The Relationship between Primary School Students' School Burnout, School Satisfaction and COVID-19 Phobia

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İlkokul Öğrencilerinde Okul Tükenmişliği, Okul Memnuniyeti ve COVID-19 Korkusu Arasındaki İlişki

Özet

Hiç şüphe yok ki COVID-19'un benzeri görülmemiş şekilde ortaya çıkması, sadece eğitim uygulamalarını değil, dünya çapında öğrencilerin psikolojisini de etkilemiştir. İlkokul öğrencilerinin okul tükenmişliği düzeyi, okul doyumu ve COVID-19 fobisi arasındaki ilişkileri ile ailelerin gelir ve eğitim düzeylerinin, tükenmişlik ve okul zamanlarında öğrencilerin COVID-19 korkusu üzerindeki etkisinin incelendiği bu araştırmada okul memnuniyeti iç değişken, ailelerin gelir ve eğitim düzeyi dış değişkenler olarak alınmıştır. Veriler "COVID-19 Korkusu Ölçeği", "Çocuklar İçin Okul Doyumu Ölçeği" ve "Okul Tükenmişliği Ölçeği" kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Araştırmaya 589 ilkokul öğrencisi katılmıştır. Veriler yol analizi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, öğrencilerin tükenmişlik ve okul memnuniyet düzeylerinin COVID-19 korkusunun pozitif yordayıcıları olduğunu ortaya koydu. Okul tükenmişliği aracı olarak ele alındığında ise aile gelir düzeyi düştükçe COVID-19 korkusu artmaktadır. Ayrıca okul doyumu aracılık yaptığında okul tükenmişlik düzeyi arttıkça COVID-19 korkusunun azaldığı tespit edilmiştir. Tükenmişlik düzeyi aracı olarak ele alındığında ise aile gelir düzeyi düştükçe COVID-19 korkusu artmaktadır. Diğer bir bulgu ise baba eğitim düzeyi düştükçe okul tükenmişlik düzeyinin arttığı, anne eğitim düzeyi arttıkça öğrencilerin okul doyumunun azaldığı yönündedir. Bu çalışmanın eğitim politikalarını belirleyenler, eğitimciler ve veliler için pandeminin ilkokul öğrencileri üzerindeki psikolojik etkilerini fark etmede önemli sonuçlar ortaya koyduğu düşünülmektedir.

Abstract

It is no doubt that the unprecedented arrival of COVID-19 has not only affected the educational practices but also the psychology of the students worldwide. This study aims to investigate the relationships between primary school students' school burnout level, school satisfaction and COVID-19 phobia, and to analyze the impact of parents' income and their educational level on the students' fear of COVID-19 when burnout and school satisfaction are considered as internal variables, and family income and parents' educational level considered as external variables. The data were collected using "Fear of COVID-19 Scale", "School Satisfaction Scale for Children", and "School Burnout Scale". 589 primary school students participated in the study. The data were analyzed using Path analysis. The results revealed that students' burnout and school satisfaction levels are positive predictors of fear of COVID-19. When the school burnout is considered as a mediator, the fear of COVID-19 increases as the family income level decreases. It was also found that when school satisfaction acts as a mediator, the fear of COVID-19 decreases as the school burnout level increases. When the level of burnout is considered as a mediator, the fear of COVID-19 increases as the family income level decreases. Another finding was that as the father's educational level decreases, school burnout level increases whereas as mothers' educational level increases, the students' school satisfaction decreases. We believe that this study reveals significant results for educational policy makers, educators, and parents to realize the psychological impacts of pandemic on primary school students.

