

# Examining the Roles of School Principals in the Emergency Distance Education Process

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Research Article

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the roles of school principals in the emergency distance education process. The research was designed as a qualitative research, and the criterion sampling method was used in the study conducted in Batman during the 2020-2021 academic year. The study group consisted of forty school principals who work in primary and secondary schools and have at least one year of management experience. A semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool. Research data were collected via e-mail. The data obtained from the study group were subjected to content analysis within the framework of the sub-objectives of the research. According to the results of the research, school principals carried out informing and preparatory activities in their schools during the emergency distance education process. In this process, they conducted planning and training activities for teachers, encouraged and communicated with them, and provided them with an adequate environment. They also introduced the process and carried out educational activities for students and informed parents about it. Additionally, it was revealed that school principals' approaches to emergency distance education in the Covid-19 process were categorized into three different ways: successful, unsuccessful, and inadequate.

**Keywords:** Covid-19 Process, emergency distance education, school principals.

## Acil Uzaktan Eğitim Sürecinde Okul Müdürlerinin Rollerinin İncelenmesi Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı acil uzaktan eğitim sürecinde okul müdürlerinin rollerinin incelenmesidir. Araştırma, nitel araştırma olarak tasarlanmıştır. 2020-2021 Eğitim öğretim yılında Batman ilinde gerçekleştirilen araştırmada ölçüt örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubu, ilkokul ve ortaokullarda görev yapan ve en az bir yıllık yöneticilik kıdemine sahip 40 okul müdüründen oluşmaktadır. Veri toplama aracı olarak yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Veriler elektronik olarak toplanmıştır. Çalışma grubundan elde edilen veriler araştırmanın alt amaçları çerçevesinde içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, okul müdürleri acil uzaktan eğitim sürecinde okullarında bilgilendirme ve hazırlık çalışmaları gerçekleştirmişlerdir. Bu süreçte öğretmenler yönelik olarak planlama ve yetiştirme çalışmaları yaptıkları, onları teşvik ettikleri, onlarla iletişim kurdukları ve onlara ortam sağladıkları; öğrencilere yönelik olarak süreci tanıttıkları ve eğitim faaliyetleri gerçekleştirdikleri ve velilere yönelik olarak da süreci tanıttıkları belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca okul müdürlerinin Covid-19 sürecindeki acil uzaktan eğitime yaklaşımlarının başarılı, başarısız ve yetersiz olmak üzere üç farklı şekilde olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Covid-19 süreci, acil uzaktan eğitim, okul müdürleri

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## INTRODUCTION

The developments resulting from the coronavirus (Covid-19) epidemic have triggered the start of a new era in Turkey, as in the rest of the world. Signs that there will be certain changes in every aspect of life have begun to emerge. A period where interaction and relations in human and social life, production systems, service offerings, and many other areas will be provided by electronic means, has begun to be experienced (Erdoğan, 2021). With the emergence of Covid-19 and its impact on the whole world in a short time, changes have taken place in traditional roles. The effect of the virus has caused significant changes in the functioning of corporate systems, along with daily life. In this process, countries have had to organize their education systems in line with new conditions. Like most countries, Turkey has been adversely affected by this process and has rearranged its education system according to these conditions. In this direction, education and training services were carried out with emergency distance education. (Demir & Özdaş, 2020). Distance education is a planned activity based on theoretical and practical knowledge. However, emergency distance education is different. In a crisis situation, it involves solving problems with all available resources, including online and offline methods. In this study, the concept of emergency distance education was used in this context.

