

## DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC PROCESS IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHER OPINIONS

### ÖĞRETMEN GÖRÜŞLERİ BAĞLAMINDA COVID-19 PANDEMİ SÜRECİNDE UZAKTAN EĞİTİM<sup>1</sup>

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#### ABSTRACT

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The aim of this study is to determine teachers' views on distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research was designed in phenomenology design, which is one of the qualitative research approaches. The study group of the research consists of 15 teachers working in Siirt and Bolu provinces determined by maximum diversity sampling method. The data obtained through semi-structured interview form were analysed by content analysis. As a result of the research, it was determined that the teachers made sense of the distance education process in terms of alternative, necessity, difficulty and technological context, stated that it has disadvantages as well as advantages and that it has different effects, especially psychological. In addition, it was determined in the study that teachers suggested solutions to the problems they encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic process in terms of infrastructure and technical support and training on the use of technology.

#### ÖZ

Bu araştırmanın amacı COVID-19 pandemi sürecinde uzaktan eğitime ilişkin öğretmen görüşlerini belirlemektir. Araştırma nitel araştırma yaklaşımlarından biri olan olgubilim (fenomenoloji) deseninde tasarlanmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme yöntemiyle belirlenen Siirt ve Bolu ilinde görev yapan 15 öğretmen oluşturmaktadır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formuyla elde edilen veriler içerik analiziyle çözümlenmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitim sürecini alternatiflik, zorunluluk, güçlük ve teknolojik bağlamda anlamlandırdıkları, avantajlarının yanı sıra dezavantajlarının da olduğunu ve başta psikolojik olmak üzere farklı etkiler bıraktığını ifade ettikleri belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca araştırmada öğretmenlerin COVID-19 pandemi sürecinde karşılaştıkları sorunlara yönelik alt yapı ve teknik destek ile teknoloji kullanımı konusunda eğitimler verilmesi yönünde çözüm önerilerinde buldukları tespit edilmiştir.

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## Introduction

Infectious diseases in the world are as old as human history and have always existed. In order for an infectious disease to be declared as a pandemic, the disease in question must affect many people and be widespread (Çıragil, 2020). There are some criteria for a case to be a pandemic according to the World Health Organisation. These are the occurrence of a disease that did not exist before in the society, the virus in question infects people and causes disease, and the virus that causes this dangerous disease to occur shows the ability to spread easily and continuously. Accordingly, diseases that start to be seen regularly in different parts of the world are declared as pandemics (WHO, 2020). According to Treanor (2011), it is not possible to predict when and how pandemics will start.

At the beginning of human history, populations were isolated from each other. However, today, when human mobility is increasing, there is a significant increase in interregional and even intercontinental communication and interaction. The emergence of possible pandemics has become inevitable due to larger cities, busier trade routes, the development of global transport and communication, and increased contact with different people and animals. The world has experienced pandemic periods with very high destructive effects in history such as the Black Plague epidemic, Cholera Epidemic and Spanish Flu. One of the latest examples of this is the COVID-19 pandemic that emerged in Wuhan, China in the last days of December 2019 and spread all over the world in a short time. The World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 as a pandemic on 11 March 2019 and drew attention to the importance of the outbreak.

The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the world has brought about long-lasting and dramatic changes that societies will experience. COVID-19 (Balci, 2020) has negatively affected the education community with more than 1.5 billion students, 63 million teachers, and a large number of education support staff affected by quarantine, lockdowns and school closures worldwide. Learning losses are expected to occur in millions of children who are unable to attend school due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, it is unclear how large the learning losses and negative impacts on disadvantaged children may be (Sabates, Carter & Stern, 2021). It is also argued that, in the medium term, a social inequality reflected in education, along with temporary changes in the mode of education, can lead to a potential trust problem for the actors implementing the measures (Bormann et al., 2021). Therefore, this pandemic has made it necessary to take a series of measures. Undoubtedly, studies have started rapidly to develop an adaptive, consistent, effective and egalitarian education that can respond to this crisis, which will significantly disrupt the education process. With the developments and the pandemic process, traditional education has become unable to meet the needs of students. Accordingly, distance education has been seen as an alternative way in many countries. Thus, distance education has become an effective option that can support or replace traditional education (Khoshemehr, 2013; Yılmaz & Güven, 2015).

In Turkey, due to the unfavourable conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of National Education and the Council of Higher Education suspended education and training activities and made the necessary legislative arrangements for the transition to distance education. In 2020, in the third week of March, EBA TV started the distance education process on three different television channels at each education level and also on [www.eba.gov.tr](http://www.eba.gov.tr) website. In addition to this, as of 13 April, the live lecture application was implemented on 'eba.gov.tr' and teachers had the opportunity to lecture their students remotely. In universities, it has been decided that the theoretical parts of the courses at all levels and in all programme types will be carried out by distance education by preparing the technical infrastructure. In fact, Turkey is not a very distant country to distance education. In 1924, the "Teacher Education Report" presented by Dewey brought distance education studies to the agenda for the first time. In 1927, it emerged as a concept (Alkan, 1997).

