

Original Article/Araştırma Makalesi

**THE SOCIAL SKILLS OF CHILDREN AND THE CONTENTS THEY WATCH:
REFLECTIONS OF THE PANDEMIC PROCESS**

Çocukların Sosyal Becerileri ve İzledikleri İçerikler: Pandemi Sürecinin Yansımaları

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Geliş Tarihi / Received: 06.12.2022

Kabul Tarihi / Accepted: 29.12.2022

ABSTRACT

The preschool period is the period in which the child's social skills develop. During this period the child adapts to new environment and acquires social environment requirements. As distance education rates increased in the Covid-19 epidemic, the social skills expected to be gained by children were adversely affected. In this process, usage of technological tools increased considerably. This research's aim is to examine the reflection of the contents that children watch/use during the pandemic process on their social skills in line with family views with qualitative survey model and phenomenology design. The study group consists of 25 parents determined by easily accessible situation sampling, whose child receives preschool education (only distance, only face-to-face, distance and face-to-face) in Şırnak province. The research data was collected through interviews and analyzed with descriptive and content analysis techniques. In the research, in line with the participants' opinions and research questions six themes were determined as: "Demographic characteristics", "Screen time", "Technological tools used", "Platforms used", "Contents watched/used", "Reflection of contents on social skills". As the result, it has been determined that the separation of children from education and friend environment during the pandemic period caused technology usage increase and negatively affected their social skills.

Keywords: Covid-19, Preschool education, Social skills, Technological contents, Technology use.

ÖZ

Okul öncesi dönem çocuğun sosyal becerilerinin geliştiği dönemdir. Bu dönemde çocuk yeni bir ortama uyum sağlamakta ve sosyal ortamın gerekliliklerini edinmektedir. Covid-19 salgınında uzaktan eğitim oranları arttığından çocukların kazanması beklenen sosyal beceriler olumsuz etkilenmiştir. Bu süreçte teknolojik araçların kullanımı da oldukça artmıştır. Bu araştırmanın amacı pandemi sürecinde çocukların izledikleri/kullandıkları içeriklerin sosyal becerilerine yansımalarını aile görüşleri doğrultusunda nitel tarama modeli ve olgu bilim deseni ile incelemektir. Çalışma grubu Şırnak ilinde çocuğu okul öncesi eğitim alan (sadece uzaktan, sadece yüz yüze, uzaktan ve yüz yüze), kolay ulaşılabilir durum örnekleme ile belirlenmiş 25 ebeveynden oluşmaktadır. Araştırmanın verileri görüşme yapılarak toplanıp betimsel ve içerik analiz tekniğiyle çözümlenmiştir. Araştırmada katılımcıların görüşleri ve araştırma soruları doğrultusunda "Demografik özellikler", "Ekran başında geçen süre", "Kullanılan teknolojik araçlar", "Kullanılan platformlar", "İzlenen/Kullanılan içerikler", "İçeriklerin sosyal beceriye yansımaları" olmak üzere altı tema belirlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak pandemi döneminde çocukların eğitim ve arkadaş ortamından uzaklaşmasının teknoloji kullanımının artmasına ve sosyal becerilerinin olumsuz etkilenmesine neden olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Covid-19, Okul öncesi eğitim, Sosyal beceri, Teknoloji kullanımı, Teknolojik içerikler.

INTRODUCTION

The period in which the child is open to the influence of his environment mostly and which has a critical importance in development is the preschool period (Senemoğlu, 2012). Studies show that preschool education has very important effects on the development of children. In addition, the development process can be supported by education plans and school-family cooperation. In this respect, the developmental areas of children who can receive preschool education are progressing positively (Akçay, 2016; Arıcı & Baltan, 2020; Güzelyurt, Birge & Ökten, 2019; Yılmaz, 2019). When the literature is examined, the social development and acquisition of social skills of children in the preschool period increase in the educational environment (Cerrahoğlu, 2002). Due to the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) epidemic, which turned into a pandemic in a short time (Chen, Zhou, Dong, Qu, Gong, Han & Zhang, 2020), these social skills that children are expected to gain have been adversely affected. Due to the increase in the rate of transmission of the virus in social and common living areas, the continuation of education in educational environments was restricted and the form of education was determined as distance education (Aykar & Yurdakul, 2021; Kay & Sağlam, 2021). Mandatory restrictions on social life due to pandemic measures were also introduced (Banerjee, 2020; Dickens, Koo, Wilder-Smith & Cook, 2020). These restrictions directly affect the social development of children (Döğer & Kılınç, 2021; Koç, 2022).