Emergency distance education is one of the largest systems offered by modern information technology. Thanks to emergency distance education technology, teachers and students have the opportunity to access educational activities without being directly in the presence of each other (Verduin & Clark, 1991). Simultaneously, the freedom of time and space it offers, variety of tools and methods used, provide advantages (Katane et al., 2015). Educational objectives through emergency distance education can often be achieved in the shortest possible time with minimal effort. As teachers and students gain experience provided by experts in various fields of knowledge, it is easier for them to develop themselves and achieve success (Igbokwe et al., 2020). Emergency distance education has been used for its features such as being an easily applicable method and ensuring the sustainability of education during the Covid-19 epidemic (Demir & Özdaş, 2020). Emergency distance education also indicates the efforts of countries to keep up with the times. Developed countries attach great importance to lifelong education activities. In this respect, emergency distance education is a perfect fit for countries to make their learning activities permanent. The inadequacy of physical and financial conditions forces countries to invest significantly in emergency distance education applications. Through emergency distance education, people and trainers from different environments can come together (Kırık, 2014). Researchs shows that emergency distance education brings with it various disadvantages. According to Özdoğan and Berkant (2020), these disadvantages are loss of motivation, measurement and evaluation problems, inadequacy of resources such as the internet and computers, lack of communication and interaction, technical problems and inadequacy of socialization. In another study, (Shaikh & Özdaş, 2022) problems such as not having hardware and internet access, lack of motivation, apathy, not being able to connect to live lessons, lack of video and sound were identified. In a different study, it was determined that school principals encountered problems such as access to lessons, infrastructure, legislation, communication and coordination during the Covid-19 pandemic (Demirdağ, 2022). According to village schools' administrators, the most encountered problems in distance education during the epidemic period were low participation of students in classes, low motivation of students, inadequacy of distance education access devices and internet, ineffective assessment and evaluation, and indifference of parents to this process (Karaibiş & Katmer Bayraklı, 2022).

The roles of school principals in the emergency distance education process differ from their traditional roles. The emergency distance education process has differentiated the roles of school principals since it is a different system that uses different tools and equipment and needs constant planning and communication with teachers, students, parents and other stakeholders. The duties of the school administrator are expressed as maintaining the current situation, fulfilling the basic functions of the school, providing the necessary resources within the framework of laws and rules, and continuing the education and training services at school (Şişman, 2019). Fulfilling the schools' expectations is possible if the school principals focus on their primary duties. Generally speaking, the top priority task for schools is expressed as providing a quality education service that allows all students to learn. The most basic condition for providing quality education services at school is to make effective decisions. The basis of decision-making processes at school is to ensure that students are successful and happy (Sezer, 2016). School leadership is a complex and challenging role, and navigating change in uncertain times brings additional challenges and increasingly difficult decisions (Panunciar et al., 2020). School leaders cannot maintain the leadership practices they were once accustomed to in times of uncertain crisis. In such times, leadership means exploring different solutions to create new ways (Harris & Jones, 2020).

In the digital age of instructional leadership, effective schools need to take advantage of physical resources, as well as information and communication technologies. They should use school resources effectively and modernize school facilities (Huong, 2020). However, Covid-19 has dramatically changed the concepts of leadership and leadership practices. While principals still run their schools, they are doing it in ways they could not have imagined a few months ago. They lead using technological tools, interacting with fewer students in school buildings, and with the community through interactions with parents, support groups, and online support groups (Harris, 2020). The pandemic has brought many of the unresolved inequalities in education systems to the fore. School principals express their concerns about the exacerbation of existing inequalities and the emergence of new problems in accessing quality education for students and parents. For example, some students do not have the technology to receive online education, and they have internet connection problems, as well as infrastructure etc. In addition to all existing problems, the principals are expected to take the initiative to solve such problems (Pollock, 2020). According to a study, school principals try to solve the problems they encounter in the distance education process by supporting teachers technologically, students academically and psychosocially, and using effective communication with parents and employees of the institution (Keleş et al., 2020). A similar study shows that principals try to prevent students from being disconnected from the school during the emergency distance education process. They provide printed resources to students who do not have the internet at home to ensure equality in students' access to technological resources, provide technological tools, and support the use of Education Information Network (EIN) (Turan, 2020).

School leadership practices have changed dramatically and may be irreversibly altered due to Covid-19. As a result of the pandemic, school leadership has deviated from traditional methods and is unlikely to return to normal anytime soon (Harris & Jones, 2020). Prior to Covid-19, the most common type of leadership found in schools was identified as traditional, where the principal's purpose was primarily to manage the school and ensure that learning and teaching were efficiently optimized. However, during the emergency distance education process, routine work and transactions were replaced by a different system. Globally, school principals at all levels of the system spend their time influencing and interacting with others through a laptop or phone screen (Harris, 2020). Research results indicate that the school principals being in contact with teachers, students, and parents, and being accessible and visible during the epidemic process, are effective in the success of the education process (Keleş et al., 2020). Examining the opinions of school principals regarding studies conducted during the Covid-19 emergency distance education process is important in solving educational problems such as communication with stakeholders, motivation, and continuity of institution identity. The research aims to examine the roles of school principals in the emergency distance education process. Within the framework of this general purpose, answers were sought for the following sub-objectives:

1. What are the school principals' views on emergency distance education in the Covid-19 process?
2. What actions have school principals taken in their schools during the Covid-19 process?
3. What actions have school principals taken for teachers during the Covid-19 process?
4. What actions have school principals taken for students during the Covid-19 process?
5. What actions have school principals taken for parents during the Covid-19 process?

