A RESEARCH ON THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND PARENTS ON THE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROCESS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Summary

The aim of this study is to conduct a research on the views of students, teachers, administrators and parents on the distance education process during the COVID-19 pandemic process. The questions prepared for the research were carried out by reaching the participants through the google forum due to the pandemic. The study was designed based on phenomenological design, which is one of the qualitative research methods. The data within the scope of the study were obtained from a total of 20 participants using a semi-structured interview form. The data obtained from the research were evaluated by content analysis technique. In line with the findings obtained when the research data were examined, the participants stated that there were beneficial aspects about the distance education system, which was made in order not to disrupt education within the scope of the pandemic process, but the interaction was limited, the students could not actively participate in the lesson, the students had technological device problems to enter the lesson, there was a problem in entering the course due to technical problems, the educational needs of the students could not be met and the lesson was gradually decreasing. They stated that they have deficiencies in terms of motivation, etc., and that they need to be developed and improved in terms of infrastructure, inequality of opportunity, content and material.

Introduction

Although it is not possible to create a universally accepted definition of education as a subject, social life is a process in which individuals acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and personal development. In a rapidly developing society, the demand for knowledge has increased along with production, so face-to-face education and traditional teaching methods have not been able to meet the needs of society. As an alternative solution to this situation, teaching methods have been developed and the emerging problems and distance education system have taken their place in the literature. (Hızıal, 1982; Kaya, 1996)

When a broad definition of distance learning is made; It is a formal, structured sub-learning function that eliminates the temporary and spatial limitations of digital or written communication resources and provides users with a variety of learning functions. (Altıparmak et al., 2011)

According to Moore (1972), distance education has three elements: student, teacher and communication. Communication is the relationship between the student and the teacher. When the first distance education applications were developed in the education system, when there was no student-teacher relationship, communication via instant messaging, voice communication and video communication were developed in two ways with the help of technology development. While the advantages and disadvantages of distance education are discussed, the concept of pandemic has become popular today. A pandemic is a contagious epidemic that begins in one region and gradually expands across borders and continents. As a result of the coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) in the People's Republic of China, education was suspended and the distance education system started to operate at the national level. The cloud system, which provides distance education to approximately 200 million students, is actively used in the country.

In our world, where the effectiveness, necessity and importance of the distance education system are still being discussed, this system has started to be implemented in education in many countries of the world with the new Coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic.

Education and training have been suspended due to the cases seen in our country. During this period, the Ministry of National Education launched a distance education system that includes primary, secondary, high school and higher education levels so that students do not miss out on education.

Platforms that can provide distance learning include online teaching methods and television-based courses, which are most commonly (Teaster and Blieszner, 1999; Valentine, 2002). For this reason, with the decision to switch to distance education, online environments and TV broadcasts have started to be actively used in this

process in many countries (Stojanovic, El-Khatib, Brandic and Maalouf, 2020). These platforms help to increase the interaction between teachers and students as much as possible in order to facilitate learning in the impossibility of face-to-face classes in the classroom, and in this way, support distance education to come as close as possible to traditional face-to-face education (Teaster and Blieszner, 1999; Valentine, 2002).

Together with students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders, education serves a significant portion of the population in many countries. One of the most important questions that countries need to answer is how to maintain educational services, which are usually conducted in school and rely on teacher-student interaction during the pandemic (Daniel, 2020). Many countries have decided to close schools to keep students away from the risk of infection and reduce the risk of transmission of the virus to their families. (ETF, 2018; OECD, 2020a, 2020b)

While the closure of schools has made a significant contribution to the prevention of the epidemic, it has caused significant costs to countries. Many countries were unprepared for one of the biggest educational challenges in history and had to switch to distance learning in a short period of time (Daniel, 2020). This transition to mandatory education has led to inadequate discussions about the effectiveness of continuing education and distance learning solutions. Although it is seen as the best solution to an epidemic that needs to be adapted in a short time, the ongoing education process using distance education brings with it many problems (Daniel, 2020; Morgan, 2020; Shapiro, 2020).

After the massive closure of schools, as part of public health efforts to curb the spread of Covid-19, education systems around the world have faced unprecedented challenges. Government agencies are working with international organizations, private sector partners, and civil society to enable distance learning to enable curriculum-based learning for all. However, there is little information on how these strategies provide effective and equitable quality learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2020g).