In preschool education institutions, children's ability to; communicate with their peers, express themselves and defend their rights is making progress (Begde & Yavuz, 2014). The fact that the pandemic process was spent at home and only with people who shared a common living space affected children's communication skills, relationships within the family, peer relationships, problem-solving skills, and ability to manage their emotions (Pujiastuti, Hartati & Wang, 2022; Tanhan & Özok, 2020). Children receiving preschool education spend their remaining time from the distance or face-to-face education process by doing various activities. Some of these activities are carried out through technological devices (Günindi, 2022; Nurjanah, Zahroh, Ainiyah, Hasina & Kamariyah, 2022). It is thought that children who are at home during the epidemic are more willing to consume various contents on technological devices and are negatively affected by some contents (Aral, Aysu & Kadan, 2020; Ekyana, Fauziddin & Arifiyanti, 2021; Güzelyurt & Nayci, 2021).

Due to the measures taken during the pandemic process, the time spent by children at home has increased. Parallel to the increase in the time they spend at home, the time they spend with their family members has also increased (Akoğlu & Karaaslan, 2020). The role of families,

which have an important role in the entire life and education process of the child, has gained even more importance in the pandemic process (Çaykuş & Mutlu Çaykuş 2020; Gündoğdu, 2021; Kırmızıgül, 2020, Koç, 2022). In this context, the aim of the study is to examine the reflection of the contents that children watch/use during the pandemic process on their social skills in line with family views.

METHOD

Model of the Research

Qualitative scanning model was preferred in this study which aims to examine the contents watched/used by children during the pandemic process and their social skills in line with family views. Scanning model aims to describe the situation that occurred in the past or present without interfering with the values, opinions, feelings of the participants and without an effort to influence them (Karasar, 2014). Phenomenology was used as the research design. In phenomenology, it is aimed to interpret the obtained information by examining individual perceptions about a phenomenon in depth (Creswell, 2016).

Study Group

The study group consists of 25 parents residing in Şırnak province and their preschool education receiving children (only distance, only face-to-face, both distance and face-to-face), who were determined by easily accessible situation sampling and who agreed to participate voluntarily in the research. In the easily accessible situation sampling, the researchers choose the situation that is easy to reach.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data of the research were collected through interviews. In the semi-structured interview form, there are three questions about demographic characteristics and five questions about the research topic. The questions were created by the researchers by scanning the literature, and then they were arranged by taking expert opinion. The data within the scope of the research were analyzed through descriptive and content analysis techniques. In descriptive analysis, data are presented within the scope of predetermined questions, concepts or themes (Merriam, 2013). Content analysis, on the other hand, is the classification and interpretation of the data within the scope of the research according to similar characteristics (Merriam, 2013). In the study, the themes were determined in line with the research questions by using the descriptive analysis technique. With the content analysis technique, the expressions that were common in the views of the participants were grouped and codes were created.

Reliability

Miles and Huberman's (1994) reliability formula [$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Consensus (37)}}{\text{Agreement (37)} + \text{Difference of Opinion (5)}}$] was used to determine the consistency between the codes of the two researchers. It was determined that there was a consistency of .88 between the codes. In this direction, the codes determined in the study are .70 and above, indicating that they are reliable. The codes with the determined theme are shown in the tables with their frequencies (f). Some of the sentences containing the thoughts of the participants were presented with direct quotations.

FINDINGS

In the study, six themes were determined in line with the opinions of the participants and the research questions: "Demographic characteristics", "Screen time", "Technological tools used", "Platforms used", "Contents watched/used", "Reflection of contents on social skills".

Theme 1: Demographic Characteristics

When Table 1 is examined it is seen that, of the children of the families participating in the research; 16 were male and 9 are female. The children were in the age group of 4 years old (f=2), 5 years old (f=13), and 6 years old (f=10). While the majority of the children (f=21) received both face-to-face education and distance education, the rest of the students received only distance/online education (f=3) and face-to-face education (f=1).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Children

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency (f)	Parent (P)
Gender	Male	16	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P11, P13, P14, P15, P16, P18, P23, P24, P25
	Female	9	P2, P9, P10, P12, P17, P19, P20, P21, P22
Age	4 years old	2	P2, P3
	5 years old	13	P1, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P14, P19, P21, P23, P24, P25
	6 years old	10	P4, P8, P12, P13, P15, P16, P17, P18, P20, P22
Education	Both face-to-face and distance	21	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P15, P16, P18, P19, P20, P21, P22, P23, P24, P25
	Distance (Online)	3	P8, P14, P17
	Face-to-face	1	P3

Theme 2: Screen Time

When Table 2 is examined, it is observed that families stated that the time spent by their children in front of the screen mostly (f=23) increased, while very few of the families (f=2) stated that the time spent by their children in front of the screen did not change.