## METHOD

This research was designed as qualitative case study. The most distinctive feature of qualitative case studies is the in-depth investigation of one or more cases (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The purpose of the case study is to try to illuminate why a certain decision or decisions were made, how they were implemented, and what the results were (Yin, 2003). This design helps researchers determine whether the applied program has achieved its purpose. In this context, the opinions of school principals about their roles in the emergency distance education process during the Covid-19 process and their work were used.

### **The Study Group**

The criterion sampling method was used in this research. Criterion sampling involves studying situations that meet a set of criteria predetermined by the researcher. While these criteria can be created by the researcher, a previously prepared list can also be used (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). In this study, the following criteria were used to select school principals for the research: having worked as a principal in at least one school during the emergency distance education process, working in primary and secondary schools, and actively conducting the emergency distance education process. The study group consists of 40 school principals working in primary and

secondary schools, with 39 of them being male and one being female. Of the principals, 28 have undergraduate education level, while 12 have graduate education level.

### **Data collection tool**

In the research, a semi-structured interview form was used as the data collection tool. To ensure the validity of the semi-structured interview form, the opinions of an associate professor and a doctor lecturer were sought. In line with their expert opinions, the research form was finalized. The semi-structured interview form consisted of two parts. In the first part, the gender, education level, age and duration of the principalship of the school principals were recorded. In the second part, five questions were included that corresponded to the sub-objectives of the research. The questions were formulated as follows: What are your views on emergency distance education in the Covid-19 process? What actions have you undertaken at your school during the Covid-19 process? What actions have you undertaken for teachers during the Covid-19 process? What actions have you undertaken for students during the Covid-19 process? What actions have you undertaken for parents during the Covid-19 process?

### **Data collection**

To collect the data, ethics committee permission was obtained from Mardin Artuklu University, dated 16/09/2020, and numbered 2020/7-1. The research data were collected using an electronic form of the semi-structured interview developed by the researchers. The link to the prepared form was sent to the school principals via e-mail. The school principals were informed that their participation in the research was voluntary, and they could withdraw from the research at any time. Additionally, it was conveyed to them that the opinions they expressed would only be used for scientific research purposes, and ethical rules would be followed in the use of the data.

### **Data analysis**

Content analysis was used to analyze the data. The main purpose of the content analysis is to identify concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data (Yıldırım & Şimşek 2018). The data analysis process started with the independent coding of the data by the researchers. The coding was done according to the concepts extracted from the data. In the second stage, the codes created by the researchers were examined, and themes were obtained. The codes were defined and arranged according to the themes obtained in the third stage. In the fourth stage, the defined findings were interpreted, and the results were obtained.

To ensure the reliability of data analysis, the consistency between the coders was calculated. In this regard, the percent agreement formula developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used. The percentage of agreement expresses "Reliability = Consensus/(Agreement + Disagreement) x 100". In the study, the percentage of agreement was found to be 0.88 by means of this formula. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018), a percentage of agreement of 70% or higher indicates coding reliability. The obtained findings are presented in tables, where the codes and themes are shown with numerical data. In addition, the opinions of some school principals were presented directly in the findings section. The coding was used to identify the opinions, where the letter represents the school principal's number and the school principal's rank in the research. For example, the SP1 code represents the school principal in the first rank of the research.

## **FINDINGS**

In this section, the findings obtained according to the opinions of the school principals are presented within the framework of the sub-objectives of the research. First of all, the work of school principals in their schools during the Covid-19 process was evaluated. Finally, in the study, the views of school principals on education in the Covid-19 process were evaluated.

### **Opinions of School Principals on Emergency Distance Education in the Covid-19 Process**

In the first research question of the study, the opinions of school principals about emergency distance education were investigated. The findings obtained from the opinions of the school principals regarding the emergency distance education activities are presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Opinions of School Principals on Emergency Distance Education in the Covid-19 Process

