show that the correct selection and use of supplementary materials increase students' participation and achievement in language classes (Peña & Sarmiento, 2012; Tomlinson, 2013).

In conclusion, this research has highlighted a number of issues faced by primary school EFL teachers while designing and using supplementary materials in their foreign language classrooms. The findings showed that teachers were challenged by some teacher related, student

related and material related problems. To overcome these issues, this study also identified some strategies employed by the teachers such as managing noise, encouraging students to use the target language during activities, modelling, making explanation, switching to alternative activities and giving motivational feedback. Yet, these challenges cannot be generalized since the findings revealed localized difficulties peculiar to a specific context.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study was applied in only 2 state primary schools in Turkey. It may be applied in more schools. Furthermore, it was applied with just 2nd and 3rd-grade student. A similar study may be applied with 4th-grade students. Similarly, a study with more participant EFL teachers can be conducted to have deeper understanding in this issue. In view of data collection, teachers wrote their self-evaluation reports not immediately after the lessons as they had following lessons. It may be discussed that some details related to the lessons may have been forgotten and mentioned in the reports.

The results of this study may be compared with other courses such as Turkish language and Maths with regard to the use of supplementary materials. This study also recommends that a study on materials development and evaluation should be carried out with pre-service EFL teachers to make contribution in their teaching skills using supplementary materials.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethics Committee Permission: Ethics committee permission for this study was received by Ordu University Social Research Ethics Committee with the decision numbered 2021-180 on 26.10.2021.

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Evaluation of Primary Reading Teaching in Multigrade Classes According to Teachers' Views

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Abstract: Multigrade classes which are at least two or more grade's students are brought together in the same classroom and educational activities are carried out simultaneously by a single teacher. The main purpose of this study is how this practice, closely related to many teachers, students and parents, is evaluated by teachers. The aim of this study is to reveal how teachers explain this experience, its positive and negative aspects, and the difficulties experienced during sound-based sentence teaching. Semi-structured interviews were held with 7 teachers in order to evaluate primary reading instruction in multigrade classes according to teachers' opinions. The data regarding the participants selected by the criterion sampling method were transferred to the word environment on the computer and descriptive analysis was performed. The analyses were evaluated and interpreted. Teachers stated that teaching in multigrade classrooms is quite different from teaching in independent classrooms. They stated that this experience provides greater satisfaction at the teaching profession and increases the sense of belonging to the school. They also stated that it is important to step in the role of community leadership and to reside in the village. Among the positive aspects of teaching in multigrade classes; supporting students' social and emotional development; supporting cognitive development by more effective usage of peer teaching, and the small class member number. Among the negative aspects, there are time constraints, emotional difficulties experienced by teachers, insufficient readiness of students, upper classes to make fun of lower classes, physical limitations and material deficiencies. It has been mentioned that some teachers changed the order of the letters during the teaching reading, that the region where the school is located is a place with intense dialect, making the process difficult, and the difficulties of performing some sound recognition activities. In order to allocate more resources to the relevant schools in order to overcome the difficulties experienced in the multigrade classrooms and to enable the teachers to start the process more ready, it is recommended that the education courses in the multi-grade classrooms conducted at the university should be more practice-based. The participants in this study are teachers. A study can be conducted that addresses the students' perspective.

Keywords: Multigrade teaching, Teaching reading, Negative and positive aspects, Teachers' perspective.

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Introduction

It has been observed that elements such as digitalization, robotic coding and STEM have started to be discussed more widely in educational environments since Industry 4.0 was revealed to be a factor that will greatly affect the 21st century education systems. It is a very different topic of discussion that how education equality can be achieved in these countries, which are trying to integrate into Industry 4.0. It can be said that one of the important elements is education in multigrade classes, from the perspective of educational equality. In multigrade classes, students from at least two or more different grade levels are brought together and education activities are carried out simultaneously in the same classroom and by a single teacher (Berry & Little, 2006). In Turkey, due to the inadequacy of the number of teachers and classrooms in the past and due to the effect of migration from the village to the city, and the lack of students in the settlements, especially in village and town primary schools today (Basaran, 1998), teaching practice is carried out in multigrade classes (Sağ, Savaş & Sezer, 2009). This practice is used not only in our country, but also in many different countries. For example, there are multigrade class practices in South Africa (Joubert, 2007), in many Latin American countries such as Columbia (Rowley, 1992), Peru (Ames, 2006), in many Asian countries (Miller, 1991) such as Nepal (Suzuki, 2006), Malawi (Croft, 2006), Sri Lanka (Vithanapathirana, 2006), Vietnam (Son Vu and Pridmore, 2006; Pridmore & Vu Son, 2006), Ghana (Akyeampong, 2006); in European countries such as England, Norway, Northern Ireland, and France (Little, 2006).

From this point of view, it is seen that multigrade classes are practiced in many developed, developing and underdeveloped countries to meet social needs. Therefore, associating the phenomenon of “multigrade classes” with underdevelopment makes it difficult to understand the dimensions of the situation (Miller, 1991). For instance, it is stated that in 2000 in England, which can be considered in the category of developed countries, 25.4% of all classes were conducted as combining at least two grades and at least 25% of all learners had studied in a multigrade class. Also in France, in 2000, 34% of schools had a multi-grade class, while 4.5% they had a single teacher. In Ireland, 42% of schools have a multigrade class, while 64% of these schools have two classes combined, and 36% have at least three or more classes combined (Little, 2006). The situation of multigrade class practices in Turkey is summarized below according to 2018-2019 data.

Table 1
Statistics regarding the classes in Turkey with collective teaching

	4. Classes	3. Classes	2. Classes	Total
*Number of Teachers	1731	449	4423	6603
*Number of Students	31165	667	135924	

*Ministry of National Education, National Education Statistics-Formal Education, 2018/2019 (page 42)

There are 135924 students studying in multigrade classes and 6603 teachers working in these schools according to Table 1. Therefore, while the facts of education in the digitalized age are discussed in these countries as well as in Turkey, on the other hand, it is important for the education system in general, as well as for teachers and students, to reveal the phenomenon of multigrade classes and the situations brought about by this phenomenon.

The Teaching of Lessons in Multigrade Classes differs from classes that do not have this practice. In multigrade classes, the teacher has to explain the lesson to all classes. In this case, it cannot be expected that all lessons will be taught at the same level at all grade levels. Therefore, while the teacher teaches one group, he/she assigns the other group homework. This is called ‘class with teacher’ and ‘class with homework’. In the ‘class with teacher’; teacher and students study the lesson together, the important parts of the subject, the clues about the subject,

the repetition of the parts that cannot be understood are explained, activities such as additional exercises and experiments are carried out by teacher. Activities to be held during these lessons are planned by the teacher and lessons are taught within the framework of this plan. In the ‘class with homework’, students try to increase their knowledge and skill capacity by working on the details or sub-topics of the units and subjects they have previously learned by themselves (Doğan. 2000). Therefore, in multigrade classes, time is structured as when the lesson is taught with the teacher and when students are assigned homework.

This indicates that the social construction of time in the school environment differs in multigrade classes than in independent classrooms. The notion of ‘time’ in the school environment is examined from different perspectives such as physical/biological time, the relationship of time with social status, time as a property, time as expressed in education policies, time in education programs, time and social identity (Leaton-Gray, 2017). ‘Time’ has a very important place in the discourses on education (Berstein, 2000). Sorokin and Merton (1937) refer to the fact that allocating quantitatively equal time to students who are unequal in terms of conditions reproduces inequality. In the case of multigrade classes, it can be thought that, when less time allocated to education and training to the detriment of the more disadvantaged group, it will deepen the ‘inequality’.

As a phenomenon closely related to many countries, the advantages and disadvantages of the multigrade class practice are discussed. The teaching method in multi-grade classrooms has not only positive aspects on the education and training of students, from the synergetic effect of students from different academic and age groups, and from the aspects of saving the school building and teachers but also has some negative effects (Doğan 2000; Öztürk 2003). It can be said that the most important advantage of multi-grade classrooms is that peer teaching, group work and independent study are the methods that are used effectively. These practices are a must in multigrade classes because group work is inevitable. During homework hours, students have to cooperate in groups or learn to work independently and individually. Having many students at different levels in a class makes it easier to form groups among students. In multigrade classes, students at different levels are constantly being taught together in the same classroom. In these lessons, the teacher can easily make students of the same level do the same activities regardless of their grades. It is very difficult or impossible to do this in independent classrooms.

It is possible to develop students individually in the fields they are interested and talented in and to prepare teaching environments according to individual differences if teaching in multigrade classrooms is well organized and conducted. Nevertheless, the fact that multigrade primary schools have some unique features and special conditions such as structure, function, implementation of programs, administrative structure and operation may cause some negativities (Abay, 2006). If the number of students is high, teachers teaching four classes together may have difficulty in implementing the education program by considering the readiness of the students in all classes. It is necessary to form two groups, one with homework and one with a teacher, in order to ensure order in the teaching of the lesson in multigrade-classed schools. When working with a group of teachers, the group to be assigned homework must be given homework at the beginning of the lesson and these homeworks must be checked again at the end of the lesson. These activities, which will be held within the 40-minute lesson period, can be considered as a disadvantage as they steal the time of the ‘group with teacher’.