The concept of distance education emerged with the idea of enabling learners to receive education at home. The first application of distance education, which was made in 1728, is nowadays carried out in the form of teleconference and internet applications by increasing its quality with the developing technology (Saygi, 2021). Thanks to the distance education practice carried out in this way, it is ensured that individuals, teachers and students who are kilometers away from each other or who are not able to come together can communicate effectively among themselves (İşman, 2005). Distance education is a teaching method in which effective communication between practitioners and learners is provided by developing different educational methods for learning and teaching methods that cannot be realized in the classroom. According to Rumble (2019), it is

the separation of teaching and learning activities in space and time. In other words, distance education is an education system in which learners and teachers establish a communication tool independent of time and space (Avcı & Akdeniz, 2021). According to Dung (2020), it is the transfer of course content through information technology applications, multimedia resources, internet, video conferencing, etc.

Distance education, which is independent of time and space, has been used with different methods that enable learners to learn with the support of many technological tools and equipment and accordingly, constantly renewing itself with the development of technology. Distance education has been carried out with various applications ranging from internet applications to radio and television broadcasts (Gürkan, 2012). Distance education, in which the student and the teacher do not have to share the same place concretely (Kaya & Önder, 2002), appears as a system that will produce alternative solutions and meet the needs of individuals with the pandemic process. However, it is not possible to ignore the positive and negative consequences of these applications.

It can be said that distance education facilitates communication independent of space and time (Özmen, 2001; Brady et al., 2010). Moreover, users communicate with objects and people as if they were in the same place. This method can have important results in terms of education (Şahin, 2005). In other words, the fact that people who are in the same environment in distance education feel themselves as a part of the community affects the success and attitude in learning (Yılmaz, 2016; Yaman & Hamedoğlu, 2014). Demiray (1999) also stated that distance education enables students and teachers to participate in education and training activities independently of the place, from work or from anywhere, and that they have the flexibility to continue education at any time without time limit, and that distance education activities also reduce the cost of education. Krasnova and Polushkina (2021) suggest that time and place constraints in lessons will be removed, and Alqahtani and Rajkhan (2020) state that the use of technology will improve the educational process. In addition, distance education applications are known to enable students to learn faster and more systematically in a shorter time with computers, to take a more active role compared to traditional education and to communicate with each other at any time (Demirel et al., 2001).

It is known that distance education activities have disadvantages as well as advantages. In addition to the advantages of distance education, there are also limitations such as lack of feedback from the student, lack of mutual interaction, socialisation barrier and inability to help the student individually (Kaya, 2002; Yurdakul, 2005). In this respect, even if distance education creates an environment independent of time and space for students, students' inability to actively participate in the lesson, lack of socialisation, lack of face-to-face interaction and learning inadequacy arising from students' differences may occur. According to Horzum (2003), distance education, which prevents students from socialising, also creates problems in the realisation of applied courses and negatively affects students' healthy learning. (Al-Balas et al., 2020) concluded that distance education is negative due to insufficient internet speed and quality, and (Perez-Lopez et al., 2021) concluded in their study that students raised by families with low education levels have fewer opportunities to use digital technologies and are in a disadvantaged position in this process. In addition, teachers' preparation for the lessons they will teach in the distance education process takes more time and tires them out. Another negativity experienced in distance education environments is the decrease in the sense of community. This situation causes students to move away from the system (Kang et al., 2011; Öztürk & Deryakulu, 2011). Students who experience individual loneliness in distance education activities have low levels of participation in learning activities (Ilgaz & Aşkar, 2009). According to Rovai (2002), students with a decrease in the sense of community may have a tendency to drop out of the course and increase absenteeism, and accordingly, the continuity of distance education may be negatively affected.

When the related literature is examined, Ağır (2007) found that teachers' attitudes towards distance education were positive in his study. Barış (2015) determined that the distance education attitudes of students with computers, mobile devices and continuous internet connection were more positive than students without technological tools. Tao & Yeh (2008) found that teachers' perceptions towards the development of distance education were positive. Similarly, there are other studies showing that the perceptions and attitudes of students who participated in distance education are positive (Antalyalı, 2004; Ağır, 2007; Gürbüz, 2014; Hannay & Newvine, 2006; Yıldız, 2011). In contrast to these studies, Gillies (2008) found that in distance education given to pre-service teachers with technological tools, pre-service teachers could not feel themselves

as real students due to problems such as sound, internet-related disconnections, image distortion, inability to communicate effectively with the teacher and not getting instant answers to the questions they asked. In similar studies, students cannot get enough efficiency from the lessons due to screen freezes, technical problems and sound loss that occur during the lessons in distance education (Doğan & Tatuk, 2015; Horzum, 2003; Karal et al., 2011;). In addition, it is stated that the perceptions and attitudes of teachers and students towards distance education in terms of knowledge and experience are uncertain (Ateş & Altun, 2008); however, it is stated that negative perceptions or attitudes can change positively with the arrangements to be made regarding distance education (Gillian & Gillian, 2004).