Theme	Codes	f
Successful	Positive (SP6, 23, 25, 26, 28, 33, 36), necessary (SP19, 34), good (SP3, 7, 14, 28), very beneficial (SP7, 10, 17, 19, 20)	18
Unsuccessful	Failed (SP35), useless (SP23), ineffective in village schools (SP5, 8, 14), not healthy (SP31), not productive (SP3, 9, 11, 16, 18), inefficient (SP1,2, 21, 29, 30, 32, 38), not helpful (SP15, 24)	20
Should be developed	Unsystematic (SP13), unequal opportunity (SP12), fine but insufficient (SP8), good for those with enough equipment (SP22), not as good as face-to-face training (SP7, 10, 25, 36), insufficient participation (SP4, 11, 39), insufficient hardware and infrastructure (SP17, 34, 37)	14

As seen in Table 1, it was revealed that school principals evaluated emergency distance education in the Covid-19 process under three themes as successful, unsuccessful and should be developed. It has been determined that the school principals, who evaluated emergency distance education as successful, found the emergency distance education activities in the Covid-19 process useful, positive, good and necessary. It was seen that the school principals who evaluated the education in this process as unsuccessful did not find emergency distance education healthy, successful, useful, or productive. In addition, it was revealed that school principals who evaluated emergency distance education in the Covid-19 process as should be developed, also evaluated that having emergency distance education is better than nothing, that it is not like face-to-face education, and that there is no equal opportunity and sufficient equipment for everyone. Below are some opinions of the school principals who evaluated emergency distance education in the Covid-19 process as successful:

SP6 stated that "it is a positive situation," SP7 mentioned that "it was fine," SP26 praised the Ministry's ability to plan and manage the process, SP19 found it "beneficial," and SP34 stated that "emergency distance education is undoubtedly necessary during the pandemic process."

Some of the exemplary school principals' opinions evaluating emergency distance education as unsuccessful in the Covid-19 process are given below:

SP15: "I do not think it is very useful", SP14: "It has been an ineffective process, especially for rural schools like ours.", SP18: "I do not find it efficient.", SP21: "Extremely inefficient. Once again, we saw that emergency distance education is not useful.", SP23: "It is not very useful.", SP30: "I find it very inefficient.", SP35: "I think that emergency distance education is not successful."

Some of the exemplary school principals' opinions evaluating emergency distance education as insufficient in the Covid-19 process are given below:

SP4: "The majority of students could not participate due to not having required equipment or infrastructure.", SP10: "Although it was not like face-to-face education, emergency distance education was also very beneficial.", SP12: "I think there are regional differences. I think that equality of opportunity, which is one of the indispensable values of education, is violated due to the limited technological infrastructure and lack of necessary materials in disadvantaged environments.", SP16: "We could not ensure the participation of students who we could not motivate at school.", SP25: "We try to provide emergency distance education in the best way, but it cannot be as efficient as face-to-face training."

### The Actions of School Principals in their Schools during the Covid-19 Process

In the second sub-objective of the study, the work of school principals in their schools during the emergency distance education process were investigated. The findings obtained from the opinions of school principals regarding the work they have done in their schools during the Covid-19 process are presented in Table 2:

Table 2. Studies of School Principals in Their Schools During the Covid-19 Process

Theme	Codes	f
Information	Informing the employees (SP12, 14, 17, 28 36), informing the students (SP4, 7, 12, 13, 14, 18, 28), informing the parents (SP4, 7, 13, 16, 17, 28),	18
Preparation	Placing masks and disinfectants in classrooms and school (SP18, 24, 25, 28, 29), painting the school (SP22), organizing the school and classes (SP5, 28, 39), taking precautions (SP8, 35), disinfecting the school (SP2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 24, 29, 33, 36), hanging out warning and information signs (SP18, 19, 25, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 36), cleaning the school (SP2, 10, 11, 19, 22, 23, 24, 26, 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, 38) thermometer was taken (SP29), making physical improvements (SP11),	51

When the findings in Table 2 were examined, it was determined that the school principals carried out information and preparatory activities in their schools during the Covid-19 process. It is seen that school principals held meetings in their schools and informed students, teachers and parents about the process within

the scope of information activities. Within the scope of the preparatory work, it was revealed that they made physical improvements in the school, cleaned and disinfected the school, bought tools for the epidemic, and hung warning and information signs about the epidemic in various areas of the school. Some of the sample opinions of the school principals about the information activities that they have done in their schools during the Covid-19 process are given below:

SP4: "...we informed students and parents...", SP7: "We guided students from a distance. We gave training to parents about Covid.", SP12: "We carried out preventive and protective information activities for students and employees.", SP14: "We tried to adapt to the new situation. We informed our students and teachers about the new process.", SP17: "We held all our meetings (group, branch, teachers' board) as ZOOM meetings. While we decided what to do in one meeting, we evaluated what we could/could not do in our next meeting.", SP28: "We informed the parents, teachers and students."