Keywords: Primary school students, COVID-19, School burnout, School satisfaction

Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic has had great impacts on the societies worldwide, and without doubt, education has been one of the most affected issues at all levels. Due to the rapid spread of this pandemic, countries had to implement mandatory lockdown for a long time, had to close down the schools and universities,

and had to implement emergency actions to sustain their educational practices through digital learning environments. Of course, this was a big challenge for everyone involved in the education process as they had almost never experienced such a change and had to adapt to it in a short time. However, the primary-school-age children were those who possibly got affected more than other students at other educational levels as they need more assistance and support for their learning (Putri et al., 2020). In addition, the uncertainty, urgent adaptation needs, and the challenges caused by the pandemic have also resulted in such behavioral abnormalities and/or psychological disorders as the fear of COVID-19 burnout, and/or stress, anxiety, boredom, lack of life satisfaction, etc. (Atılgan & Aksoy, 2021; Garfin et al., 2020; Talidong & Toquero, 2020; Tomaszek & Muchacka-Cymerman, 2022; Vu & Bosmans, 2021). Similarly, Panda et al. (2020) stated that anxiety, depression, irritability, boredom, inattention, and fear of COVID-19 are predominant new psychological problems in children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although the children have been less likely to be infected with COVID-19 and even if infected they usually have recovered with milder symptoms, they are still prone to the negative psychological and social effects of the pandemic (Imran et al., 2020). Decreased life satisfaction, irritability, disappointment, emotional discomfort, sadness, guilt, fatigue, boredom, insomnia, lack of concentration, indecision, isolation, and decreased school performance are stated as the most common psychological and behavioral reactions caused as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Karakose et al., 2021). Fear of COVID-19, school burnout and decrease in the level school satisfaction are amongst the most common problems that primary school students have encountered (Satıcı et al., 2020; Seçer et al., 2013; Telef, 2014). Students have suffered additional psychological stress due to interrupted academics and uncertain future (Hou et al., 2020). Similarly, fear of COVID-19 or phobia causes people to be on alert to protect themselves and their beloved ones, which can result in loneliness and fear (Yip & Chau, 2020), and this fear causes hopelessness (Sarıcalı et al., 2020). Hopelessness results in the decrease of school performance and life satisfaction (Shek & Li, 2016).

When the above-mentioned issues are considered, it is of great importance to investigate the relationship between fear of COVID-19, school burnout and school satisfaction. This paper aims to examine the relationships between primary school students' school burnout level, school satisfaction and fear of COVID-19. In addition, the paper analyzes the impact of parents' income and educational level on fear of COVID-19 when burnout and school satisfaction are considered as internal variables, and family income and parents' educational level considered as external variable. We, as educators, reckon that the students in this age group could be regarded more disadvantaged as they need socialization. In other words, the school satisfaction level of primary school students could be affected more than the students from any other educational level since they could not socialize with their peers due to extended school closures, the stress of learning loss etc. Therefore, we believe that finding the relationship between those

variables will help educational institutions, educators, psychological counsellors, and other stakeholders act for a better learning experience for learners.

Method

The study adopts correlational research design (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Correlational research is a quantitative approach that uses a structured data collection and analysis process when the data are numerical and/or categorical (Gall et al., 2006). Researchers use correlational research to investigate the relationship between variables without manipulating them (Limberg et al., 2021).

Participants

The research was carried out with 589 primary school students in Düzce, Turkey based on the principles of voluntary participation. Convenience sampling, which is one of the nonprobability sampling methods, was adopted in this research as reaching the whole population was not easy (Sümbüloğlu & Sümbüloğlu, 2005). The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic Characteristics of the Participants*

Variables		N	Frequency
Gender	Male	314	53.3
	Female	275	46.7
Income	5000 TL or below	235	39.9
	5001-10000 TL	263	44.7
	10001-15000 TL	67	11.4
	15001 TL or above	24	4.1
Mother's Educational Level	Elementary School	164	27.8
	High School	208	35.3
	Undergraduate Degree	193	32.8
	Graduate Degree	24	4.1
Father's Educational Level	Elementary School	115	19.5
	High School	219	37.2
	Undergraduate Degree	210	35.7
	Graduate Degree	45	7.6
	Total	**589**	**100**

Data Collection Tools

The data were collected using three scales. The first one is the "Fear of COVID-19" developed by Satıcı et al. (2020), the second is the "School Satisfaction Scale for Children" adapted into Turkish by Telef (2014), and the third is "School Burnout Scale" adapted into Turkish by Seçer et al. (2013). The authors obtained the permissions from the researchers who developed these measurement tools.