In multigrade classes, the teacher's workload is not just the students in the classroom. The teacher, who is authorized as the principal, apart from the education of students, has to organize official and administrative affairs, respond to incoming letters, attend meetings, and even take care of the cleaning of the school. Problems such as the commuting problems of teachers working in schools far from the city or district center, as well as the closure of roads in

winter conditions can be counted among the disadvantages. Köksal (2005) lists the drawbacks of teaching in multigrade classes as follows: The quality of the teacher's duties, powers and responsibilities increased, the teacher's effort to prepare for the lesson increased, it becomes difficult to reach all the objectives in the primary education program, most of the primary school teachers do not have enough knowledge and experience in the multi grade class practice that teachers do not receive as much guidance as necessary.

In classroom management, the loss of desire in students during the teaching of the lessons, the shift of attention to other classroom activities, the limited time that the teacher can allocate for classes can be counted among the limitations. Problems such as insufficient physical structure of the classroom and insufficient materials can be added to the above deficiencies. Especially the primary reading and writing period has a critical importance at the point where the multigrade class practice suffers from the disadvantages mentioned above. Students' reading difficulties in the first years may negatively affect their school life in the following years (Türkmenoğlu & Başbuğ, 2017). According to Bloom (1979), since most of the learning tools used in school are language-based and must-read resources, the reading comprehension skill gained in the primary school years affects most of the learning that takes place in the following years. The negativities experienced in the primary reading and writing period can affect cognitive areas such as reduced school success, as well as social and affective areas such as insecurity and low motivation (Altun, Ekiz & Odabaşı, 2011; Uzunkol, 2013). The first reading and writing teaching is given in the Turkish lesson in the first grade in the combined classes. The student, who learns to read and write, obtains an important tool by comprehending these course subjects and solves their problems with this tool.

In this study, it is aimed to reveal how classroom teachers working in multigrade classes experienced teaching in multigrade classes for the first time; to identify the positive and negative aspects of teaching in multigrade classes; and to determine the difficulties experienced during primary reading education within the scope of teachers' opinions. In line with this main purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. How do teachers describe their teaching experience in multigrade classes?
2. What are the positive aspects of teaching in multigrade classes?
3. What are the negative aspects of teaching in multigrade classes?
4. What are the difficulties experienced during sound-based sentence teaching during primary reading and writing teaching in primary schools with multigrade classes?

Methodology

The study was carried out based on qualitative research methods. In a qualitative study emphasizing the social construction of reality, it points out that participants may interpret reality differently (Merriam, 1998). In the study, which aims to reveal the current situation, questions such as what, how and why are focused (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). The criterion sampling method was used by considering the distinctive characteristics of the individuals who could participate in the research. In criterion sampling, individuals who meet the criterias, form the study group (Canbazoğlu-Bilici, 2019). In criterion sampling, individuals who meet the criterion form the study group (Canbazoğlu-Bilici, 2019). In this study, the criteria were determined as having worked in a school with a multigrade class in previous years and having provided primary reading and writing education in these schools.

In the interview, the semi-structured interview form consists of 15 questions. After receiving the opinions of 2 experts, a pilot interview was conducted. The pilot interview lasted

52 minutes. After the pilot interview, the questions were finalized. The pilot interview was not included in the analyses.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 7 people in line with the criteria determined in the study. The interviews conducted in Zoom were transferred to the computer as a Word file line by line, and then descriptive analysis was carried out. In descriptive analysis, the data is organized to answer the research problem (Aydın, 2019).

In the research, credibility, transferability, reliability and confirmability dimensions will be explained one by one in order to increase trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to ensure credibility, pilot interviews were conducted after the developed tools were reviewed by experts. As one of the researchers is a teacher who has taught in multigrade classes for a long time, he/she is well acquainted with the phenomenon. In addition, participant consent was obtained before the interviews. Inter-coder reliability was calculated (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and found to be .87. The findings were compared in detail with previous research. In order to ensure transferability, the contexts and experiences of the participants are explained in detail in the method part. The findings are expressed in as much detail as possible with direct quotations from the participants. To ensure the reliability, all the process and steps are explained in detail.

Findings

The findings of the research are listed below in terms of sub-problems:

1. How do teachers describe their teaching experience in multigrade classes?

In the interviews, the points emphasized by the teachers while explaining the teaching experience in multigrade classrooms can be summarized as follows:

Table 2

Experience of teaching in multigrade classrooms

Differences of the course process from independent classes

Satisfaction with the teaching profession

Increasing the teacher's belonging to the school

Community leadership role

Importance of living in the village

A teacher describes the process of teaching primary reading and writing in multigrade classes as follows:

“Being a 1st grade teacher is enjoyable not only for the multigrade classes, but for all detached classes, even this is the most enjoyable period of the profession. It makes us really happy to be able to see a product in return for something we have given to 1st grade education. Dear teacher, since the whole school belongs to us in the multigrade classes, we become the principal, teacher, servant of the school, whatever comes to your mind. We own the school. For example, our friends don't say ‘We are going to XXXX Primary School’, they say ‘We are going to T3's school’. You know, this is how they talk when they're out there. As we own it, we become a family with the children, there's a nice atmosphere that really isn't in separated classes or crowded schools. I see this happiness in the eyes of the children as well.” (T3, M, 33).

Therefore, T3 states that teaching in multigrade classes and primary teaching reading and writing have difficulties as well as providing satisfaction for the teacher. Another teacher explains the bond that the experience of teaching in multigrade classes creates with the school atmosphere, the mission they undertake and the role of community leadership as follows:

“Children's interest is a little different, which is a source of honor for us. Because children see “us” as role models. In this regard, I pay more attention to my actions, my words, and my work as much as it is possible. We are in constant cooperation with our villagers in this regard. They try to consult something on almost every subject when they have an official job or when they are filling out paperwork or on different subjects, they ask for help or they want to do it together. This is a "source of honor" for us. In fact, we have better relations, we have sincere exchanges. I am very happy to be in a multigrade class atmosphere or to work in the neighborhood.” (T4, M, 31).

A teacher also mentions that if teachers who teach in multigrade classes live in villages, their contribution to students will increase (T6, M, 37).

“Although there is a great need for attention and support in terms of education, students are left alone. Of course, again, the teacher has a big job to do. If the teacher lives in the village -I think the multigrade class teacher should live in the village- he can take care of the students outside of the classroom. Because in the village, there is not much for the teacher to do.”

2. What are the positive aspects of teaching in multigrade classrooms?

The interviewed teachers mentioned some positive aspects brought by the multigrade class practice. Table 3 summarizes the positive aspects of teaching in multigrade classes:

Table 3

Positive aspects of teaching in multigrade classrooms	
In terms of social and emotional development	Students from different age groups can get to know each other Opportunity to model from peers Learning to cooperate and help each other Taking responsibility for each other's learning
In terms of cognitive development	Peer teaching can be used effectively
The atmosphere of school/classroom	Low number of students

They also mentioned that one of the positive aspects of primary reading and writing teaching in multigrade classes is that it is a system that allows students to learn from each other and that different classes get to know each other (T3, M, 33; T4, M, 31; T6, M, 37). A teacher emphasizes that students take responsibility for each other's learning and this contributes to the development of their sense of responsibility (T1, M, 36). A teacher also emphasizes that students' solidarity and cooperation skills are further developed (T5, F, 29). It is mentioned that peer teaching is used effectively during the cognitive development of students:

“Because there are 4 classes together when you start, the interaction with other children is stronger. The event we call latent learning takes place and older classes help 1st graders” (T3, M, 33).

However, there is also a participant who mentioned that the low number of students in multigrade classes provides benefits in terms of dealing with students one-to-one (T1, M, 36; T4, M, 31).

3. What are the negative aspects of teaching in multigrade classes?

The opinions of the interviewed teachers about the negative aspects of teaching in multigrade classes are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4
Negative aspects of teaching in multigrade classes

Time	Having many classes together Solving the problems caused by not having a servant at school: cleaning, maintenance, repair etc. Time including correspondence due to the absence of a secretary Meetings, etc., which must be attended as a principal authorized teacher.
Emotional difficulties experienced by teachers	Feeling of inadequacy Remorse
Students start school with insufficient readiness	Their lack of kindergarten education ➤ <i>Difficulties in compliance/discipline with school rules</i> ➤ <i>Underdeveloped finger muscles</i> ➤ <i>Importance of sibling order</i> Parents' interest in education
Social-emotional development	Making fun of the lower classes by the upper classes
Physical facilities	The danger of the stove for 1st Classes Lack of physical space to hang material
Lack of materials	Lack of devices such as smart boards, projectors Lack of educational materials

All of the teachers stated that one of the most important disadvantages of teaching in multigrade classes is the time problem. The fact that all classes continue their educational activities together causes the attention of the classes to be more easily distracted, and these classes provide less benefit. Considering that students' attention can be distracted more quickly especially in 1st grade, this situation indicates a negativity regarding the lesson atmosphere (T4, M, 31; T6, M, 37). Similarly, questions from students in other classes during the lesson can cause both attention deficit and division of the lesson (T4, M, 31; T6, M, 37).