Some of the sample views of school principals regarding the preparatory work they have done in their schools during the Covid-19 process are given below:

SP2: "We cleaned the school. We disinfected the school at regular intervals.", SP11: "Since the school is closed to educational activities, we carried out physical improvements and cleaning", SP18: "We put up warning signs. We put disinfectant in every classroom.", SP23: "We worked to make the school ready.", SP27: "We put direction signs in various parts of the school.", SP39: "We organized the working environment and classes in the school according to social distance rules. We also started to pay more attention to cleanliness. We do general cleaning in the toilets at least twice a day."

### Actions of School Principals for Teachers in the Covid-19 Process

In the third sub-objective of the research, the works of school principals for teachers in the emergency distance education process were investigated. The findings obtained from the opinions of school principals regarding the work they have done for their teachers during the Covid-19 process are presented in Table 3:

Table 3. Actions of School Principals for Teachers in the Covid-19 Process

Themes	Codes	f
Encouraging	Motivation (SP14, 17, 38), mentoring (SP37), directing (SP11), inclusion in the process (SP22)	6
Communicating	Information (SP2, 7, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 39), calling the phone (SP8), held meetings (SP1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 15, 17, 35, 36), setting up WhatsApp groups (SP3, 15)	30
Providing an environment	Organizing the teachers' room (SP31), creating a clean environment (SP34)	2
Planning	Planning online lessons (SP3, 4, 6, 7, 13, 15, 17, 21), distribution of lessons (SP5), supervision the training (SP1, 10).	11
Training	Supporting (SP4), introducing educational tools (SP12,21), carried out professional studies (SP6), holding seminars (SP11, 23, 25, 27, 30, 32, 35)	11

When the findings in Table 3 were examined, it has been revealed that school principals have been working on encouraging, communicating, providing an environment, planning and training for teachers during the Covid-19 process. Within the scope of encouragement, it is seen that school principals carry out guidance and orientation activities for teachers and motivate them to participate in the process. Within the scope of communication, it is revealed that they exchange information with the teachers, inform the teachers about the process, establish communication groups, call the teachers on the phone and hold meetings. Within the scope of providing an environment, it has been determined that school principals provide e-resources to teachers, provide a clean environment for teachers at school, and organize the teachers' lounge following the epidemic conditions. Within the scope of planning, it is seen that school principals plan online lessons by scheduling classes and follow the training given. Within the scope of training, it was revealed that school principals gave seminars to teachers, held conferences and professional studies, supported teachers by introducing emergency distance education tools, and gave training about EİN. Some of the exemplary opinions of school principals about the encouragement activities they have done for teachers during the Covid-19 process are given below:

SP11: "We provided guidance and information for teachers to attend emergency distance education courses organized by the Ministry of National Education.", SP17: "We tried to motivate the teachers.", SP22: "We shared information about emergency distance education. We tried to include the teachers in the process.", SP37: "We did an online guidance work on what teachers should do during the pandemic process."

Some of the exemplary opinions of school principals regarding the communication activities they have done for teachers during the Covid-19 process are given below:

SP2: “We exchanged information about what can be done.”, SP3: “We set up WhatsApp groups for teachers.”, SP8: “We held online meetings at regular intervals. We kept in touch over the phone.”, SP13: “We informed (them) remotely online.”, SP21: “We kept in touch via WhatsApp. We shared the incoming information and links.”

Some of the exemplary opinions of school principals regarding their efforts to provide an environment for teachers during the Covid-19 process are given below:

SP31: “We made the necessary arrangements in the teachers' lounge.”, SP34: “We tried to create a clean environment for teachers in the school.”

Some of the sample views of school principals regarding the planning studies they have done for teachers during the Covid-19 process are given below:

SP5: “We held meetings and scheduled classes.”, SP6: “We planned online lessons and carried out emergency distance education activities.”, SP10: “We tried to ensure that teachers continue the lessons, also guide and follow students.”

Some of the exemplary opinions of school principals about the training activities they have done for teachers during the Covid-19 process are given below:

SP4: “We provided support for additional resources.”, SP12: “We introduced information technologies to be used in emergency distance education to our teachers.”, SP21: “We introduced EIN...”, SP25: “We gave seminars to all teachers.”, SP32: “We held conferences. We informed (the teachers) about the process.”