Scale 1: Fear of COVID-19

"Fear of COVID-19" developed by Satıcı et al. (2020) is a 5-point Likert type scale and has 7 items. The scale consists of one dimension and has no reverse coded item (Two sample items from this scale are as follows: "Thinking about the coronavirus bothers me.", "I'm losing sleep because of my anxiety about coming down with the coronavirus."

Scale 2: Overall School Satisfaction

Overall School Satisfaction Scale adapted by Telef (2014) has 6 items and one dimension. The items in this 5-point Likert type scale consists of the statements about school and learning experiences and scored between 5 and 30 points. The adaptation study by Telef (2014) was carried out with 582 primary and middle school students (3rd grade-8th grade). As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, it was determined that the scale consisted of a single factor and the total variance was 65%, as in the original. The factor loads of the scale items were calculated between .77 and .82. In confirmatory factor analysis, fit index values were found to be RMSEA= 0.06, SRMR= 0.01, GFI= 0.98, NFI= 0.99, RFI= 0.98, CFI= 0.99, and IFI= 0.99. As a result of the criterion-related validity study of the scale, a positive and significant relationship was found between school satisfaction and life satisfaction (r= .39, p<.01). The Cronbach alpha internal consistency reliability was .89. According to the test-retest scores, it was determined that there was a high positive and significant relationship between the first and second application of the scale (r=.92, p<.01). It was determined that the item-total correlations of the scale varied between .68 and .73, and the t values were significant (p<.001). Two sample items from this scale are as follows: "The time I spend at school is good." , "I like going to school."

Scale 3: School Burnout

Adapted into Turkish by Seçer et al. (2013), "School Burnout Scale" has statements about various situations that are likely to be encountered with regard to school and the way of reaction to these situations. In this 5-point Likert type scale, there are 9 items, and it consists of three dimensions: (1) emotional burnout (items 1, 4, 7, and 9), indifference (items 2, 5, and 6) and the feeling of low individual success (items 3 and 8). The exploratory factor analysis results revealed that the scale explained a total of 66.858 variances in three dimensions. The model fit of this three-dimensional structure was tested with confirmatory factor analysis and the fit indices were found to be at a good level (RMSEA=.042, RMR= .013, NFI=.90, CFI=.96, IFI=.97, RFI=.92, AGFI=.90, GFI=.92). In addition, the confirmatory factor analysis results showed that three sub-dimensions could be summed and scored unidimensionally. As a result of the reliability analysis of the scale, it was found that the internal consistency coefficient was a=.75 and the test-retest reliability was a=.80. Two sample items from this scale are as follows: "I

feel like I'm getting bored with the lessons.", "Recently, I feel that the lessons have become meaningless."

Data Analysis

The data collected through three scales were transferred to the JAMOVI program. The reason for choosing this statistical software is that it is free and easy to perform path analysis. Path analysis was performed in data analysis. Path analysis is an approach to model explanatory relationships between observed variables. The defining feature of path analysis models is the absence of hidden variables. Path analysis models are special cases of structural equation models (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2006). In the Path model, the variables of fear of COVID-19, burnout and school satisfaction are continuous variables. Also, the categorical (ordinal scale) variables such as income, parents' educational level were also included in the model. Since the variables in the model are categorical and no normal distribution is expected, the estimations were made by the method of "Asymptotic Distribution Free". In the Path model, income, parents' educational level was considered as external variable, and burnout and school satisfaction as internal variables, and the indirect effects of parents' income level and educational level on fear of COVID-19 were examined.

Ethics Committee Approval

The research was conducted with the approval of the Scientific Research Ethics Committee, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University (03/08/2021 -13/15). In addition, the researchers obtained permission from the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) Düzce Provincial Directorate of National Education (Date of Approval: 29/09/2021, No: E-10240236-605.99-33377432).