As it can be understood from the literature, it is thought that teachers are direct users of distance education, accordingly, the most accurate and most effective evaluation can be made by teachers, and the determination of the positive and negative aspects of distance education, which is a fact of life with COVID-19 and has become compulsory in a sense, will be revealed more clearly with teacher opinions. For this reason, it is thought that this and similar studies will contribute to the identification of deficiencies related to distance education practices, and detailed examinations of the process will contribute to the understanding of various problems that are not realised. In the current study, it is aimed to evaluate a detailed analysis of the distance education process implemented with the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of teacher opinions. In addition, in the study, it was tried to reveal the positive and negative aspects of distance education and the shortcomings or pluses of distance education by taking the opinions of teachers about the distance education process being implemented. Therefore, the following questions were tried to be answered within the scope of this study:

1. What are teachers' views on the meaning of distance education?
2. What are the opinions of teachers on the advantages and disadvantages of distance education process?
3. In which ways did the distance education process affect teachers?
4. What are the teachers' suggestions about the distance education process?

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study was designed in the phenomenology design, which is one of the qualitative research approaches. Patton (2014) defines phenomenology as making sense of people's individual experiences and experiences by examining them in depth. Creswell & Poth (2016) define phenomenology as the extraction of similar or common points from phenomena and events. In the phenomenological design, it is aimed to determine the perceptions and meanings of certain phenomena depending on experience or experiences (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In the current study, phenomenology design was used since it was aimed to determine the experiences of teachers about the phenomenon of distance education during the COVID-19 process and the problems and solution suggestions experienced in distance education depending on these experiences.

### **Participants**

The study group of this research, in which maximum diversity sampling method, which is one of the purposive sampling methods, consists of 15 teachers working in public schools in Siirt and Bolu provinces. Maximum diversity sampling is the determination of similar and different situations in the universe related to the problem being studied and conducting the research on these situations (Büyüköztürk et al., 2014). The reason why the maximum diversity sampling method was preferred in the study is to ensure the diversity of the study group. In other words, with the maximum diversity sampling method, it was aimed to determine the similar or common opinions of the participants who showed diversity and differences in terms of personal (demographic) characteristics. In addition, with the maximum sampling method, it was also aimed to reflect the different experiences and situations that the participants encountered in distance education during the COVID-19 period. In this direction, variables such as gender, branch, school level, professional experience, education level were taken as a source of diversity in determining the teachers to be selected for the study group. Thus, it was ensured that comprehensive and broad evaluations were made by providing participant diversity regarding the problems arising from the distance education process. characteristics of participating teachers in the study group are given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Self-Qualification Information About The Participants

Teacher	Gender	Speciality	School Level	Professional Experience	Learning Status
T1	Male	classroom	Primary School	5	Bachelor
T2	Female	Pre-School	Kindergarten	9	Bachelor
T3	Male	Pre-School	Kindergarten	11	Bachelor
T4	Male	Literature	High Schools	22	Master degree
T5	Female	Maths	Secondary School	3	Bachelor
T6	Female	Pre-School	Kindergarten	4	Bachelor
T7	Male	History	High Schools	18	Bachelor
T8	Male	Turkish	Secondary School	14	Bachelor
T9	Female	Physics	High Schools	10	Bachelor
T10	Female	classroom	Primary School	12	Master degree
T11	Male	classroom	Primary School	26	Bachelor
T12	Male	Science	Secondary School	8	Master degree
T13	Female	Literature	High Schools	14	Bachelor
T14	Male	Physical Education	High Schools	9	Bachelor
T15	Male	English	Secondary School	6	Bachelor

As can be seen in Table 1, the participants of the study consisted of 15 teachers working in kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and secondary education. Six of the teachers were female and nine were male. Table 1 shows that the teachers were selected from different branches. The teachers included in the study have professional experiences ranging from 3 years to 26 years. In terms of school level, the number of teachers participating in the research is almost close to each other. On the other hand, it was determined that 3 of the teachers had master's degree and 12 of them had bachelor's degree.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The data of the study were obtained through a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers as a result of the literature review. Semi-structured interviews are considered important because they enable participants to express their feelings and thoughts better (Büyükoztürk et al., 2014). Interviews enable the understanding of attitudes or perceptions that cannot be directly known concretely (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The interview questions of the research were analyzed by three faculty members (1 doctoral faculty member, 2 associate professors) who are experts in the field of educational administration. In addition, an associate professor who has research and experience in qualitative study methods evaluated the interview questions in terms of scope, purpose and method. The research questions were also checked for language and expression appropriateness by two Turkish language experts who are doctoral faculty members in the field of Turkish Language and Literature. The interview questions were revised in line with the expert opinions. The updated questions and pilot implementation of the study were determined by interviewing two teachers who were not among the participants of the study. The interview form was reorganized according to the feedback received after the pilot application and the interview form was finalized. Thus, an interview form suitable for the purpose of the research was prepared. The interviews of the research were conducted by appointment system in the places and at the times determined by the participants. Each interview lasted an average of 30 minutes and the research data were collected on a voluntary basis. Before the interviews, the participants were given detailed information about the research and were assured that the interviews shared in the research would not be shared with others in any way. Throughout the interview, the researchers stayed away from attitudes and behaviors that could direct the participants and took care not to ask questions outside the purpose of the research. The researchers prevented interviews outside the purpose of the research by asking probe questions (auxiliary questions) when necessary to prevent interviews outside the purpose of the research.