#### **Actions of School Principals for Students in the Covid-19 Process**

In the fourth sub-objective of the study, the actions of school principals for students in the emergency distance education process were investigated. The findings obtained from the opinions of the school principals participating in the research on the work they have done for their students are presented in Table 4:

Table 4. Works of School Principals for Students in the Covid-19 Process

Theme	Codes	f
Organizing educational activities	Sending trial exams (SP15, 36), preparing lesson videos (SP15), doing exercises (SP8,36), motivation (SP4, 14, 17), online lessons (SP1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20, 33, 35, 36, 37), homework submission (SP2), guiding (SP2, 12, 13, 16, 17, 27, 29, 30, 36, 37), sharing solutions of questions (SP7, 16), setting up meetings with authors (SP11)	40
Introducing the process	Informing (SP2, 3, 9, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39), explaining the use of masks (SP19, 31), organizing seminars (SP17, 25, 27, 32, 35, 39).	27

When examining the data in Table 4, it was determined that the school principals introduced and organized educational activities for students during the Covid-19 process. It has been revealed that as part of their efforts to organize educational activities they guided and motivated students, enabled their participation in various activities, and gave online lessons, shared assignments, exams, questions, and lecture videos. In addition, they established communication groups, gave seminars, and explained the use of masks. Some sample opinions of the school principals about their efforts on informational activities for parents are given below:

SP8: “Online lessons were taught. ...many activities were held.”, SP14: “We tried to reach our students and maintain their concentration through various communication tools.”, SP15: “We sent practice exams and activities to eighth-grade students via EIN. Within the scope of the ‘6 questions 6 answers’ project of the Directorate of National Education, we prepared 6 question 6 answer videos and presented them to our students.”, SP37: “We taught online lessons through EIN...”

Some of the sample views of the school principals about their efforts on informational activities they have done for students during the Covid-19 process are given below:

SP3: “...we set up WhatsApp groups for students.”, SP9: “We did emergency distance education activities and encounter (Kavrayıcı & Kesim, 2021). briefings.”, SP19: “We distributed masks and informed students.”, SP35: “We gave emergency distance education and seminars. We informed about the process.”

#### **Actions of School Principals for Parents in the Covid-19 Process**

In the last research question of the research, the actions of school principals for parents in the emergency distance education process were investigated. The findings obtained from the opinions of the school principals participating in the research on the work they have done for the parents are presented in Table 5:

Table 5. Actions of School Principals for Parents in the Covid-19 Process

Theme	Codes	f
Informational activities	Informing (SP1, 4, 5, 6, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 28, 30, 34, 37, 38, 39), sending brochures (SP29, 34, 36), interviews (SP2, 3, 14, 22), guidance (SP6, 10, 13, 36), seminars (SP27, 35), meetings (SP7, 8, 25, 28, 31, 32, 35, 36), orientation (SP13, 33, 34)	45

When the findings in Table 5 were examined, it has been determined that school principals have done informational activities to parents during the Covid-19 process. It is understood that within the scope of promoting the process school principals sent brochures to parents, they informed and guided parents through meetings and seminars.

Some of the sample opinions of the school principals about the efforts on informational activities they have done for the parents during the Covid-19 process are given below:

SP3: “*Meetings were held with parents to provide students with required materials such as communication, necessary internet, questions and books.*”, SP13: “*Guidance was provided.*”, SP27: “*We conducted practices on crisis intervention through seminar presentation and social networks.*”, SP36: “*We sent informational brochures on Covid-19 Disease.*”, SP38: “*We conducted informational activities on protecting children from the virus.*”

## Discussion & Conclusion

Schools are dynamic organizations that principals must deal with daily with various levels of anxiety, uncertainty, and equity issues (Ahlström et al., 2020). It is estimated that school principals encounter such situations more frequently during the epidemic. A comprehensive action plan is required to overcome such a crisis. In this process, school principals have to encourage teacher-student communication, ensure adequate participation in classes, and be in contact with teachers, students and parents (Chennamsetti, 2020). In the Covid-19 epidemic, school principals are expected to recognize and solve the problems they face, to guide and lead teachers, students and other school stakeholders. In this process, it has been determined that school principals make an effort to solve the problems they encounter (Dilekçi, 2021; Kavrayıcı & Kesim, 2021). This study, is aimed to examine the roles of school principals in the emergency distance education process in general. In addition to the problems that are routinely encountered in times of crisis and uncertainty, crisis-specific problems are also expected to emerge. In the study, the views of school principals on emergency distance education in the Covid-19 process were examined. At the same time, their activities in their schools were examined, and it was tried to determine what their work was for teachers, students and parents of students.