From time to time, this confusion can continue as follows:

“There are 14 students in the class, but you say something to one, and the other student takes it. For example, one day I wrote a problem for the 4th graders. The second grade student who is a little smart, wrote it and solved it. He brought it and said, 'Teacher, I solved this'. Such incidents also happen” (T1, M, 36).

In multigrade classes, not only the time allocated to primary reading and writing, but also the difficulties of raising educational programs at all grade levels in a given time are mentioned:

“...the biggest problem is the lack of time, that is, the number of students is not high, but after all, when you continue as ‘class with homework’, we have a time problem with 1st grades compared to a normal detached classroom.” (T4, M, 31)

However, this problem should not be thought of as a simple problem arising from the fact that many classes receive education and training together. In addition to these, the fact that teachers have duties and responsibilities in matters not directly related to education, such as the administrative affairs of the school, cleaning and repairing the school, makes time management difficult for teachers (T3, M, 33; T4, M, 31). A teacher describes the difficulties of running formal school processes and teaching in multigrade classes as follows:

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‘They call and say there is a meeting. They are constantly calling for a meeting. In such cases, you close the school. In my opinion, there should be an officer to carry out the official affairs of the multigrade classes in the national education directorate’ (T1, M, 36).

A teacher points out that especially the number of students in the class is determinant in time-related problems. On the other hand, two teachers mention that the difficulties and time constraints experienced due to the fact that 4 classes are together cause the teacher to not be able to do what they want over time, not being able to complete the program, and to feel inadequate (T5, F, 29; T6, M, 37). Another teacher explains the psychological effects of this situation on him as follows:

"For them, I feel unwillingly uncomfortable with my conscience; they really do not receive education on equal terms with other children"(T1, M, 36)

One of the teachers mentions that she designed additional learning opportunities in all opportunities such as after school, during class breaks in order to balance this unequal time, (T2, F, 33). A significant part of the teachers mentioned the factors related to the fact that the students were not ready for education because they did not receive preschool education before (T1, M, 36; T3, M, 33; T4, M, 31; T6, M, 37). Another teacher mentioned that not taking kindergarten education is an important disadvantage, and that those who have older siblings have the chance to observe them, so they can get through this process more easily (T1, M, 36). The limited readiness of the students prolongs the adaptation period in the first year. The processes such as activities related to developing hand muscles in the first month and compliance with school rules take longer than other classes. This situation should be considered together with the time allocated for primary reading and writing teaching in first graders (T6, M, 37).

Another teacher points out that the support of parents is important in the process and this situation differs depending on whether the students have an obligation to participate in agricultural production. He states that in schools where students do not participate heavily in agricultural production, parents follow the education processes more supportively (T4, M, 31). One of the teacher states that parents are generally uninterested and have limited opportunities (T6, M, 37). Another teacher points out that the effort of the parents is extremely important in these groups, especially because of the problems related to training the curriculum. In addition, they mention that the expectation of the parents about the contribution of the students to the agricultural production affects the education-related processes:

“I live in a village that mostly does animal husbandry, for example, the biggest problem I have here is that children help their families unwillingly. I was very surprised at first. First year students can take 8-10 cows and take them to the herd. Parents are also a bit involved in this dimension. They think that the children can help us so that reading and writing education can be done later. We see the biggest difficulty here because we cannot get parent support” (T1, M, 36).

The same teacher expresses the difficulty of achieving achievements during teaching in multigrade classes, with the limited support of parents during the pandemic period:

“When we meet with the first grade teachers working in the detached classroom at the city center, there is an incredible interest from their parents. The parents of the students support them. For example, during this pandemic, we have been incredibly, very badly affected. The lack of internet in the villages and the limited availability of such opportunities limited us a little more. When we look at the friends at the center, they say that they attend parent-supported classes via Zoom. They are somehow making progress by sending homework to parents on Whatsapp. But our chance is a little less” (T1, M, 36).

In terms of social-emotional development, he mentions that sometimes the older classes make fun of the mistakes of the younger classes, making it difficult for the younger classes. (T1, M, 36).

“Negatively, I can say the following; for example when all classes are together, children sometimes hesitate. Maybe classes with their own peers provide a more comfortable atmosphere for children. But they cannot move freely here because they are younger. When they make mistakes, misread, other classes laugh. This undermines the child's self-confidence. This was the biggest disadvantage I saw at first. And this disappears when we maintain classroom discipline.”

All of the teachers emphasize the shortcomings of the physical environment:

“The physical environment is quite inadequate compared to other detached classes; it is insufficient in all multigrade classes. Since it is a village school, the classroom has a stove and there is no smart board. There is not enough material support. When I first started to work at this school, there was a chalk board. But with our own efforts and some supports, we found a projector and a white board. We do something with our own efforts, we try to find materials. Apart from these, I use photocopies, but multigrade classes are incredibly lacking compared to separate classes in this regard.” (T3, M, 33)

Many of the teachers also mention the physical facilities of the school, among the negative aspects of teaching in multigrade classes (T1, M, 36; T3, M, 33; T4, M, 31; T6, M, 37). Another teacher mentions the dangers of the stove for first grade students. He refers to the problems experienced in hanging the material on the wall due to the inadequacy of the physical space (T4, M, 31). Regarding the lack of materials in the school, teachers state that they try to overcome these needs with their own efforts.

“The materials are insufficient. For example, the first school I worked was closed for a long time and was opened later. The school was in ruins when I first went. We met with the villagers and the headman. We found several helpful friends. We found maps and 1st grade materials. We visited the stationery stores and tried to find materials. There is a serious lack of material, this is a fact. But it is not a serious problem for those who want to do this job. It takes extra effort, but it's not insurmountable for someone who wants to work in that village.” (S1, M, 36)

Another teacher mentions that he provides projectors and computers to the school with his own possibilities (T6, M, 37). The lack of materials in the school (no smart board, etc.) limits the activities related to letter recognition. They mention that in schools with smart boards, faster and permanent learning can be achieved with stimulating materials such as showing spellings and cartoons (T7, M, 39).

4. What are the difficulties experienced during sound-based sentence teaching during primary reading and writing teaching in primary schools with multigrade classes?

The opinions of the teachers about the difficulties experienced during sound-based sentence teaching in multigrade classes are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Difficulties experienced during sound-based sentence teaching in multigrade classes

Difficulties	The order of the letters Regions spoken with dialect Voice recognition activities distract other classes
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Some of the teachers mentioned that they changed the order of the letters during the sound-based sentence teaching:

“It was changed many times that I remember. There were times when I made changes from time to time. Let me tell you, after I gave a few consonants, I continued to give all the vowels. Or, when the sounds that are sometimes hard to say are at the beginning, I put them last in the list given to us. I started with the sounds that are easier to say. For example, the 'k' sound is at the beginning, but it is a little difficult to say, or there were times when I took it to the beginning because the 's' sound is easier.” (T3, M, 33).

The other three teachers state that they follow the order published by the Ministry (T1, M, 36; T4, M, 31; T5, F, 29). A teacher mentions that he tries to follow the program but sometimes he changes the sound order. He mentions that although there is no change in putting a sound at the end to the forefront, there are changes among the sounds in the same group depending on the ease of saying or the difficulty in comprehending a sound (T6, M, 37). At the same time, he emphasizes that the difficulties experienced during writing are more common in regions where dialect is spoken more (T6, M, 37). Especially, teachers working in dialect-speech regions mention that they spend a lot of effort in this process (T1, M, 36; T4, M, 31). One teacher mentioned that the methods and techniques used in the stage of recognizing the voice (for example, storytelling, drama, singing, etc.) distract other classes (T2, F, 33).

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

Teachers teaching in multigrade classes describe this process as positive in terms of elements such as their teaching professional satisfaction and belonging to the school. In the process of teaching in these schools, the importance of the teacher's role as a community leader and residing in the village is pointed out. Döş and Sağır (2013) also point out that it is a significant disadvantage for teachers not to reside in the place where the multigrade classes are located. Especially in these schools, where the needs of the school can be met through informal communication, it is seen that close and warm relations with the people of the school are established.

Participants in this study cited the following among the positive aspects of teaching in multigrade classrooms; social and emotional development supports students from different age groups to get to know each other, enabling peers to take models, teaching solidarity and helping each other and supporting each other by enabling them to take responsibility for their learning. In addition, it was mentioned that cognitive development is supported through peer teaching and the low number of students in the classroom is an advantage. Çoşkun and Çetinkaya (2018) mention the positive aspects of teaching in multigrade classes, such as helping upper-class students to lower-class students, the possibility of peer teaching, the low number of students in the class, and the acquisition of individual and study responsibilities. Dursun (2006) similarly states that there are some advantages of multigrade classes in terms of interaction, cooperation, cohesion and peer teaching. İzci, Duran, and Taşar (2010) think that teaching in multigrade classes supports students in terms of their social development. It is seen that teaching in multigrade classes is considered as an advantage especially in terms of social and emotional development when the studies are examined.