Method

In the study, qualitative research method was preferred because it allows school administrators, teachers, students and parents to interpret their views on the development of the Covid-19 process in education in depth. The research is designed as a phenomenological form, which is one of the types of qualitative research. Phenomenological design is a high-quality research design that aims to present the concepts and experiences of individuals from their own perspectives. (Ersoy, 2016) In this design, it is important that the participants in the research group have direct experience (Patton, 2014: 104). In this study, the phenomenological model was used to examine the impact of Covid-19 on the education system on a global scale, which fits the views of school administrators, teachers, students and parents who manage the process.

Purpose of the research

The aim of this study is to examine the opinions of stakeholders (school administrators, teachers, students and parents) regarding the problems and solution proposals regarding the distance education system implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic process in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which has been continuing since March 2020. For this purpose, the participants participating in the study were asked to answer the following questions.

1-If you evaluate distance education during the pandemic period, what would you say about its efficiency?

2- To what extent were the educational needs of students met by distance education during the pandemic period? Explain

3-How do you evaluate the motivation of the courses held with distance education during the pandemic process (March 2020-October 2020) on the students and teachers?

4-Did you have any technical problems during distance education courses during the pandemic period? If you have experienced it, can you explain it (Internet, computer-related deficiency, etc.)

5-What are your solutions to the difficulties experienced in the distance education process during the Covid-19 pandemic and to increase the quality of education?

Data analysis

In the study, descriptive analysis was preferred in the analysis of the data. The data collected in the descriptive analysis determines the content or results presented in relation to the research question of the study (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018). Categories were determined by taking into account the questions in the interview form. In the results of the research, each participant was given a specific code and their opinions were explained. Studies have been carried out to ensure the validity and reliability of the research. While preparing the interview form, expert opinions were obtained to ensure the validity of the scope.

Working Group

The study group of the research consists of various stakeholders involved in the distance education process carried out due to the Covid-19 pandemic in various regions of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the 2020-2021 academic year, which was determined from easily accessible samples. The easily accessible sampling method is often used in cases where the researcher does not have the opportunity to use other sampling methods and to provide speed and practicality to the researcher (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018). Since face-to-face interviews were not possible during the COVID-19 pandemic, the stakeholders were selected from people who researchers could reach quickly and practically. The sample group of the study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1.Sample group of the study

Sample Group	N
Administrator	5
Teacher	5
Parent	5
Student	5
Sum	20

Results

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that there are a total of 27 participants consisting of 5 school administrators, 7 teachers from various branches, 10 high school students consisting of different age groups and 5 parents in the sample of the study.

3.1. When the opinions of the school administrators participating in the research regarding the "evaluations of the efficiency of distance education during the pandemic period" were examined, they stated that the education was efficient and successful because the infrastructures of private schools were ready for distance education, while the administrators working in public schools stated two different opinions as not efficient and partially efficient. Some of the opinions of school administrators regarding the efficiency of distance education are as follows:

"No, I don't think it's efficient"

"I think it's partially efficient"

"Since private schools are ready as an infrastructure, online education has been efficient and successful"

3.2. When the opinions of the teachers participating *in the research regarding the "*evaluations of the efficiency of distance education during the pandemic period" were examined; It has been stated that distance education is not as efficient as face-to-face education, student-teacher communication is broken, teacher and student motivation is low, distance education can be implemented from the second level of secondary education can be more appropriate and efficient, and the teacher and student should have the competence to use distance education tools. Some of the teachers' opinions on the efficiency of distance education are as follows:

"It can be used quite efficiently in all levels of primary education and other levels of secondary education, except for the first two levels of secondary education. However, in order to increase productivity and/or achieve success, both the target audience student and the trainer must have the competence to use distance education tools."

"Although it is not as efficient as face-to-face education, I think it is effective in keeping students close to the lessons and allowing them to make their own plans and create self-discipline. With good preparation and keeping the student active, I can say that it is efficient and effective."

"I don't think distance learning is efficient. I don't think the motivation of both students and teachers is enough."

"Student-teacher communication was broken. The yield was lower than face-to-face education."

"It made me better understand the importance of face-to-face education. Distance education has lagged far behind in terms of getting feedback."

3.3. When the opinions of the parents participating *in the research regarding the* "evaluations of the efficiency of distance education during the pandemic period" were examined; They stated that distance education is efficient, although not as much as face-to-face education, the length of course duration, low productivity, and students are passive for a long time. Some of the parents' opinions on the efficiency of distance education are as follows:

"It's not as productive as face-to-face training, but it's been productive."

"Long course durations"

"The fact that students sit passively in front of the computer for long periods of time has reduced productivity."

"Although it does not replace face-to-face education, we can say that distance education has been efficient because we think with the logic of "the worst education is better than the education that has never been done".