Findings

In this research, the effect of income, parents' educational level, primary school students' burnout, school satisfaction on the fear of COVID-19 was modeled using Path modelling. In this modelling, parents' income level and parents' educational level were considered as external variables, school burnout and school satisfaction as internal variables. And indirect effects of parents' income and educational level on fear of COVID-19 were also modelled. The Path analysis model is shown in Figure 1.
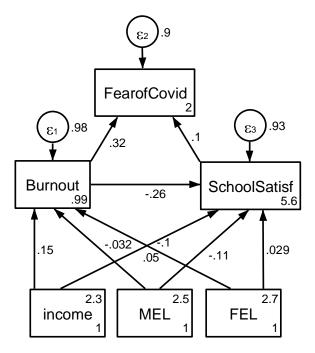
Figure 1. Path Model

(MEL: Mother's Educational Level, FEL: Father's Educational Level)

The degree of freedom of chi-square (chi-square-X^2), which is one of the fit index values of the applied Path analysis, is 1.81, "Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)" 0.037, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) 0.959, Turker-The Lewis Index (TLI) is set at 0.836. Among the fit index values, TLI shows acceptable fit, while other indices indicated perfect fit (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993; Kline, 2011; Özdamar, 2013; Sümer, 2000). These results showed that the path model was suitable. The predictions analyzed in the model are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Regression Predictions in the Model*

		Coefficient	Standard Error	Z	p
Direct Effect	Income → Burnout	0.92	0.29	3.13	**0.002**
	MEL → Burnout	-0.18	0.26	-0.70	0.487
	FEL → Burnout	-0.59	0.28	-2.10	**0.036**
	Burnout → School Satisfaction	-0.27	0.05	-5.45	**<0.0001**
	Income → School Satisfaction	0.32	0.26	1.20	0.230
	MEL → School Satisfaction	-0.64	0.31	-2.10	**0.036**
	FEL → School Satisfaction	0.17	0.28	0.61	0.539
	Burnout → Fear of COVID-19	0.45	0.06	8.18	**<0.0001**
	School Satisfaction → Fear of COVID-19	0.14	0.06	2.51	**0.012**
Indirect Effect	Income → Burnout → Fear of COVID-19	-0.25	0.09	-2.53	**0.011**
	MEL → Burnout → Fear of COVID-19	0.05	0.07	0.68	0.495
	FEL → Burnout → Fear of COVID-19	0.16	0.08	1.99	**0.047**

Burnout → School Satisfaction → Fear of COVID-19	-0.04	0.01	-5.45	**<0.0001**
Income → School Satisfaction → Fear of COVID-19	0.43	0.15	2.81	**0.005**
MEL → School Satisfaction → Fear of COVID-19	-0.16	0.12	-1.40	0.162
FEL → School Satisfaction → Fear of COVID-19	-0.22	0.12	-1.77	0.076

MEL: Mother's Educational Level, FEL: Father's Educational Level

According to the direct effects in the Path model, family income is a positive predictor of students' burnout level (p<.05). That is to say, as the family income level increases, the school burnout level also increases. This finding is unique considering the related literature. The studies conducted by Kerr et al. (2021) and Khan et al. (2021) reached just the opposite results in that family income is related to students' academic motivation, and therefore family income affects the students' burnout levels positively. They found that burnout level is higher within lower income families. Another finding was about educational levels of the students' fathers and mothers. No significant important was found about the mother's education level on students' burnout level (p>.05) whereas father's educational level is a negative predictor of students' school burnout level (p<.05). As the father's educational level decreases, school burnout level increases. This is another interesting result as we found there is difference in terms of the mothers' and fathers' income levels on students' school burnout levels. What is more, in the literature, no studies so far have indicated such a relationship between those variables.

We also reached the finding that students' burnout level is a negative predictor of school satisfaction (p<.05). As students' burnout level increases, their school satisfaction level decreases. This is quite normal that students' satisfaction level will decrease in a state of mental, physical, or emotional exhaustion which lead to hopelessness and lack of academic motivation (Virtanen et al., 2019). Another finding is that there is no significant effect of family income level on students' school satisfaction level (p>.05). However, mother's education level is a negative predictor of students' school satisfaction (p<.05). In other words, as the education level of the mother increases, the students' school satisfaction decreases. But there is no significant effect of father's education level on students' school satisfaction (p>.05). There exist no studies which are in correlation with these results.