In this study, firstly, the time problem experienced during teaching in multigrade classes was put forward as a disadvantage. Similarly, the problem of time is addressed in many studies (Bayar, 2009; Çınar, 2004; Çoşkun & Çetinkaya, 2018; Dursun, 2006; Kuzu & Aslan, 2011; Kaya & Taşdemirci, 2005). Bayar (2009), Çoşkun and Çetinkaya (2018) mention in their studies that teachers experience problems such as attention deficit while they are dealing with a

classroom. Döş and Sağır (2013) emphasize the time-consuming aspects of office work. Çoşkun and Çetinkaya (2018) refer to points such as students' late understanding of concepts and late acquisition of reading skills in multigrade classes. Secondly, the study also points to some emotional difficulties experienced by teachers when teaching in multigrade classes. Teachers state that they experience feelings such as "feeling of inadequacy" and "remorse" because they cannot provide equal learning compared to independent classes. In their study, Yılmaz and Köksal (2009) state that teachers who teach in multigrade classes cannot see enough support and guidance in the problems they experience. Third, in this study, students' starting school with insufficient readiness emerges with two sub-categories. The first of these is related to the fact that students have not received kindergarten education. This situation emerges as difficulties in complying with school rules, insufficient development of finger muscles, and even less readiness, especially in families where the student is the first child. On the other hand, it is stated that the school readiness of the students decreases due to the low interest of the parents in education and the expectation of the families to contribute to the production of their children, especially in the regions where agricultural production is done. The readiness of the students (Çoşkun & Çetinkaya, 2018) and the indifference of the parents (Çınar, 2004; Dursun, 2006; Yıldız & Köksal, 2009) stand out among the problems at these schools. Sağ, Savaş, and Sezer (2009) also mention that one of the dimensions of the problems related to teaching in multigrade classes is related to the socio-economic environment. They mention that "lack of opportunities in terms of raising children" and "not being able to attract parents' attention in monitoring students' success and solving school problems" are some of the problems in multigrade classes. Fourth, one of the disadvantages in terms of social and emotional development is that students in the upper grades can make fun of students in the lower grades. Finally, the physical inadequacy of schools is a point emphasized by Döş and Sağır (2013) in their studies. The lack of material (Çınar, 2004; Dursun, 2006; Kuzu & Aslan, 2011; Kaya & Taşdemirci, 2005; Yıldız & Köksal, 2009) is associated with the difficulties encountered during teaching in multigrade classes.

Some of the teachers who teach with sound-based sentence method in multigrade classes say that they changed the order of the letters but there are also teachers who follow the order given in the program. Especially in the regions where dialect is spoken, primary reading and writing teaching requires much more effort. While voice recognition activities are performed from time to time in multigrade classes, this situation can cause attention deficit on other students.

This study did not focus specifically on primary reading and writing teaching in multigrade classes. Studies can be conducted to understand how this practice works at other grades or in other learning areas and disciplines. This study focused on teacher opinions. Studies can be carried out to evaluate the situation from the perspectives of students and parents.

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Student Incivility in Classrooms: An Insight From the Student's Point of View with Focus on Kerala

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Abstract: Educators endeavour to establish classroom settings that foster learning. Nevertheless, it is a frequent occurrence to come across disruptive student conduct that hampers the learning environment we aim to establish. Classroom incivility may be characterized as student conduct that hinders the anticipated progression of the lecture or disturbs the educational environment within the class. After COVID-19, offline classes have begun and students are adapting to the traditional method of classroom coaching once again. The shift from digital to online mode of teaching has also created a sense of change in the general classroom discipline. This research investigates the student incivility from the student's perspective. The research explores factors contributing to such behaviours, focusing on gender and age. The target population is from the State of Kerala, India. The sample size was 244 students from different educational institutions across the State. A structured questionnaire was used to measure different incivility behaviours of students. The study used proportionate analysis for the demographic characteristics and general questions related to classroom incivility. Exploratory factor analysis was used to group the factors that contribute to classroom incivility. The findings provide insights into students' perceptions of classroom incivility, offering educators valuable information to enhance classroom management and develop strategies to address disruptive behaviours effectively.

Keywords: Classroom, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Higher Education, Student Incivility.

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Introduction

Classroom incivility, a complex and multifaceted challenge, has emerged as a significant concern across diverse educational settings globally (Vural & Donat Bacıoğlu, 2020). Characterized by a range of disruptive behaviours that hinder the teaching-learning process, incivility undermines the core purpose of the classroom: fostering effective teaching and learning. While previous research has primarily focused on the perspectives of educators and administrators, a critical gap exists in understanding the student experience of incivility. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the nature and impact of student classroom incivility from the students' point of view within the specific context of higher education institutions in Kerala.

By centering the student voice, this research seeks to illuminate the factors contributing to incivility, the perceived consequences, and potential strategies for prevention and intervention. A particular emphasis will be placed on understanding the role of social norms in shaping students' behaviours and attitudes towards incivility. Segrist, Bartels, and Nordstrom (2018) highlight the influence of social norms on classroom incivility, suggesting that the perception of peer acceptance can significantly impact student behaviour.

According to Spadafora & Volk (2023) notable discrepancy exists in the perception of uncivil behaviours between adolescent students and teachers. While students tend to view teacher-related incivilities as more severe, teachers prioritize student-to-student incivilities as more problematic (Spadafora & Volk, 2023). By exploring this dynamic within the context of Kerala's higher education landscape, this study aims to contribute new knowledge to the existing body of research. The specific focus on Kerala is warranted given the unique socio-cultural context of the region, which may influence the manifestation and experience of classroom incivility. Limited research has examined this phenomenon in the Indian context, particularly from the student perspective. By addressing this research gap, this study offers a valuable opportunity to inform the development of culturally appropriate interventions to enhance classroom climate and learning outcomes in Kerala's higher education institutions. Also with a nuanced understanding of the issue from the students' perspective, this study contributes to the development of targeted and effective interventions to create more positive and conducive learning environments in Kerala's higher education landscape.

Statement of the Problem

Classroom incivility appears in many forms, including texting during lectures, engaging in side conversations, and leaving class early. These behaviours disrupt both faculty and students, compromising the learning environment. Student misbehaviour has been associated with decreased occupational well-being among teachers (Aldrup et al., 2018), with classroom disturbances and disciplinary issues often cited as significant sources of job stress.

Scope of the Study

The study aims to comprehensively understand student classroom incivility among students in higher education. It seeks to explore various factors influencing incivility, such as internal and external determinants, cultural contexts, and the perceptions of both students and teachers. In addition, the study places particular emphasis on examining the roles of gender and age in shaping these behaviours. By analyzing how these demographic variables influence incivility, the study intends to identify specific patterns and trends. This will contribute to a deeper understanding of the underlying causes and provide insights into effective strategies for managing and mitigating uncivil behaviours in the classroom.

Significance of the Study

This research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on classroom incivility and provide a foundation for developing effective strategies to mitigate this issue in higher education settings.

Objectives

To study the Student Classroom incivility in among students in Higher education from the student's point of view.

Hypothesis:

H₀₁: There is no association between student classroom incivility and gender

H₀₂: There is no association between student classroom incivility and age

Literature Review

Dimensions and Cultural Contexts of Classroom Incivility

The concept of incivility in classrooms is complex and varies across different cultural and educational contexts. Ani et al. (2021) conducted a study in Indonesia and identified four key factors of uncivil behaviour: disregard for instructors/annoyances, disrespect for others (both verbal and non-verbal), misconduct and integrity violations, and use of cell phones. This multidimensional perspective on classroom incivility was also supported by Asfiati et al. (2022), who suggested that higher education institutions in Indonesia could adopt their instrument as an additional tool to assess the level of classroom incivility.

Perceptions of Incivility: Students vs. Teachers

Perceptions of classroom incivility can differ significantly between students and teachers. Spadafora and Volk (2023) found that adolescent students view behaviours disrespectful towards teachers as more uncivil than the teachers themselves do. In contrast, Hudgins et al. (2022) reported limited agreement between faculty and students regarding their perceptions and experiences of incivility, highlighting a gap in understanding between the two groups. A growing body of research indicates that student incivility is perceived as a significant impediment to the learning environment in various educational contexts (Orfan, 2023).

Contributing Factors to Disruptive Behaviour

Several factors contribute to the occurrence of disruptive behaviour in classrooms. Jati et al. (2019) identified internal factors such as boredom, anxiety, and attention-seeking, along with external factors like fatigue. Additionally, Saini et al. (2023) pointed out factors like attention-seeking and peer appreciation, disorganized family backgrounds, lack of dependency on the instructor, teacher leniency, poor communication, low student–teacher ratios, inadequate infrastructure, and deteriorating social values.