In the research, the views of school principals on emergency distance education during the Covid-19 process were examined. According to the results of the research, it has been revealed that school principals evaluate emergency distance education during the Covid-19 process in three different ways as successful, unsuccessful and should be developed. The research findings show that the school principals expressed 52 opinions on the subject. It is understood from the research findings that while approximately one-third of the opinions of the school principals are positive about emergency distance education, the remaining opinions are negative. School principals also presented examples from their experiences while expressing these views. From the results of the research, the results indicate that about two-thirds of school principals consider emergency distance education during the Covid-19 process insufficient. This result requires questioning the quality of the education provided. Because one of the main purposes of schools is to provide students with a quality educational opportunity and environment. It is understood from the views that this opportunity and environment could not be provided despite all the efforts of the school principals, and therefore the emergency distance education provided was not successful.

Success cannot be expected from a system that is caught unprepared in times of crisis. However, the fact that the rate is so high indicates that the emergency distance education system is not efficient. One reason for such a high level of dissatisfaction may be the comparison of the emergency distance education system with the face-to-face system. Having to switch very quickly from a system known for its advantages and disadvantages to an almost unfamiliar system may have caused the negative sides of the system to be brought to the fore. Similar studies with the results of this research are found in the literature. The opinions of school administrators on the disadvantages of emergency distance education are mostly in the form of inadequacies related to technology, environment, and assessment evaluation (Özdoğan & Berkant, 2020). In another study on the inadequacy of emergency distance education, it was stated that there were hardware and software deficiencies regarding the infrastructure (Gökdaş & Kayri, 2005). In a similar study, technical deficiencies were seen as an important problem by school principals. Within the scope of this problem, school principals stated that online education was adversely affected due to reasons such as teachers' limited internet quotas, lack of internet in their regions, and some teachers



and students not having equipment such as tablets and computers. School principals also stated that they mostly experienced problems related to communication (Külekcı et al., 2020).

About one-third of the school principals gave a positive evaluation on emergency distance education. This ratio is important in a time of crisis and uncertainty. Because despite everything, it is stated by school principals that schools have done positive things, taken initiative and provided solutions during this crisis period. It is estimated that the technology infrastructure of the schools, the social and economic situation in which the school is in, the facilities the students have are more advantageous in schools of which school principals have expressed positive thoughts on emergency distance education. Although its quality is discussed during the epidemic period when many workplaces or institutions around the world stopped or limited their activities, it is an important gain that schools continued their activities with emergency distance education.

Another area where the opinions of school principals were evaluated is the work of school principals at school. In this context, the studies of school principals in the emergency distance education process were examined. According to the research findings, it has been revealed that school principals have done informative and preparatory activities at school. School principals stated that they informed teachers, students and parents about exam preparations, online lessons, etc. in the emergency distance education process. It is understood from the views that informative activities were carried out through online meetings and social media tools. School principals also stated that they made preparations considering the possibility of face-to-face education at any time, that they kept the school and classrooms clean, ready and safe, they arranged the classrooms according to the epidemic conditions and the social distance rules.

In times of uncertain crisis, school principals can not maintain the leadership practices they are accustomed to. In such times, leadership means exploring different solutions to create new ways (Harris & Jones, 2020). In the research, it was determined that school principals took duties and responsibilities in and out of the school during the epidemic process. The in-school duties and responsibilities of school principals have been communication, coordination, management of instruction, online project management and assistance (Kavrayıcı & Kesim, 2021). In line with the opinions taken to examine the level of crisis management skills of school principals, it has been determined that school principals take adequate measures against the crisis in times of crisis (Karakuş, 2018). In another study, it was determined that school principals take physical precautions at schools, carry out information activities and plan with teachers (Kavrayıcı & Kesim, 2021). A similar study concluded that during the Covid-19 process, school principals followed the emergency distance education process from the reports received over EİN, the evaluation reports received from the teachers, the verbal statements of the teachers, by participating in online lessons, by sharing the good practices and evaluating the feedback from the parents of the students (Turan, 2008). 2020). When the results obtained in this research and similar research results were examined, it was seen that school principals made an effort to provide a healthy and productive educational environment at school during the Covid-19 process.