3.4. When the opinions of the students participating in the research regarding the "evaluations of the efficiency of distance education during the pandemic period" were examined; They stated that distance education is efficient, although not as much as face-to-face education, that productivity in numerical courses is low, that they have internet problems and that this process is inefficient. Some of the students' opinions on the efficiency of distance education are as follows:

"Even if it is not as efficient as face-to-face education, it is a good method to keep up with education."

"Although not as much as education in school, it can be productive when you take notes and listen carefully."

"I don't believe it's very efficient"

"I didn't get much efficiency in numerical lessons"

"I don't think there's anything productive about it at all."

"Unproductive", "Sleeping"

"I find it productive because we are taught in a more comfortable and quiet environment, except for the lack of internet"

4.1. The opinions of the school administrators on the question of "To what extent were the educational needs of the students met with distance education during the pandemic period" stated that the educational needs of the students were generally not met, the students could not be reached, the implementation of the curriculum was somehow ensured but not efficient. Some of the views of school administrators are as follows:

"Although it is not like face-to-face education, students were prevented from being idle in these difficult conditions and it was ensured that they did not break away from the curriculum instead of computer games"

"Students who are eager and take the job seriously have definitely taken something for granted, but I think the proportion of this is quite low when you put it in general."

"It hasn't reached all the students."

"I don't think it's useful enough."

4.2. The opinions of the teachers from the participants on the question "To what extent were the educational needs of the students met with distance education during the pandemic period?"; They stated that the educational needs of the students were not met adequately, the motivation of the students was low, there was no feedback and evaluations about the lessons, the teachers' technology usage skills and the indecision about the systems to be used for distance education. Some of the teachers' opinions are as follows:

"Students' educational needs have not been met, but it's not just because of the system or the teacher. Students did not attend classes enough to meet their needs."

"The inadequacy of teachers in the use of technology and the indecision about the system to be used are the reasons why the educational needs of the students cannot be met."

"It has not been adequately met. It was also inadequate and subjective in terms of assessment and evaluation."

"At the end of the process, it was seen that the evaluations obtained from the feedback did not have the desired effect on the students without the classroom environment."

"Even if classes started with a high participation throughout the school, participation decreased at the end of two weeks with low motivation."

4.3. The opinions of the parents of the participants on the question "To what extent were the educational needs of the students met by distance education during the pandemic period" generally stated that the educational needs of the students were not met sufficiently, and that there were technical problems, especially in applied courses. Some of the parents' opinions are as follows:

"Except for applied courses, the need for education has been met."

"The educational needs of the students have been met to a certain extent."

'Not adequately met'

"It was not adequately received, sometimes the internet was disconnected, sometimes the student was bored."

"The teacher did not adequately observe the intelligibility of the lesson."

4.4. The opinions of the participants on the question "To what extent were the educational needs of the students met with distance education during the pandemic period?"; Mostly, they stated that the educational needs of the students could not be met adequately, technical problems with the internet, and the shortage of tools necessary to enter the course. Some of the students' opinions are as follows:

"Nothing was met"

"The need for training has been met to a certain extent."

"There have been a lot of problems, such as the internet and electricity."

"Most students in our school could not provide the necessary tools"

"The internet network was constantly disconnected because of the connection to the classes at the same time"

5.1. To the question of "How would you evaluate the motivation of the students and teachers made by distance education during the pandemic process (March 2020-September 2020)" of the administrators participating in the research, the opinions of the school administrators are that the motivation is negative for both parties. Some of the school administrators' opinions are as follows:

"There was a negative motivation. The teacher and the student started distance education willingly at first. However, the motivation of the student, who spent long hours in front of the digital screen, decreased over time. The flexibility of the issue of absenteeism by the ministry also had a negative impact on motivation."

"His motivation is negative because distance learning is not positive enough. Even if the teacher assumes great responsibility, it will not be productive."

"There was a motivation that started well but dropped as time went on"

"It was a difficult process. In particular, teachers had to appear in front of the students in a fully equipped and prepared manner. Of course, teachers who do not have adequate preparation have not been able to provide effective motivation on the student."

"Both sides were unhappy and hopeless. Because both groups could not find what they were looking for or imagined in this method, which they encountered for the first time."

5.2. The opinions of the teachers participating in the research on the question "How do you evaluate the motivation of distance education on students and teachers during the pandemic process (March 2020-September 2020)?" stated that this process was a different experience for both parties, and that the level of adaptation and motivation to the system was low on both sides. Some of the teachers' opinions are as follows:

"Distance learning has been a different educational experience for the teacher and the student. Especially the studies in the preparation and transfer of the lessons kept the motivation high."