Strategies to Address Classroom Incivility

Addressing incivility in classrooms requires a multi-faceted approach. Bantha et al. (2020) suggested enabling strategies such as providing platforms for students to express their

thoughts without judgment and fostering intellectually stimulating discussions. Weger (2017) emphasized the importance of effective communication, noting that active empathic listening is negatively associated with three types of classroom incivility, underlining the significance of empathetic interactions in managing student behaviour.

Institutional Role in Managing Incivility

Educational institutions play a critical role in managing incivility. Krečar et al. (2016) identified behaviours like chatting, using cell phones, and being unprepared for class as the most prevalent forms of disruptive behaviour, according to both students and professors. Essa and Khaton (2019) proposed that educational programs that provide meaningful information about the types of uncivil behaviours, contributing factors, their impacts, and strategies to prevent and manage incivility could be highly beneficial.

By understanding these multifaceted dimensions and addressing the various factors contributing to incivility, educational institutions can implement effective strategies to create a more respectful and conducive learning environment.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design to investigate student classroom incivility in higher education among a specific target group. The focus was on understanding the prevalence and types of incivility behaviours as perceived by students in various educational institutions in Kerala, one of the most literate states in India. The target group comprised 244 students from different educational institutions in Kerala. Kerala is one of the most literate states in India. We employed convenience sampling for data collection due to its practical advantages, such as ease of access to respondents and cost-effectiveness. While we acknowledge the limitations of convenience sampling, such as potential bias and limited generalizability, we chose this method because it allowed us to gather preliminary insights and identify trends in student classroom incivility efficiently. Future studies could employ probability sampling techniques to enhance generalizability.

The survey instrument was questionnaire which was structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was adopted from Bjorklund & Rehling (2010). The questionnaire consisted of 13 classroom behaviours that contributed to incivility. Uncivil behavior in the classroom encompasses a range of actions that disrupt the learning environment and hinder cooperation among students. It can manifest in various forms, from minor acts like inattentiveness to more severe behaviors that are violent, disruptive, rude, or disrespectful. In academic settings, incivility is characterized by actions that interfere with creating a harmonious and cooperative atmosphere for learning (Cahyadi et al., 2021).

Google Forms were used to circulate and collect data from the target group. The participants were asked to rate the level of uncivil behaviors in their perspective. LIKERT scale was used in the questionnaire (1= not uncivil at all and 5= extremely uncivil).

The Cronbach's alpha for the reliability test of the thirteen items related to incivility was 0.925. Cronbach's alpha values of 0.7 or higher indicate acceptable internal consistency according to literature (Taber, 2018). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test was conducted for the sample size of $n \geq 50$ which was not significant ($p > 0.05$). So the data was normally distributed as per previous literature (Gupta et al., 2019).

Statistical techniques used included proportionate analysis, Chi-square test and Exploratory Factor analysis (EFA). EFA was done using Maximum likelihood extraction and Promax rotation for the 13 items related to student classroom incivility behaviour. IBM SPSS v23 was used in the analysis for EFA.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1
Demographic characteristic

Age Group	n	%
16-19 yrs.	53	22
20-23 yrs.	142	58
25-27 yrs.	49	20
Gender		
Male	168	69.1
Female	76	30.9
Education		
12th	36	14.8
Graduation	45	18.5
Postgraduation	154	63
Professional (B. Tech/Law/Medicine)	9	3.7
CGPA (/10)		
Less than 6	9	8
6 to 8	142	58
Above 8	93	38

Note: Sample size, n= 244

From Table 1, the largest age group of the respondents was between 20-23 years followed by 16-19 years and males were the majority among the respondents. Most of the respondents were graduates followed by students who had completed their plus two. Interestingly, the Cumulative Grade Point Average(CGPA) of the majority of respondents were between 6-8 while this was followed by students who had CGPA above 8. This shows the performance of the students in their academics was were high.

Chi- Square Test : Age and Student Classroom Incivility

Hypothesis

H₀₁: there is no association between age and student classroom incivility.

H₁₁: there is an association between age and student classroom incivility.

Table 2
Chi-square tests

Test	χ^2	df	p
Pearson Chi-Square	438.085	385	0.032
Likelihood Ratio	217.821	385	1
Linear-by-linear Association	0.145	1	0.703

Note : Sample Size, n =244. p < .05. df stands for degree of freedom.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between age and student classroom incivility. The relation between these variables was significant, χ^2 (1, n = 244) = 438.085, p = .032. This shows evidence there is an association between age and the uncivil behaviour of the students in the classrooms.

Hypothesis

H₀₂: there is no association between grade and student classroom incivility.

H₁₂: there is an association between grade and student classroom incivility.

Table 3
Chi-square tests

Test	χ^2	df	p
Pearson Chi-Square	1350.235	1295	0.139
Likelihood Ratio	368.749	1295	1
Linear-by-linear Association	0.001	1	0.976

Note : Sample Size, n =244. p <.05. df stands for degree of freedom.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between grade and student classroom incivility. The relation between these variables was significant, χ^2 (1, n = 244) = 1350.235, p = .139. This shows evidence there is no association between grade and the uncivil behaviour of the students in the classrooms.

Uncivil Behaviour in Classroom from Student's Point of View

Table 4
Descriptive statistics of the questionnaire

Sl No	Uncivil Behaviour	M	SD
1	Continuing to talk after being asked to stop	2.975	1.3321
2	Coming to class under the influence of alcohol or drugs	3.642	1.5836
3	Allowing a cell phone to ring	2.975	1.3872
4	Conversing loudly with others	3.062	1.2879
5	Nonverbally showing disrespect for others	3.556	1.3874
6	Sleeping	2.679	1.1492
7	Arriving late and/or leaving early	2.889	1.1068
8	Using a palm pilot, iPod, mobile or computer for non-class activities	3.074	1.2627
9	Nonverbally indicating dissatisfaction with an assignment, activity or grade	2.852	1.2561

10	Fidgeting (hand or feet movement) that distracts others	2.728	1.2943
11	Eating and drinking	2.704	1.3271
12	Yawning	2.383	1.168
13	Nose blowing	2.494	1.2158

Note : M stands for mean and SD for standard deviation.

Coming to class under the influence of alcohol or drugs has the highest average score (M= 3.642, SD =1.58), suggesting it's the most frequent behaviour. Yawning and nose blowing have the lowest average scores (M= 2.383, SD=1.16 and M= 2.494, SD=1.21), indicating they are the least frequent behaviours.

Exploratory Factor Analysis: Factors influencing Student classroom Incivility Behaviours

Table 5
Pattern component matrix, eigen values, and total variance percentage for components obtained by maximum likelihood with promax rotation method

Variables	Component	
	1	2
Coming to class under the influence of alcohol or drugs	0.888	
Non verbally showing disrespect for others	0.818	
Continuing to talk after being asked to stop	0.749	
Conversing loudly with others	0.684	
Allowing a cell phone to ring	0.669	
Nonverbally indicating dissatisfaction with an assignment, activity or grade	0.475	
Arriving late and/or leaving early		0.994
Sleeping		0.968
Using a palm pilot, iPod, mobile or computer for non-class activities		0.576
Yawning		0.497
Nose blowing		0.442
Fidgeting (hand or foot movement) that distracts others		0.43
Eating and drinking		0.38
Eigenvalues	6.798	1.429
Percentage of total variance	48.384	8.525

Note: Factor loadings < .035 have been omitted from the table.

The KMO value is 0.885, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity chi-square is 656.995 with a degree of freedom 241 and a significance <0.05, according to the obtained table. The

outcome of the summary proved that the data was suitable for factor analysis as indicated in previous studies (Wu et al, 2023). Maximum Likelihood factor analysis with promax rotation was conducted to assess the underlying structure for the 13 items of the variables under investigation. The result generated two factors with eigenvalues 6.79 and 1.42 respectively. After rotation, the first factor accounted for 48.38 % of the variance, the second factor accounted for 8.52%, Table 5 displays the factor loadings for rotated factors where loadings less than 0.35 have been omitted.

The first factor, identified as “Disruptive behaviour”, had strong loadings on 5 items out of the six. This included the following- Coming to class under the influence of alcohol or drugs, Nonverbally showing disrespect for others, Continuing to talk after being asked to stop, Conversing loudly with others, Allowing a cell phone to ring, Nonverbally indicating dissatisfaction with an assignment, activity or grade. The second factor was “Inattentive and Disengagement Behaviour” which had four items with loading greater than 0.35. This included Arriving late and/or leaving early, Sleeping, Using a palm pilot, iPod, mobile or computer for non-class activities, Yawning, Nose blowing, Fidgeting (hand or foot movement) that distracts others, Eating and drinking.

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics for the factors of student classroom incivility

	Description	M	SD
1	Disruptive Behaviour	19.062	6.569
2	Inattentive and Disengagement Behaviour	19	6.566

Note: Sample size, N= 244. M and SD stand for mean and standard deviation respectively.