P3 “...We couldn't take the tablet and the phone from his/her hands anyway. With this virus, he/she started to use it even more. I can't stop it if I don't give it.”

P14 “...No school, no friends. These tools are my child's only friend after Corona. I know it's harmful, but I can't stop him/her from using it.”

P19 “...Nothing has changed. Almost all of the day was spent on the phone. This situation continued during the pandemic. The children are stuck at home. We couldn't get him/her out at all at first. We're taking him/her out a little now, but he/she's addicted to the phone.”

Table 2. Screen Time Children Spent

Screen Time	Frequency (f)	Parent (P)
Increased	23	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P20, P22, P23, P24, P25
Remained the same	2	P19, P21

Theme 3: Technological Tools Used

When Table 3 is examined, families stated that their children used telephone (f=17), television (f=13), tablet (f=9), computer (f=4), and playstation (f=1).

Table 3. Technological Tools Used by Children

Technological Tool	Frequency (f)	Parent (P)
Telephone	17	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P13, P15, P16, P19, P20, P22, P24, P25
Television	13	P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P10, P14, P15, P17, P18, P23, P24, P25
Tablet	9	P1, P2, P3, P7, P11, P14, P21, P23, P25
Computer	4	P3, P12, P20, P22
Playstation	1	P3

Theme 4: Platforms Used

When Table 4 is examined, families stated that their children used their parents' technological tools to watch contents on platforms of youtube (f=21), TRT Çocuk (f=10), Tiktok (f=7), Instagram (f=6), Netflix (f=4), Cartoonnetwork (f=4) and Nick Jr. (f=1).

Table 4. Platforms Used by Children

Platform	Frequency (f)	Parent (P)
Youtube	21	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P20, P21, P22, P23, P24, P25
TRT Çocuk	10	P2, P3, P6, P9, P10, P14, P19, P22, P23, P25
Tiktok	7	P5, P7, P8, P11, P12, P20, P22
Instagram	6	P1, P5, P7, P8, P11, P12
Netflix	4	P1, P3, P21, P24
Cartoonnetwork	4	P13, P15, P17, P18
Nick Jr.	1	P4

Theme 5: Contents Watched/Used

When Table 5 is examined, it is determined that the families have stated their children to watch cartoons (f=16), play violent games (f=14), watch violent videos (f=12), watch educational videos (f=6), listen to online stories (f=4) and to music (f=1).

P5 “...he/she watches weird videos on Youtube like “siren kafa”. And then he/she is very afraid. And he/she started to follow a platform called Tiktok. He imitates the dances he sees there and uses the negative sentences he hears on the platform.”

P8 “...he/she watches videos as if hypnotized. I uninstalled Youtube. He/she cried for two days. I downloaded Youtube's app for kids. He/she cried again, saying “I don't want this”. I resisted but he learned to download the app. He/she downloaded it again at every opportunity.”

P22 “...I am opening TRT Çocuk so that he/she can watch healthy contents. He/she gets bored after a while. He/she watches PUB-G videos on YouTube.”

Table 5. Contents Watched/Used by Children

İçerik	Frekans (f)	Parent (P)
Cartoon	16	P1, P2, P3, P6, P8, P9, P11, P13, P14, P15, P16, P19, P21, P23, P24, P25
Games including violence	14	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P13, P14, P17, P18, P23, P25
Videos including violence	12	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P13, P14, P15, P18, P25
Educational videos	6	P2, P11, P12, P16, P20, P22
Online stories	4	P14, P16, P22, P24
Music	1	P1

P2 “...he/she watches cartoons all the time. I can no longer keep track of exactly what he/she's watching. I have work too. I can't stand by all the time. I open educational videos when I am by his/her side. We can't take the phone of the tablet away from the him/her, at least I want him/her to watch educational things.”

P10 “... He/she plays PUB-G the most. He/she's killing someone in this game.”

Theme 6: Reflection of Contents on Social Skills

When Table 6 is examined, the families have been determined to state that the technological contents their children accessed affected their children's social behaviours. These reflections are as follows: to force (crying, hitting, shouting) when the required thing was not done (f=8), to become aggressive during communication (f=8), to withdraw with less communication (f=8), to imitate aggression in the contents they watched/played (f=6), not to see friends (f=3), to be bored at home (f=2), to be calm when using a technological device, to be angry when the required device is not used (f=2), not to tell the cause of the problem at the time of the problem (f=2), not to access appropriate contents for age (f=1). Few of the families (f=2) stated that the social skills of the children have not changed.