When the relationship between students' burnout level and COVID-19 phobia is analyzed, the results reveal that students' burnout level is a positive predictor of fear of COVID-19 (p<.05). To put it differently, as the students' burnout level increases, the fear of COVID-19 also increases. The findings of several other studies (Barbarin et al., 2021; Mohamed et al., 2021; Pozo-Rico et al., 2020) also indicate similar results. In addition, school satisfaction is a positive predictor of fear of COVID-19 (p<.05). As school satisfaction increases, the fear of COVID-19 also increases. This finding is in line with several studies in the related literature (Blasco-Belled et al., 2020; Gündoğan, 2021; Satıcı et al., 2020). We reckon that this result may be due to the working family structure in Turkey. In other words, the number of men working is more than women in Turkey.

When the indirect effects in the Path model are examined, it was found that the effect of family income on fear of COVID-19 is negative and significant when the school burnout is taken as the mediator (p<.05). When the level of burnout is considered as a mediator, the fear of COVID-19 increases as the family income level decreases. This may be due to the fact that the students feel the stress of not being able to continue their education because of their families' financial disruption. This finding correlates with the research conducted by Suffren et al. (2021). In terms of the educational level of the parents, the findings reveal that the effect of father's educational level on fear of COVID-19 is positive and significant when the school burnout is the mediator (p<.05). In other words, the fear of COVID-19 increases when father's education level increases. This finding is unique when the related studies are considered, and there exist no studies which the same or similar results are reached. This may be due to the fact that the fathers whose educational level is higher expect more from their children and they think this expectation should not be affected by such a pandemic. Another finding is that the effect of school burnout level on fear of COVID-19, when the school satisfaction is the mediator, is negative and significant (p<.05). When school satisfaction is the mediator, the fear of COVID-19 decreases as the school burnout level increases. This may be due to the fact that the students have no hopes about their future lives as a result of their academic lives, and therefore, they do not feel stressed because of COVID-19. Another finding is that the effect of family income on the fear of COVID-19 is positive and significant when school satisfaction is the mediator (p<.05). To put it differently, when school satisfaction acts as a mediator, the fear of COVID-19 increases as the family income level increases. This may be due to the fact that the students feel stressed about not being able to meet the expectations of their parents in terms of academic success. There exist no studies in the literature in correlation with these results.

Conclusion

This study aimed at investigation the relationships between primary school students' school burnout level, school satisfaction and fear of COVID-19. The paper also analyzed the impact of parents' income and educational level on fear of COVID-19 when burnout and school satisfaction are considered as internal variables, and family income and parents' educational level considered as external variables. Considering all the results our study has revealed, we can conclude that the school burnout and satisfaction levels have a direct effect on the fear of COVID-19. In addition, family income level, father's educational level and the student burnout level indirectly affect the fear of COVID-19. This indicates the fact that the impact of the pandemic should not only be considered within the context of academic issues but also as a psychological and social issue that would affect the students at the further stages of their education. In addition, if the students' school satisfaction level decreases and burnout level increases at primary school level, it may be difficult to fix this problem in the future as negative emotions about motivation, school happiness will arise. Therefore, the educational policy makers,

curriculum specialists, educators and psychological counsellors should pay special attention to students' well-being, and they should support parents with necessary information to help their children overcome the negative impacts of the pandemic. Furthermore, professional psychological support should be provided to all primary school students by developing appropriate strategies for the ongoing pandemic and post-covid world.

Limitations

This study has a limitation in that the data were obtained from only the participants in one city, Düzce. Therefore, collecting the data from a larger sample from different cities could have increased the generalizability of the results. In this context, further research can be conducted with larger samples and can be compared with the findings of our study.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

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

Acknowledgements or Notes

The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of the primary school students who voluntarily participated in this research and would like to thank their families who gave their consents for their children to participate in our research.

Authors' Contributions

Authors' contributions study design and conception: GK, OA; analysis and interpretation: GK, OA, ÇT.

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