From Table 6, it is evident that between the factors generated, the sample as a whole relatively showed “Disruptive Behaviour” (M = 19.06 , SD = 6.56) when it comes to student classroom incivility.

Previous literature mentions that classroom incivility in adolescents can be an early indicator of future bullying behaviour, emphasizing the importance of addressing and reducing uncivil actions before they escalate into more serious issues (Spadafora & Volk, 2023). .Our study offers valuable insights into student classroom incivility, identifying two main types of behaviours: disruptive and inattentive/disengaged. These findings have significant practical implications for educational practitioners and policymakers. To address the most common disruptive behaviours, such as attending class under the influence of alcohol or drugs, institutions can develop targeted interventions. These might include stricter campus policies, counselling services, and substance abuse education programs. To foster a positive classroom environment and reduce nonverbal disrespect and continuous talking, strategies could involve setting clear behavioural expectations, using positive reinforcement for good behaviour, and encouraging mutual respect among students and faculty.

Enhancing student engagement is also crucial. This can be achieved by using engaging teaching methods, integrating technology meaningfully into the curriculum, and providing flexible breaks to help maintain student attention and participation. Professional development programs for faculty can equip them with effective strategies for managing classroom incivility. Training on conflict resolution, classroom management techniques, and creating inclusive and respectful learning environments can be particularly beneficial.

The research literature also stresses that incivil behaviour in classrooms will hinder the development of educational policies for a better learning environment (Orfan, 2023).

Policymakers can use these findings to develop comprehensive policies that address classroom incivility. Such policies should outline clear consequences for disruptive behaviours and provide support mechanisms for students who struggle with engagement. By implementing these practical measures, educational institutions can create a more conducive learning environment, reduce incidences of classroom incivility, and enhance overall academic success.

Conclusion

This research aimed to understand student classroom incivility in higher education from students' perspectives. The study found significant associations between age and student classroom incivility, indicating that age influences uncivil behaviors in classrooms. The demographics of the target group showed that the majority were male graduate students with a CGPA between six to eight which was evidence of high performance. The results showed that there was no significant association was found between grade and student classroom incivility. The outcome of the study pointed out that certain incivil behaviours were more noticed by the students compared to others. Exploratory Factor analysis identified two main factors influencing student incivility: disruptive behavior and inattentive/disengagement behavior. The authorities need to look into the potential dangers of these incivil behaviours and training for the teachers to manage the students better.

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Hayat Bilgisi Öğretiminde Öğrenci Merkezli Öğretim Yöntem ve Tekniklerinin Akademik Başarı Üzerindeki Etkisi: Bir Meta Analiz Çalışması

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Öz: Bu çalışmada hayat bilgisi öğretiminde öğrenci merkezli öğretimin öğrencilerin akademik başarıları üzerindeki genel etkisinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda YÖK Tez Merkezinde taranan, açık erişim izni olan, yöntemsel olarak meta analize dahil edilme kriterlerini karşılayan 25 lisansüstü tez bu çalışmanın verilerini oluşturmuştur. 25 tez çalışmasından meta analiz yöntemiyle 26 etki değeri hesaplanmıştır. Etki değerlerinin belirlenebilmesi için Cohen'nin g değeri kullanılmıştır. Meta analize dahil edilen araştırmalar Rosenthal yöntemi ve huni grafiği kullanılarak öncelikle yayın yanlılığı açısından sınanmıştır. Ayrıca meta analiz modeline karar vermek için Z değeri, Z değerinin anlamlılığı, Q değeri ve 25 serbestlik derecesinde ki-kare dağılım değerleri kullanılmıştır. Meta analize dahil edilen araştırmaların yayın yanlılığı göstermediği ve heterojen dağıldığı saptanmıştır. Bu doğrultuda rastgele etkiler modeline göre meta analiz gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmada elde edilen bulgulara göre analize dâhil edilen her bir araştırmacının bağımsız olarak öğrencilerin akademik başarılarını olumlu etkilediği görülmüştür. Rastgele etkiler modeline göre bütünleştirilen araştırmaların genel etki büyüklüğünün 1.028 olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bundan hareketle hayat bilgisi öğretiminde öğrenci merkezli öğretim yöntem ve tekniklerinin öğrencilerin akademik başarılarını geniş ölçüde olumlu etkilediği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. **Anahtar Kelimeler:** Hayat bilgisi, Öğrenci merkezli öğretim, İlkokul, Meta analiz, Akademik başarı.

The Effect of Student-Centered Teaching Methods and Techniques on Academic Achievement in Life Sciences Teaching: A Meta-Analysis Study

Abstract: In this study, it was aimed to determine the general effect of student-centered teaching on students' academic achievement in life science teaching. For this purpose, 25 theses scanned in YÖK Thesis Center, having open access permission and methodologically meeting the criteria for inclusion in meta-analysis constituted the data of this study. From 25 thesis studies, 26 effect values were calculated by meta-analysis method. Cohen's g value was used to determine the effect values. The studies included in the meta-analysis were first tested for publication bias using the Rosenthal method and funnel plot. In addition, Z value, significance of Z value, Q value and chi-square distribution values at 25 degrees of freedom were used to decide the meta-analysis model. It was found that the studies included in the meta-analysis did not show publication bias and were heterogeneously distributed. Accordingly, meta-analysis was conducted according to the random effects model. According to the findings obtained in the study, it was seen that each study included in the analysis independently positively affected students' academic achievement. It was determined that the overall effect size of the studies integrated according to the random effects model was 1.028. From this point of view, it was concluded that student-centered teaching

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methods and techniques in life science teaching have a large positive effect on students' academic achievement.

Keywords: Life science, Student-centered teaching, Primary school, Meta-analysis, Academic achievement.

Introduction

While the concept of learning is defined in various ways according to different theories and approaches, the learner itself is at the core of learning (Gültekin & Burak, 2021). On the other hand, instruction is a formal approach aimed at the realization of learning through formal means. The primary goal of instruction is to impart desired knowledge, skills, and values to the student. However, achieving the acquisition of desired knowledge, skills, and values becomes difficult without considering the learner's interests, desires, and needs, in other words, without placing the learner at the center of the instructional process (Jonassen & Grabowski, 1993; Riding & Rayner, 2012). Therefore, adopting and employing an instructional approach that centers on the learner is crucial for providing effective and efficient instruction. Learner-centered instruction is largely explained through the social constructivist approach, emphasizing that learning is a social phenomenon (Yaşar et al., 2015). Within this context, learner-centered instruction can be thought to be based on views advocating for the learner to construct their own meaning through gaining experiences and interacting and communicating with others (Deboer, 2002). In other words, teacher-centered instruction primarily provides guidance and organization, while learner-centered instruction involves students actively participating in and experiencing instructional activities.

Social Studies is a central subject aimed at preparing primary school students for life and future learnings. Social Studies can be expressed as knowledge of life that focuses on learning by doing and experiencing (Burak & Topkaya, 2018). However, it seems quite challenging for the goals of Social Studies regarding life to be achieved without adopting an approach that prioritizes the student expected to be prepared for life in the instruction of this subject. In this regard, the findings of a study conducted by Taneri and Engin Demir (2013) on Social Studies instruction with students are noteworthy. In the mentioned study, primary school students expressed that they enjoyed and were more engaged and learned when their teachers conducted activities such as drama and collaborative learning in Social Studies classes.

The paradigm shift in education since 2005 emphasizes student-centered instruction. It cannot be assumed that Social Studies, whose main aim is to acquire life-oriented competencies, would be exempt from this. Indeed, the 2018 Primary School Social Studies Curriculum emphasizes student-centered activities, providing instruction tailored to students' interests, desires, and needs, particularly highlighting experiential learning or processes where students are actively engaged. The program articulates these orientations and recommendations as follows:

"In the conduct of the course, care should be taken to carry out both in-school and out-of-school applications. Especially, out-of-school applications such as oral history, local history, museum visits, environmental education, recognition of official and private institutions and organizations should be valued, and student-centered activities pre-planned in this direction should be implemented." (Ministry of National Education-MoNE, 2018, p. 9).