It has been determined that school principals are trying to increase the motivation of teachers during the Covid-19 process, they do guidance work about the emergency distance education process, direct teachers and try to add them to the process. At the same time, the findings indicated that they exchange information with teachers, communicate through social media groups, plan online lessons and follow the education process, make an effort to provide a suitable learning environment and promote the tools to be used in this process. School principals stated that they tried to communicate with teachers in this process and to keep the motivation of teachers at a high level. Motivation has an important role in increasing efficiency and ensuring success in educational organizations (Herzberg, 2003). The research results show that school principals are at the forefront of the factors that affect teachers' motivation (Latham, 1998; Koçak & Helvacı, 2011; Özdemir et al., 2014). Teachers need motivation and guidance during this process. Because teachers had to continue their education with a new approach in areas such as teaching with an unusual system, using different tools and classroom management. Therefore, school principals are expected to assist teachers in these matters. One of the activities of school principals is to plan and provide a suitable learning environment. It is important to plan emergency distance education activities with teachers. It is also important that subjects such as educational activities, online lessons, guidance activities, parent meetings, and presentations of materials that students preparing for central exams will need are included in the planning through the EİN platform or other emergency distance education tools. In this context, it is expected that strengthening the leadership of school principals, focusing on educational goals that will enable school principals and teachers to take a participatory management approach (Özdaş et al., 2018) will contribute to the more efficient operation of the system. A similar study pointed out that school principals carried out practices such as providing technical

support to teachers, sharing school computers and announcements by the ministry of education with teachers, and directing teachers to distance in-service training for technology use during the Covid-19 process (Turan, 2020).

The research result has revealed that the work of school principals for students during the Covid-19 process is to introduce the emergency distance education process and organize educational activities. In this context, school principals stated that they carried out activities such as planning online lessons, sending exams to students through various emergency distance education tools, sharing answer keys, homework, doing activities that will increase the motivation of students, bringing students together with experts, and being in constant communication with students. It is understood that school principals mostly work on planning the teaching process and work towards increasing student motivation. Another study supporting this research stated that online lessons were given to students through the EİN platform during the emergency distance education process (Yaman, 2021). Another similar study concluded that school principals have a role in ensuring the motivation of their students, and they perform these roles sometimes directly and sometimes through their teachers (Külekcı et al., 2020). In another study, it was determined that school principals support students in using technology by directing them to EİN TV and EİN online lessons, and by sharing good examples of emergency distance education among teachers (Turan, 2020). It is known that in the early stages of the epidemic, students did not have enough technical infrastructure and opportunities to connect to online lessons (Kavrayıcı & Kesim, 2021; Chennamsetti, 2020). Another issue that school principals focus on is the provision of necessary materials to students. Thus, it has been tried to ensure that students benefit from the education process efficiently.

The present research revealed that school principals introduced educational activities for parents during the Covid-19 process, informed them about the process, provided guidance to parents, organized seminars, held meetings, and helped the parents with financial inadequacy. In other words, school principals have included parents in the process considering them as a pillar of the process. Yaman (2021) also stated in his research that families are not forgotten in the emergency distance education process and that parents, one of the stakeholders in the education process, are included in the process. Similar studies have determined that school principals plan for the continuity of learning, meet with parents and are in contact with them (Turan, 2020; Panunciar et al., 2020). Research shows that school principals also have a role in ensuring the motivation of parents, which they sometimes perform themselves and sometimes through teachers (Külekcı et al., 2020). Research shows that the school administration's communication with parents during the epidemic increases participation and interest in emergency distance education (Keleş et al., 2020; Panunciar et al., 2020). While school principals continue their traditional roles in school management, the emerging Covid-19 epidemic has made emergency distance education compulsory in schools. This situation has caused school principals to continue their traditional roles differently. It has been revealed that school principals kept the school ready for education and training during the epidemic and carried out practices for teachers, students and parents.

In this study, the roles of school principals in the Covid-19 process were investigated. In the research, the qualitative method was used. Quantitative or mixed research can be done at different educational levels. When the findings are examined, it is seen that the school principals are working to improve the education and training process in schools during the Covid-19 process; they carry out various activities for teachers, students, and student parents. The research was conducted at the primary and secondary school levels. The collection of research data only from primary and secondary school principals reveals the limitations of the research. Another limitation of the study is that the data were collected from only one province. However, the researchers tried to reduce the effects of this limitation by reaching as many primary and secondary school principals as possible.

#### **Statements of publication ethics**

Permission for the present research was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Mardin Artuklu University with the decision dated 16.09.2020 and numbered 7/1.

#### **Researchers' contribution rate**

Each of the authors contributed equally to the article.

#### **Conflict of interest**

The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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