Table 6. Reflection of Contents Watched/Used by Children on Social Skills

Reflection of contents watched/played on social skills	Frequency (f)	Parent (P)
When he/she does not get what he/she wants, he/she forces people to do it for him/her (by crying, hitting, shouting)	8	P1, P3, P6, P10, P14, P20, P23, P25
He/she becomes aggressive during communication	8	P7, P11, P12, P15, P16, P17, P18, P20
He/she lost contact and became withdrawn.	8	P2, P4, P6, P8, P9, P10, P22, P24
He/she imitates aggression in the contents he/she watches/plays.	6	P1, P7, P14, P20, P23, P25
He/she never sees his/her friends.	3	P12, P22, P23
He/she is very bored at home.	2	P2, P12
He/she is calm when using a technological device, and gets angry when he/she does not use it.	2	P1, P5
He/she does not tell the cause of the problem at the time of the problem.	2	P3, P25
His/her social skills did not change.	2	P19, P21
Accessing contents that is not age-appropriate.	1	P13

P6 “...He/she does not communicate with us. If we call while the phone is in his/her hand, he/she will never hear it. He/she yells when he/she picks up the phone. No matter what I do, he/she is not happy. He/she became an introverted child by himself.”

P20 “...he/she forgot to play with his/her friends. The phone is in his/her hand and he/she does what he/she sees there. I can't always control what he/she watches. When I say no to a thing he/she wants, he/she gets mad. He/she's literally having bouts of crying and hitting.”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the study, six themes were determined in line with the opinions of the participants and the research questions: "demographic characteristics", "screen time", "technological tools used", "platforms used", "contents watched/used", "reflection of contents on social skills".

Within the scope of these themes, the majority of children have been determined to receive both face-to-face education and distance/online education during the pandemic period. The fact that the school environment and relations with friends are not regular in the education process suggests that the development of children is negatively affected. In preschool education institutions, children enter the new social environment and gain vital skills. Studies conducted in this context reveal that the development of children who receive regular preschool education is more desirable (Can Yaşar & Aral, 2010; Erbay, 2008; Turan, 2013). In preschool education institutions, children start the socialization process by going out of their home environment. In the socialization process, the environment of the child provides many opportunities for the child to be a researcher and open to discovery (Akduman, 2011). Conducting education in the form of distance education during the pandemic process reveals that it restricts children's communication with their movement areas and weakens children's social skills with friends (Özdoğan & Berkant, 2020).

The most used technological tools by children are respectively; phone, television and tablet. Children mostly watch cartoons, violent videos and play violent games with these devices. However, there are children who also have access to social media tools at the adult level. These data show that children reach to materials which have unsuitable contents for their development. Today, technological tools are the first of the tools that children interact with the external environment. Technological tools can affect the development of children both in positive and negative aspects. As the technological tools have easy accessibility, portability and personalization features, they are used as a supportive element in the learning process of children. In addition, children who interact too much with technological tools also access contents that is violent, unsuitable for their age and may pose a risk (Arslan vd., 2023; Gökler & Turan, 2020; Güzelyurt & Nayci, 2021; Yeygel & Temel Eğinli, 2009).

When the reflection of the contents that children watch or play on their social skills is examined; it has been determined that children imitate the negative contents they watch, crying, hitting and shouting behaviors increase among children, and children are aggressive and withdrawn when communicating. While technological tools contribute to children's access to information and practice, the excessive and uncontrolled use of technological tools affects the development of the child negatively (Arnas, 2005; Çelen, Çelik& Seferoğlu, 2011; Tuncer, 2000). For example while the children were playing outside the home environments which would improve their friendship and support their development in the past, especially with the restrictions imposed by the pandemic process the use of technological tools increased, and the time children played outside and established social relations decreased (Akoğlu & Karaaslan,

2020; Günder, 2021; Pınar, 2021; Üstündağ, 2021). In this context, he experiences problems such as alienation from the social environment, aggression, introversion, lack of communication, and distraction (Acar, Erbaş& Eryaman, 2021; Özkılıç Kabul, 2019). As a result it has been concluded that the separation of children from education and friend environment during the pandemic period caused an increase in the use of technology and this situation negatively affected the children's social skills. In line with the obtained results, suggestions can be listed as follows to ensure the transition from the pandemic process to normal life and to reduce the negative reflections of technology.

- Families can install child safe mode on their children's devices.
- The usage time can be limited for all family members by determining the house rules in the use of technological devices.
- Families can present the contents that their children will use by examining them beforehand.
- Family activities that will increase children's physical and social skills can be done more frequently.
- Family members can also be role models by following the rules set in the use of technological devices.
- Awareness can be raised about the educational use of technology (books supported by augmented reality, educational videos, etc.).
- Families can be informed about social media literacy so that their children can use social media correctly.

Not

This study was presented as an oral presentation at the 8th International Eurasian Educational Research Congress on 7-10 July 2021.

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