MoNE explicitly expects teachers in Social Studies instruction to embrace a student-centered instructional approach and design their instruction accordingly. Therefore, teachers are expected to utilize methods and techniques that prioritize students in the learning-teaching process, such as game-based learning, collaborative learning, project-based learning, problem-solving, scenario-based learning, active learning, utilizing case studies, brainstorming, multiple

intelligences, differentiated instruction practices, experiments, drama, creative drama, role-playing, research-based learning, learning through the 5E model, multiple intelligence practices, differentiated instruction, station technique, utilization of social media and information technologies (Yağın, 2022). Despite the recommendation in the current curriculum and the potential for providing student-centered instruction through various methods and techniques, it is observed that classroom teachers encounter challenges in implementing student-centered instruction. Karaman (2019) revealed in a study with classroom teachers that while teachers acknowledge that the Social Studies curriculum is student-centered, they face difficulties in instructional design and evaluation processes. Therefore, it can be speculated that one reason for classroom teachers' inability to create a student-centered instructional design in Social Studies is the lack of sufficient evidence on the general impact of various methods and techniques and their specific effects in Social Studies education. Although there are some meta-analytical studies in the literature demonstrating the positive effects of student-centered instruction methods and techniques, such as the meta-analysis conducted by Yağın (2022) indicating the overall positive effect of student-centered instruction on students' attitudes towards learning, Yaşar et al., (2015) showing the positive effect of student-centered instruction on academic achievement in social studies, Ulubey and Toraman (2015) and Yılmaz, Yüksel, and Toy (2023) demonstrating the positive effect of creative drama from student-centered instruction activities on academic achievement, Can and Gerşil (2021) on the positive effect of project-based learning on academic achievement, Camnalbur and Mutlu Bayraktar (2018) demonstrating the positive effect of collaborative learning on academic achievement, Camnalbur and Erdoğan (2008) and Dikmen and Tuncer (2018) on the positive effect of computer-assisted instruction on academic achievement, Toraman, Çelik, and Çakmak (2018) showing the positive effect of gamification on academic achievement, it can be said that there is a need for studies revealing the impact of student-centered instruction on students' academic achievement specifically in Social Studies. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the effect of student-centered instruction in primary school Social Studies on students' academic achievement. In line with this aim, the study sought to answer the research question:

"What is the effect of student-centered instruction on academic achievement in Social Studies instruction?" It is expected that the findings of the current study will contribute to teachers and researchers in the field of Social Studies instruction.

Method

This study aims to examine the effect of student-centered instruction in primary school Social Studies on students' academic achievement. In line with this aim, the scope of the current study has constituted experimental studies where student-centered instructional activities, technologies, or materials defined as student-centered instruction in Social Studies education are utilized as independent variables, and academic achievement is considered as the dependent variable. A thorough literature review revealed numerous studies, hence the current research was conducted using the meta-analysis method. Meta-analysis is a research process where findings of multiple studies with a common focus are reanalyzed (Dinçer, 2014).

In meta-analysis studies, the first step involves accessing studies with a specific focus, followed by descriptive classification of these studies, and finally, statistical integration, analysis, and interpretation of the findings (Dinçer, 2014; Burak, 2023). Therefore, to conduct the current study, the initial focus was on graduate theses containing student-centered instructional practices in Social Studies education. Studies conducted in an experimental model and examining the effect of student-centered instruction in Social Studies education on academic achievement were identified from these theses. The identified studies were then meticulously examined in terms of methodology (sample, data analysis, etc.), and finally, based

on the findings of these studies, the overall effect of student-centered instruction on academic achievement was statistically determined.

Data Collection

The data for this study were sourced from graduate education theses scanned in the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). The study data were accessed by periodically scanning the thesis center with specific keywords until February 01, 2024. In this context, keywords such as "Hayat Bilgisi" (Life Science), "Akademik Başarı" (Academic Achievement), and their English equivalents "Life Science" and "Academic Achievement" were utilized. As a result of the scans, 299 master's and doctoral theses were retrieved from the system. The inclusion criteria for the studies to be included in the meta-analysis were determined based on inclusion criteria, and among the 299 theses, those eligible for meta-analysis formed the research data. The inclusion criteria used in this study are as follows:

- i) The thesis should be openly accessible (focused on the last 20 years),
- ii) The research should be conducted in an experimental research model,
- iii) There should be control groups in the experimental process,
- iv) Data should be obtained using pre-test and post-test,
- v) There should be no significant difference in pre-test academic achievement scores between the experimental and control groups,
- vi) The research findings should include arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and/or t-value.

Accordingly, 25 graduate theses constituted the data for the current study, yielding 26 effect sizes. The theses used in the meta-analyses of the current study were first saved to a computer in PDF format and then coded using a form. During the coding process, the characteristic features of the studies (author, year, type, sample size, student-centered method used, etc.) and statistical findings (arithmetic mean, standard deviation, t-value, etc.) were entered into the form. The characteristic features of the theses that constituted the data for the current study are presented in Table 1.

Tablo 1
Characteristic Features of Theses

Variables	Sub-variables	n
Year	2003	1
	2004	2
	2005	2
	2008	1
	2009	1
	2010	1
	2011	2
	2012	2
	2013	1
	2014	1
	2015	1
	2017	1
	2019	1
	2020	1
	2021	1
2022	1	

	2023	5
Thesis	Master Education	22
	Dissertation	3
Clases	2. Grade	5
	3. Grade	20
Teaching Methods and Techniques	Scenario Based Learning	1
	Learning Style Model (Dunn and Dunn)	1
	Flipped Learning	1
	Augmented Reality	1
	Multiple Intelligence Theory	2
	Drama-Dramatization-Creative Drama	4
	Analytical Story Method	1
	Brain Based Learning	1
	Technology Supported Learning	1
	Educational Game-Digital Game-Gamification	4
	Collaborative Learning	1
	Cartoon	2
	Media Supported Teaching	1
	Learning Package (Slides, Video, etc.)	1
	Project Based Learning	1
Station Technique	1	
Problem Based Learning	1	

Data Analysis

The Comprehensive Meta-Analysis (CMA) package program was employed for analyzing the data of this research. In the analysis, effect sizes for each examined study were determined. Hedge's *g* was utilized for determining effect sizes. Cohen's (1988) suggested criteria intervals were considered in evaluating the determined effect sizes:

- -0.15 to 0.15: negligible level
- 0.15 to 0.40: small level
- 0.40 to 0.75: medium level
- 0.75 to 1.10: large level
- 1.10 to 1.45: very large level
- 1.45 and above: excellent level

Once the effect size for each individual study was determined independently, the overall effect size of studies in different models was calculated. In this context, the overall effect size can be examined in two different models: fixed or random effect models (Burak, 2023). To decide on the interpretation of the overall effect size, whether a fixed or random model should be used, the obtained *Z* value, significance level of the *Z* value, *Q* value, and degrees of freedom were used in comparison with the critical value of the χ^2 (chi-square) distribution. If the *Q* value is smaller than the critical value, the fixed effects model should be preferred; if it is larger, the random effects model should be preferred (Dinçer, 2014). To determine which model to use in this study, the *Q* value obtained in the homogeneity test and the critical value of the χ^2 distribution at 25 degrees of freedom with a 95% confidence interval were compared.

To demonstrate the reliability of the meta-analyses conducted in the present study, the scope of the research was examined in terms of publication bias. Various methods and techniques exist to determine whether publication bias is present in meta-analysis studies. In the current research, publication bias was examined using the Rosenthal method and funnel plot. The Rosenthal method indicates how many studies opposite to the effect size obtained in the research scope should be included in the analysis to nullify the effect size (Burak, 2023; Özcan, 2008). In this study, 25 studies were selected and included according to the inclusion criteria,

and a meta-analysis was conducted. According to the Rosenthal method, for the effect size obtained in the present study to be considered biased, another 1859 studies opposite to these studies would need to be found. Hence, it can be said that the current study is free from publication bias. Additionally, funnel plots can also be utilized to determine whether publication bias is present. The funnel plot presents the dispersion of each independent study's effect size around the overall effect size. If the independent studies scatter within the funnel and show symmetry, it indicates the absence of publication bias (Dinçer, 2014). Figure 1 presents the funnel plot of the current study.

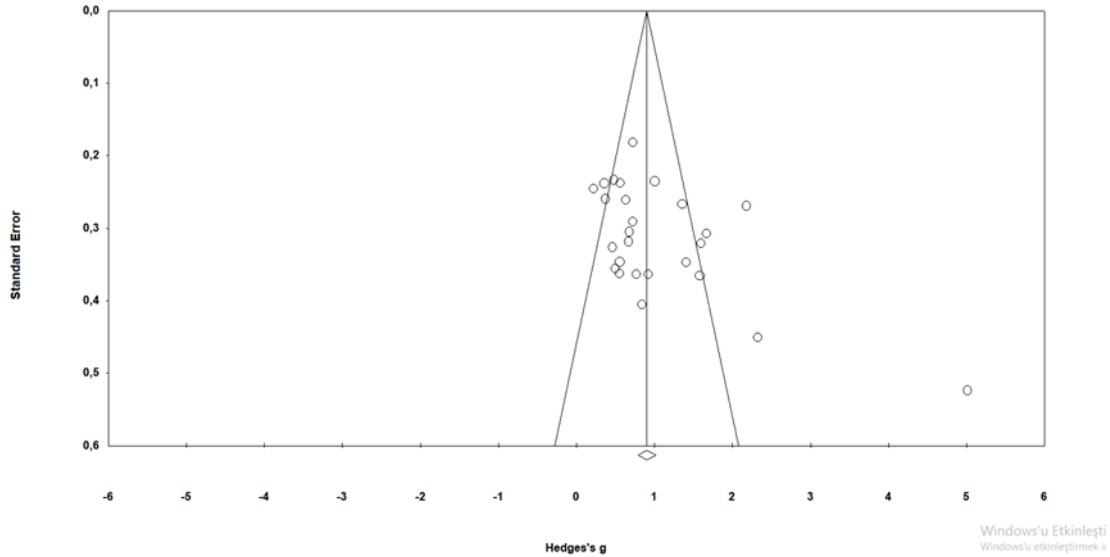


Figure 1. Funnel plot

Based on the graph in Figure 1, it can be observed that the majority of the studies examined through meta-analysis are scattered within the funnel. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no publication bias in the current study according to both the Rosenthal method and the funnel plot.