The data of the study were analysed by content analysis. Content analysis is the collection of common or similar concepts under certain themes, categories and codes and making them understandable (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The teachers interviewed within the scope of the research were given pseudonyms as "T1, T2, T3"...and all data obtained from the participant teachers were coded. The answers given by the teachers to the

questions were collected under similar or different codes according to their content. In addition, themes and categories were reached by collecting common or similar codes together. In order to fully reflect the views of the participants, attention was paid to ensure that direct quotations were striking, descriptive and diverse (Ünver et al., 2010).

### Validity and Reliability

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in terms of validity and reliability. There are various ways to ensure internal validity (credibility), external validity (transferability or transferability), internal reliability (consistency) and external reliability (confirmability) in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Credibility is related to the internal validity of the research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Within the scope of internal validity in the current research, the meaningfulness of the research and whether the findings obtained are consistent within themselves were examined. In order to ensure internal validity in the current study, attention was paid to direct quotations, participant confirmation, expert review and the consistency of the collected data with the literature. Transferability and transferability are related to the external validity of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this study, in order to ensure external validity, the maximum diversity sampling method and criterion sampling method, which are more preferred in qualitative studies and which are purposeful sampling methods, were applied and detailed information about the scope of the research was given to the teachers. In order to ensure internal and external reliability, the data obtained were first analysed individually by the researchers, then the analysed data were checked and common themes were determined, and other expert researchers were provided to examine the operation and process of the study in detail (Creswell, 2012). In addition, in order to increase the internal and external reliability of the research, time was spent with the teachers to make them feel comfortable, questions that were not understood were rearranged by making necessary explanations to the teachers, and analyses were carried out by adhering to the conceptual framework.

### Findings

This section consists of sub-headings including the questions addressed to the teachers in accordance with the research objectives

#### Opinions on the Meaning of Distance Education

In this sub-heading, the teachers were asked "What does distance education mean to you? Can you explain?" question was asked. Accordingly, teachers' views on the meaning of distance education are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Teachers' Views On The Meaning Of Distance Education

Categories	Codes	Participants	f
Alternativity	A new training model	T1, T4, T10, T12, T15	5
	Contactless training	T3, T8, T13	3
	Non-face-to-face training	T7, T14	2
	An education applied in times of emergency	T6, T5	2
	One-way education	T11	1
Necessity	A spatially independent training technique	T2	1
	A training that is inevitable	T9, T11, T15	3
	Education required by the circumstances	T3, T4	2
	An educational practice used in times of crisis	T6, T5	2
Difficulty	A mandatory application for uninterrupted education	T7	1
	A challenging process for teachers and students	T2, T3, T14	3
	An education that not everyone can benefit from	T9, T15	2
Technological	An education that is almost impossible to implement	T14	1
	Training using technological tools	T1, T3, T6, T8, T11, T12	7
	Computer aided education	T1, T3, T5, T8, T11, T13	6
	Online education via the Internet	T1, T6, T12, T13, T15	5
	A technological development at the student's doorstep	T5	1
	An application that offers video tutorials	T9	1

Table 2 shows that teachers expressed their views on the meaning of distance education under four categories. According to the views of the participants, the category of alternative is a new education model ( $f=5$ ), non-face-to-face education ( $f=2$ ), an education applied in extraordinary periods ( $f=2$ ), non-contact education ( $f=3$ ), one-way education ( $f=1$ ), an education technique independent of space ( $f=1$ ); In the category of necessity, the codes of education necessitated by conditions ( $f=2$ ), an education that is inevitable ( $f=3$ ), a compulsory practice for uninterrupted education ( $f=1$ ), an educational practice used in times of crisis ( $f=2$ ); in the category of difficulty, the codes of a challenging process for teachers and students ( $f=3$ ), an education that is almost impossible to implement ( $f=1$ ), an education that not everyone can benefit from ( $f=2$ ). According to the last category, the technology category, the opinions were gathered under the codes of a technological development that comes to the student's feet ( $f=1$ ), an education that is realised by using technological tools ( $f=6$ ), an application that offers camera education ( $f=1$ ), online education via the internet ( $f=5$ ) and computer-aided education ( $f=6$ ). The opinions of some participants are as follows:

*"In my opinion, distance education is an alternative education model for students to stay in school after the pandemic and for education to continue (T1)."*

*"I think we have added a new concept to the education model we have been used to for many years with the pandemic, and I call it place-independent education (T2)."*

*"Despite all the negativities experienced, it was compulsory for education to continue uninterrupted; for this reason, I define distance education as compulsory education (T7)."* *"Distance education is seen as an impossible education for physical education teachers like me...(T14)."*

*"Distance education is an education model in which technology is at the forefront and is realised by using technological tools (T8)."*

*"Distance education is an education model that I call as a kind of computer assisted education that is carried out by using a computer and connecting to the internet (Ö11)."*

### Opinions on the Advantages and Disadvantages of Distance Education

In this sub-heading, the teachers were asked "what do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of the distance education process? Can you explain?" question was asked. Accordingly, the frequency distributions of the teachers regarding the advantages and disadvantages of distance education are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Teachers' Views On The Advantages And Disadvantages Of Distance Education

Theme	Categories	Codes	Participants	f
Advantage	Independent of space and time	Easy and fast access to training	T3, T5, T13	3
		Saving time	T7, T1	2
		Flexibility	T9, T11	2
	Technology	Computer Usage	T1, T6, T7, T11, T12	5
		Technological blessings	T1, T4, T12	3
		Internet and Generation Z	T8	1
	Learning	Continuity	T4, T11, T13	3
Staying on top of your studies		T2, T4	2	
Fulfilment of training needs		T15	1	
Disadvantage	Affective Deficit	Lack of emotion transfer	T7, T14	2
		Lack of interaction	T5, T8	2
		Soulless, far from practice	T14	1
	Technological Inadequacy	Need for a computer or tablet	T7, T9, T6	3
Internet connection problems		T3, T6	2	
Inequality of opportunity and opportunity		T14	1	
Passive Participation	Lack of communication	T14, T5, T8	3	
	A virtual environment	T7, T9	2	
	Absenteeism	T9	1	

Table 3 shows that teachers expressed their views on the advantages and disadvantages of the distance education process in two themes and six categories. According to the views of the participants, the advantage theme is organised under the categories of space and time independent ( $f=7$ ), technology ( $f=9$ ) and learning ( $f=6$ ); the disadvantage theme is organised under the categories of affective deficiency ( $f=5$ ), technological inadequacy ( $f=6$ ) and passive participation ( $f=5$ ). The time and space category consisted of the codes of education anytime and anywhere ( $f=3$ ), saving time ( $f=2$ ), flexibility ( $f=2$ ); the technology category consisted of the codes of technological blessings ( $f=3$ ), internet and Generation Z ( $f=1$ ) and computer use ( $f=5$ ); the learning category consisted of the codes of staying connected with the lessons ( $f=2$ ), meeting educational needs ( $f=1$ ) and staying connected with the student ( $f=3$ ). The affective deficiency category consisted of the codes of lack of emotional transfer ( $f=2$ ), lack of spirit away from practice ( $f=1$ ), lack of interaction ( $f=2$ ); the technological inadequacy category consisted of the codes of internet connection problems ( $f=2$ ), need for computers and tablets ( $f=3$ ), inequality of opportunity and opportunity ( $f=1$ ); and finally, the passive participation category consisted of a virtual environment ( $f=2$ ), lack of communication ( $f=3$ ) and absenteeism ( $f=1$ ). Some participants' views on the advantages and disadvantages of distance education are as follows;

*"With the pandemic, we have learnt that education and training activities cannot be limited within a certain space or time period. This situation has shown us once again that education and training activities overflow within four walls (T5)."*

*"The technology that exists in our lives has become indispensable with the pandemic; everyone from young to old has learnt how to use computers and tablets, and those who know how to use them have improved themselves a little more. We have seen that technology is a blessing (T1)."*

*"With the closure of the schools, the effort to teach the course through distance education without lagging behind our students, being in constant communication with our students and not being separated from them was a source of morale for us in this negative situation. Despite all the difficulties, we ensured that our students did not fall behind in the education process (T4)."*

*"When I was teaching my lessons, the students' lack of interest in the lesson made me very sad. I could not understand their feelings because I could not see eye to eye with them. I was in an effort to teach in a soulless environment (T14)."*

*"Not all of my students could attend my lessons. While some of my students had internet connection problems because they were in the village, some of my students did not have computers or tablets (T6)."*

*"Some of my students were absent from online courses during the distance education process. The existence of a virtual environment prevented students from actively participating in the lesson (T9)."*

### Opinions on the Effects of Distance Education

In this sub-heading, the teachers were asked "In which ways did the distance education process affect you? Can you explain?" The question was asked. Accordingly, the frequency distributions of the teachers regarding the effects of distance education are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Teachers' Views On The Effects Of Distance Education

Categories	Codes	Participants	f
Psychological Effects	Exciting	T1, T5, T3	3
	Happy	T2, T3, T11	3
	Inadequate	T10, T14,	2
	Agitated	T3, T9	2
	Confused	T12	1
Innovative	Entrepreneur	T2, T13, T15	3
	Open to learning	T11, T13, T6	3
	Productive	T1, T8	2
	Selfless	T4, T12	2

In Table 4, it is seen that teachers expressed their views on the effects of distance education in two categories. The psychological effects category consists of inadequate ( $f=2$ ), anxious ( $f=2$ ), excited ( $f=3$ ), happy ( $f=3$ ) and confused ( $f=1$ ) codes; the innovative category is grouped under the codes of entrepreneur ( $f=3$ ), productive ( $f=2$ ), open to learning ( $f=3$ ) and selfless ( $f=2$ ). Some participants' views on the effects of distance education are as follows:



*"In the first days, I could not understand what I had to do in the process. Therefore, I felt very inadequate. In the following periods of time, I overcame my deficiencies; however, this time, the fact that the students participated very little in the lesson and I could not reach them tied my hands (T10)."*

*"In the first lesson, I felt a little nervous and excited. In the following lessons, I was a little more relaxed. I was very happy to solve the questions I had prepared for my students beforehand. It was exciting for me to be able to reach the students even in this process (T3)."*

*"The pandemic process turned into an opportunity to improve myself. I saw that the entrepreneurial spirit was triggered in myself. I realised that I was actually hungry to learn and that I was making great efforts to learn ways and methods that I did not know (T13)."*

*"I constantly tried to add something to the teaching methods and techniques that I should use while lecturing to the students remotely. I shared the materials I produced with them remotely. Before each lesson, I was concerned about producing a material, a method or a way to attract the attention of my students (T1)."*

### Opinions on Distance Education Suggestions

In this sub-heading, the question "What are your suggestions to teachers about the distance education process? Can you explain?" question was asked. Accordingly, the frequency distributions of teachers' distance education suggestions are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Teachers' Opinions On Distance Education Suggestions

Categories	Codes	Participants	f
Infrastructure	Internet speed	T3, T8	2
	Technical support	T11	1
Training and Courses	Technology use	T7, T13, T11	3
	In-service training	T4, T7	2
Resource Support	Computer or tablet	T1, T4, T9, T11, T13, T15	6
	Free internet	T4, T9, T13, T14	4
	e-content	T5	1

Table 5 shows that teachers expressed their views on distance education suggestions under three categories. In the infrastructure category, internet speed ( $f=2$ ), technical support ( $f=1$ ) codes; in the training and courses category, technology use ( $f=3$ ), in-service training ( $f=2$ ) codes; in the resource support category, computer or tablet ( $f=6$ ), free internet ( $f=4$ ) and e-content ( $f=1$ ) codes. Some participant opinions on distance education suggestions are as follows;

*"If we want to increase the quality in distance education, our priority should be to increase the speed of the internet. Continuous interruptions and screen freezes due to the internet speed during the process of my course created negativities (T3)."*

*"The pandemic has been a period when teachers should be more intertwined with technology. For this reason, I think that teachers should be trained by providing in-service trainings on the use of technology (T7)."*

*"Since not all students have computers or tablets, we could not reach all students. Therefore, the priority in distance education should be to meet the need for computers or tablets. In addition, only computer and tablet are not enough to teach a lesson. Internet should also be free and quota-free during distance education (T9)."*

*"Resources such as e-books and e-questions should be created by the ministry at each course level and shared with teachers and students and these contents should be continuously developed and updated (T5)."*

### Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

This study aims to determine teachers' views on the distance education process during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the study, it was concluded that teachers see the distance education process as an alternative education due to compulsory reasons and generally accept it as an indispensable teaching method in extraordinary situations. Yunus et al. (2021) also found that distance education is an indispensable method during the pandemic process. On the other hand, it was observed in the study that teachers' views on distance

education were mostly positive. Similarly, Yenilmez et al. (2017), Afşar & Büyükdoğan (2020), Nasser & Abouchedid (2000) found that teachers had a positive perspective on the implementation of distance education processes. However, in the study, negative opinions were also determined, which considered the distance education process as a difficult and inaccessible education application. Çakır (2022), Çelebi (2022), Bulut (2021), Karakuş et al. (2020), Karatepe et al. (2020), Yolcu (2020), Polat & Binici (2021), Taşkın & Aksoy (2021), Demir & Kale (2020) reported that teachers reported negative opinions about distance education in their studies. There are also results that there are problems in distance education, especially in the processing of practical courses compared to theoretical courses (Almuraqap, 2020; Utomo et al., 2020). The fact that there are different research results regarding the meaning of distance education can be explained by the positive or negative perceptions of the participants towards distance education. Finally, it is noteworthy that the research emphasised the technological meaning of distance education such as being independent from space, technology, camera education, computer-aided education. The existence of studies drawing attention to the technological meaning of distance education (Beldarrain, 2006; Duman, 2020; Hussein et al., 2020; Shin & Hickey, 2021) supports the results of the current study.

According to the results of the research, it was determined that distance education has some advantages and disadvantages. These advantages and disadvantages are listed as saving time, increasing awareness of the importance of technology in education, meeting the educational needs of students under all conditions without breaking away from the lessons, and continuing education without interruption. Kaden (2020) sees the distance education process as an important support for learning in extraordinary situations. Similarly et al. (2020) state that distance education is an indispensable application in meeting the need for education. De Paepe et al. (2018) determined the aspects that seem advantageous in the evaluation of distance education as the increase in the use of technology and awareness. DeNeui & Dodge (2006) found that the most important advantage of distance education is that it is independent from time and space; Horspool & Lange (2012) found that the most important advantage is the ease of saving time along with independence from time and space. In addition, there are also research results that see the advantage of distance education as utilising technological tools and equipment (Gökçe, 2008) and students not falling behind in the lessons (Fidan, 2020). Therefore, it can be said that the results of the study coincide with the literature.