Results

The effect sizes produced from 25 experimental studies testing the impact of student-centered teaching methods and techniques in life science education on students' academic achievements in life science, along with their confidence intervals and findings regarding the study weights within the meta-analysis, are presented in Table 2.

Tablo 2
Effect Sizes, Confidence Interval ve Weights of Studies

Study	Etki Büyüklüğü	Confidence Interval		Study Weights (Fixed Effect)	Study Weights (Random Effects)
		Lower	Upper		
Aslan, 2004	0.463	-0.177	1.102	3.06	3.80
Bilek, 2009	1.598	0.969	2.227	3.16	3.87
Bütün, 2015	0.768	0.056	1.480	2.47	3.67
Çakmak, 2023	0.840	0.046	1.634	1.99	3.42
Çalışır, 2011	1.406	0.725	2.087	2.70	3.70
Çetin, 2011	1.670	1.068	2.273	3.45	3.89
Çokçalışkan, 2013	0.372	-0.136	0.881	4.83	4.11
Demir, 2008	0.478	0.021	0.936	5.98	4.22

Dinçer Çengeloğlu, 2005	0.678	0.080	1.276	3.50	3.90
Dündar, 2003	0.561	0.094	1.028	5.74	4.20
Gazioğlu, 2023	0.724	0.153	1.295	3.83	3.96
Gündüz, 2014	0.557	-0.122	1.237	2.71	3.70
Güneş, 2021	5.013	3.986	6.039	1.19	2.87
Karaoğlan, 2019	2.183	1.655	2.711	4.49	4.07
*Kaynar, 2020a	0.920	0.207	1.634	2.46	3.62
*Kaynar, 2020b	0.555	-0.155	1.265	2.48	3.62
Kılıç Özün, 2010	0.359	-0.109	0.826	5.73	4.20
Oğuz, 2023	2.324	1.441	3.207	1.60	3.20
Özdemir, 2023	0.219	-0.263	0.701	5.38	4.17
Palavan, 2012	0.721	0.365	1.077	9.87	4.43
Selanik Ay, 2005	1.358	0.835	1.881	4.57	4.08
Temur, 2004	0.667	0.042	1.292	3.20	3.83
Tengilimiloğlu, 2013	0.634	0.121	1.146	4.77	4.10
Ütkür, 2012	1.008	0.547	1.469	5.88	4.22
Yavuz, 2017	1.583	0.866	2.300	2.56	1.98
Yıldız, 2022	0.499	-0.199	1.196	2.57	3.66

The 26 effect sizes generated from the 25 studies presented in Table 2 are distributed between 0.219 and 5.013. Thus, it has been observed that each study independently exhibits a positive effect size. Based on this, in experimental studies where student-centered methods and techniques are tested against traditional teaching methods in life science education, it is evident that academic achievement significantly differs in favor of the experimental group. Therefore, it can be said that the use of student-centered methods and techniques in life science education positively impacts academic achievement. Findings related to the evaluation of the magnitude of each study's independent effect sizes are presented in Table 3.

Tablo 3
Size of Independent Effect Values of Studies

Effect Size Interval	Level of Effect Size	n
-0.15-0.15	Negligible	0
0.15-0.40	Small	2
0.40 -0.75	Medium	12
0.75 -1.10	Large	4
1.10 -1.45	Very Large	2
1.45 -	Excellent	5

According to the findings presented in Table 3, it has been determined that 2 studies have small effect sizes, 12 studies have medium effect sizes, 4 studies have large effect sizes, 2 studies have very large effect sizes, and 5 studies have excellent effect sizes. In this context, it can be stated that each study independently exhibits at least a medium level of effect size. The combined effect sizes of the relevant studies according to different models are presented in Table 4.

Tablo 4
Combined Effect Sizes of Studies According to Different Models

Model	n	Z	p	Q	χ^2 Değeri	Effect Size	Confidence Interval	
							Lower	Upper
Fixed Effects	26	15.769	0.000	144.896	37.652	0.900	0.788	1.011
Random Effects	26	7.342	0.000	144.896	37.652	1.028	0.754	1.302

As observed in Table 4, the Z values are statistically significant in different models (15.769; 7.342, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, overall, the combined effect size of the studies included in

the meta-analysis holds a significant value. To decide which of the two different models to use for interpreting the overall effect size, the Q value presented in Table 4 was considered. In this regard, it was found that the Q value was 144.896. It was observed that the critical value of the χ^2 distribution at 5% alpha level with 25 degrees of freedom was 37.652. Thus, it was determined that the χ^2 value was smaller than the Q value, indicating that the effect sizes of the independent studies exhibited a heterogeneous distribution. Therefore, the combined overall effect size of the studies was interpreted according to the random effects model.

According to the random effects model presented in Table 4, it was found that the lower limit of the overall effect size at a 95% confidence interval was 0.754, and the upper limit was 1.302. The combined overall effect size of the studies was calculated as 1.028. Based on these values, it was determined that student-centered teaching methods and techniques have a substantial impact on academic achievement in life science education.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the effect of student-centered teaching on academic achievement in life science education. To reach this aim, 25 postgraduate education theses meeting the inclusion criteria for meta-analysis methodology and available from the Higher Education Council (YÖK) Thesis Center, and with open access permission, conducted between 2003 and 2023 were examined. During the meta-analysis process, the effect sizes produced from the 25 thesis studies were independently examined, then combined to establish and interpret the overall effect size. According to the findings of the research, it was revealed that the student-centered teaching process in life science education has a statistically significant effect on academic achievement. It was found that this effect favored the experimental group where student-centered teaching was conducted over the control groups using traditional teacher-centered teaching methods. In this context, it can be inferred that student-centered teaching in life science education positively affects academic achievement more favorably compared to traditional teaching.

According to the findings of the current research, each study conducted independently with student-centered teaching in life science education positively affected students' academic achievements. However, when the effect sizes of each study were examined independently, it was found that the experimental study conducted by Güneş (2021), based on the Dunn and Dunn learning styles, significantly differed from other studies and demonstrated the most excellent effect size. Therefore, designing student-centered teaching in life science education to provide instruction tailored to the learning characteristics of students, as demonstrated by learning styles, appears to be an effective approach. Providing instruction according to learning style not only positively affects students' academic achievement but also enables students to develop positive attitudes towards the course. Despite the existence of many factors affecting academic achievement, students' affective characteristics such as attitudes and interests significantly influence academic achievement to a greater extent than cognitive characteristics like learning style. Therefore, providing instruction according to learning style in life science education also positively affects these affective aspects, supporting the remarkable positive effect observed in academic achievement.

The findings of the current research revealed that the studies included in the meta-analysis showed a heterogeneous distribution. Therefore, the general effect of student-centered teaching in life science education on academic achievement was interpreted according to the random effects model of meta-analysis. According to the random effects model, it was concluded that student-centered teaching in life science education has a broad impact. Previous studies in the literature have also generally indicated that student-centered teaching has a moderate effect on students' attitudes towards the course (Yağan, 2022) and significantly positively influences academic achievement in social studies (Yaşar et al., 2015). Furthermore, some studies have shown that student-centered teaching methods such as creative drama

(Ulubey & Toraman, 2015; Yılmaz et al., 2023), project-based learning (Can & Gerşil), collaborative learning (Camnalbur & Mutlu Bayraktar, 2018) have a broad impact on academic achievement in life science education. Additionally, computer-supported instruction has a broad impact on students' academic achievements (Camnalbur & Erdoğan, 2008; Dikmen & Tuncer, 2018), while gamification has been found to have an excellent effect (Toraman et al., 2018). In this context, it can be said that the positive effect of student-centered teaching, along with the independent methods and techniques used in this teaching, is consistent with and supports the literature.

In conclusion, it is understood that implementing student-centered teaching in life science education significantly enhances students' academic achievements. Academic achievement is considered as an indicator of the effectiveness of methods and techniques used in the education system (Rodríguez et al., 2017) and is accepted as a criterion by stakeholders (Burak & Gültekin, 2021). Therefore, the findings obtained in the current study are highly significant in terms of life science education. In this regard, teachers in life science education should frequently utilize student-centered teaching methods, techniques, and materials such as collaborative learning, station technique, drama, computer-supported instruction, augmented reality, brain-based learning, educational digital or non-digital games, project-based learning, learning environments organized according to learning styles, cartoons, and media-supported instruction based on the available resources, student characteristics, and their own competencies

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