In the study, the disadvantages of distance education were determined as the lack of emotion transfer in the lessons, lack of interaction, lack of socialisation, the existence of a soulless environment far from practice, lack of motivation, lack of computers or tablets, internet connection problems, inequality of opportunity and opportunity among students. Durak (2017) found in his study that distance education causes lack of motivation in students. Öztaş & Kılıç (2017), Keskin & Özer-Kaya (2020), Koç (2020) & Kurnaz et al. (2020) found that one of the most important disadvantages of distance education is the lack of interaction and communication. Ramos-Morcillo et al. (2020) sees the disadvantage of distance education as inequality of opportunity and opportunity. The consistency between the results obtained from all these studies and the results of the current study indicates that the disadvantageous aspects of the distance education process are similar.

In the study, it was determined that the psychological effects of distance education are inadequacy, uneasiness, excitement, happiness and astonishment; the effects in the context of innovation are entrepreneurship, selflessness and productivity. Şan & Karsak (2020) concluded that distance education causes a sense of inadequacy, Karatepe et al. (2020) found that distance education courses are boring due to uneasiness, Karakuş et al. (2020), Shin & Hickey (2021) concluded that the distance education process decreases motivation. In addition, various research results can be found in the literature that see the distance education process as an innovative education system developed by teachers in online environments (Başar et al., 2019; Kahraman, 2020; Machado, 2007). When these results are evaluated as a whole, it is understood that the distance education process causes different and complex emotions in teachers.

Another important result of the research is that the suggestions of the teachers regarding the functioning of the distance education process show diversity. Teachers mostly made suggestions on making technological resources such as internet and computer accessible in the distance education process, eliminating internet connection interruptions due to infrastructure, providing free internet access, planning training and courses on the use of technology, and preparing e-content resources. In the literature, as in this study, similar suggestions

were made in the form of increasing the possibilities of having computers and internet in the distance education process (Yılmaz-İnce et al., 2020), providing technological and technical support (Kaden, 2020; Kebritchi et al., 2017; Sarı, 2020), increasing internet access (Genç et al., 2020; Malik et al., 2020), providing courses and trainings (Boling et al., 2012). The fact that there are similar suggestions in different studies may be related to some common problems in the distance education process.

The research has some limitations. Conducting the research with qualitative research approaches prevents the generalisation of the results obtained from the research. In addition, the fact that the research data was conducted only with the interview technique and in public schools, and that there were no different participant groups such as administrators and parents in the research can be seen as other limitations of the research. Despite these limitations, the following suggestions can be made to practitioners and researchers:

1. Since it was determined in the research that distance education is an alternative to face-to-face education for teachers in the distance education process, it may be useful to technically organise and equip one or more classes related to distance education in each school.
2. As a result of the study, since the situations in which distance education is advantageous are determined, arrangements can be made to prevent learning loss by establishing classes ready for hybrid education for students who cannot attend classes for various reasons in schools.
3. In order to minimise the negative effects of distance education, psychological support services can be provided or increased by school guidance services for teachers and students.
4. In order to ensure uninterrupted access of teachers and students to distance education, it may be appropriate to abolish or rationalise internet quotas and fees across the country.
5. In order to contribute to the generalisation of the results of the research, the research can be repeated with quantitative or mixed method approaches.
6. The research can be conducted with different outcome groups such as school administrators and parents working in private schools as well as public schools.
7. In order to ensure data diversity in the research, other data collection methods such as observation can be used in addition to interviews.

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## GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Öğrenenlerin zamandan ve mekândan bağımsız bir şekilde birçok medya ve ortam desteği ile öğrenmelerini sağlayan uzaktan eğitim zamanın ve teknolojinin gelişimi ile birlikte kendini yenileyen farklı araç ve yöntemler ile kullanılmıştır. Uzaktan eğitim internet uygulamalarından, radyo ve televizyon yayınlarına kadar çeşitli uygulamalar ile gerçekleştirilmiştir (Gürkan, 2012). Uzaktan eğitim ile yüz yüze eğitim arasındaki en önemli farkın öğrenci öğretmen arasındaki zaman ve mekân bağımsızlığı olduğu gözlenmektedir. Öğrenci ve öğretmenin fiziksel olarak aynı mekânı paylaşmak zorunda olmadığı uzaktan eğitim (Kaya ve Önder, 2002) uygulaması, pandemi süreciyle birlikte bireylerinin eğitim ihtiyacını karşılamada alternatif çözümler sunabilecek bir sistem olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Ancak bu uygulamaların olumlu ve olumsuz sonuçlarını da göz ardı etmek mümkün değildir.

Öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitimin doğrudan uygulayıcısı olan kişiler olmaları, en doğru ve en etkili değerlendirmenin yine öğretmenler tarafından yapılabileceği, COVID-19 ile birlikte hayatın bir gerçeği olan ve bir anlamda zorunlu hâle gelen uzaktan eğitimin olumlu ve olumsuz taraflarının belirlenmesinin öğretmen görüşleri ile daha net ortaya çıkacağı düşünülmektedir. Bu nedenle bu ve benzeri çalışmaların uzaktan eğitim uygulamalarına ilişkin eksikliklerin tespit edilmesini, sürece ilişkin detaylı incelemelerinse farkına varılmayan çeşitli sorunların anlaşılmasına katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

Bu çalışma nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden olgubilim (fenomenoloji) desenindedir. Amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden maksimum çeşitlilik yöntemi kullanılan bu çalışmada, çalışma grubunu Sırt ve Bolu ilinde görev yapmakta olan 15 öğretmen oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmada maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmaya nedeni çalışma grubunun çeşitliliğini sağlamaktır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilen yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Her bir katılımcıdan elde edilen veriler araştırmacılar tarafından kodlanmıştır. Yapılan çalışmada iç geçerliğin anlamlılığına ve elde edilen bulguların kendi içinde tutarlılık gösterip göstermediğine bakılmıştır. Bu bağlamda çalışmada iç geçerlik uzman incelemesi, katılımcı teyidi, bulguların doğrudan alıntılarla verilmesi, veri toplama aracının ve bulguların ilgili alanyazınla tutarlılığına dikkat edilmiştir. Ayrıca araştırmanın iç ve dış güvenilirliğini artırmak için öğretmenler ile birlikte zaman geçirilerek kendilerini rahat hissetmeleri sağlanmış, anlaşılmayan sorular öğretmenlere gerekli açıklamalar yapılarak yeniden düzenlenmiş ve kavramsal çerçeveye bağlı kalınarak analizler gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitimin anlamına ilişkin görüşlerini dört kategori altında ifade ettikleri görülmektedir. Bunlar alternatiflik, zorunluluk, güçlük ve teknolojiktir. Öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitimin avantaj ve dezavantajlarına ilişkin görüşleri avantaj ve dezavantaj olarak iki kategoride toplanmaktadır. Öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitimin etkilerine ilişkin görüşleri psikolojik etkiler ve yenilikçi olarak iki kategoride toplanmaktadır. Son olarak uzaktan eğitim önerilerine ilişkin görüşleri alt yapı, eğitim ve kurslar ile kaynak desteği kategorilerinden meydana gelmektedir.

Bu araştırma öğretmenlerin COVID-19 pandemi sürecinde uzaktan eğitim sürecine ilişkin görüşlerini belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmada öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitim sürecini zorunlu sebeplerden kaynaklı alternatif bir eğitim olarak gördüğü ve genel olarak olağanüstü durumlarda vazgeçilmez bir öğretim yöntemi olarak kabul ettiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Öte yandan çalışmada öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitime ilişkin görüşlerinin çoğunlukla olumlu olduğu görülmüştür. Son olarak çalışmada uzaktan eğitimin mekândan bağımsız olma, teknolojinin ayağa gelmesi, kameralı eğitim, bilgisayar destekli eğitim gibi teknolojik anlamına ilişkin yoğun bir şekilde vurgu yapılmış olması da kayda değerdir. Bu çalışmada uzaktan eğitimin avantajları yüz yüze eğitime göre zaman ve mekândan bağımsız olarak eğitimin yapılabilmesi, zamandan tasarruf edilmesi, teknolojinin eğitim içerisindeki önemi üzerindeki farkındalığın artması, öğrencilerin her koşulda derslerden kopmadan eğitim ihtiyaçlarının giderilebiliyor olması ve kesintisiz bir şekilde eğitim-öğretime devam edilebilmesi şeklinde sıralanmıştır.

Araştırmada uzaktan eğitimin dezavantajları derslerde duygu aktarımının olmaması, etkileşim yetersizliği, sosyalleşme eksikliği, uygulamadan uzak ve ruhsuz bir ortamın varlığı, motivasyon eksikliği, bilgisayar veya tablet eksikliği, internet bağlantı sorunları, öğrenciler arasındaki fırsat ve imkân eşitsizliği olarak saptanmıştır. Araştırmada uzaktan eğitimin psikolojik etkilerinin yetersizlik, tedirginlik, heyecan, mutluluk ve şaşkınlık; yenilikçilik bağlamındaki etkilerinin ise girişimcilik, özverili ve üretkenlik olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Araştırmanın

bir başka önemli sonucu öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitim sürecinin işleyişine ilişkin sundukları önerilerin çeşitlilik göstermesidir. Öğretmenler daha çok uzaktan eğitim sürecinde internet ve bilgisayar gibi uzaktan eğitim sağlayacak teknolojik kaynakların erişilebilir duruma getirilmesi, alt yapı kaynaklı yaşanan internet bağlantı kesintilerinin giderilmesi, ücretsiz internet erişiminin sağlanması, teknoloji kullanımı noktasında eğitim ve kurs planlamalarının yapılması ve e-içerik kaynaklarının hazırlanması yönünde önerilerde bulunmuşlardır.