"Due to the variable decisions made by the teachers about the system to be used and the late system education, there was a problem in motivation due to the passive participation of the students in the lesson. Students, on the other hand, had problems in attending the class due to the flexibility of the ministry in terms of class participation, being in front of the technological device screen for a long time, or not having technological devices to participate in the class, and this affected their motivation."

"Motivation is insufficient"

"I can say that teachers in my immediate environment are more motivated. Everyone embraced each other in order to do something for themselves and contribute to the process. Even though the students missed school, they had a harder time staying motivated."

"In accordance with the newly created information technology law, the fact that the target student group is under the age of 18 and the fact that it is not obligatory to turn on the camera has caused the student to experience complacency due to comfort, and accordingly, the teacher has lost motivation by feeling that he is teaching on a blank screen."

5.3. How would you evaluate the motivation of distance education on students and teachers during the pandemic process (March 2020-September 2020)?" Their views on the question are that as time progresses, the motivation of both sides decreases. Some of the parents' opinions are as follows:

"The motivation of the teachers was at the level of motivating the children. As time progressed, the children's motivation decreased."

"It has been a new educational experience. It kept motivation high."

"Motivation was low, the student was able to attend the class at home, sometimes sleepy, and sometimes even did not attend the class."

5.4. How would you evaluate the motivation of distance education on students and teachers during the pandemic process (March 2020-September 2020)? Students' opinions on the question mostly stated that their motivation was low and they could not be motivated in the home environment. Some of the student testimonials are as follows:

"I think the motivation of the students is not as high as in school"

"Motivation was zero in the students, internet interruptions, terrible course flow, low motivation in the teachers"

"It's starting to get very tiring and distressing in the long run. Because it was a home environment, no one managed to fully adapt to the lesson."

"Distance education has caused a decrease in the motivation of both sides, both teachers and students, and has also reduced productivity to a certain extent"

6.1. Did you have any technical problems during distance education classes during the pandemic period? The opinions of school administrators are generally that they have technical problems caused by the Internet. Some of the managers' views are as follows:

"It has been revealed in this period how inadequate the internet facilities in our country are."

"There were problems such as internet-related freezing, not being able to download files."

"There were problems with the internet and electricity."

6.2. Did you have any technical problems during distance education classes during the pandemic period? To the question, the opinions of the teachers stated that they mostly had technical problems caused by the Internet. Some of the teachers' opinions are as follows:

"Although we did not have any problems in terms of equipment, there were serious problems in terms of internet."

"Yes, the internet did not work properly, there were problems opening the image."

"Yes, I did, I had to constantly change venues to teach in a quiet environment."

6.3. Did you have any technical problems during distance education classes during the pandemic period? All of the parents' opinions to the question are that they have technical problems caused by the Internet. Some of the parents' opinions are as follows:

"We have been affected by this problem internettir.biz the general problem of your country."

"The internet is constantly down."

6.4. Did you have any technical problems during distance education classes during the pandemic period? To the question, the opinions of the students mostly stated that they had technical problems caused by the Internet, that there was no internet in their homes and that there was a technical device supply problem. Some of the student testimonials are as follows:

"I had to attend classes with mobile data because there was no internet at home"

"I had problems with the internet and most of the time I couldn't attend classes"

"Many of my friends don't have computers, most of them had to take classes on the phone"

"Absence of computers"

7.1. What are your suggestions for solutions to the difficulties experienced in the distance education process during the Covid-19 pandemic and to increase the quality of education? The opinions of school administrators to the question; The necessity of legislating distance education, the provision of an infrastructure and technical equipment, and the necessity of giving importance to teacher training have been on the necessity. Some of the views of school administrators are as follows:

"A good internet infrastructure and students to be reached equally"

"First of all, both the individuals who will give and receive the training should receive sufficient knowledge and skills in this regard, and have sufficient materials and equipment. Both the student and the teacher should take the incident seriously and help to a certain extent, and they should make more effort and be more self-sacrificing than face-to-face education."

"First of all, every student should have a computer or tablet to attend the class"

"Distance education needs to be centralized"

"More attention should be paid to teacher training related to distance education"

7.2. What are your suggestions for solutions to the difficulties experienced in the distance education process during the Covid-19 pandemic and to increase the quality of education? The opinions of the teachers stated that the studies on teacher training and student motivation should be increased, the legalization of the distance education system, the provision of the necessary devices for distance education, and the adequacy of infrastructure and technical equipment. Some of the teachers' opinions are as follows:

"It is important for all students to be able to participate in distance education under the same conditions, I think that effective planning for distance education and studies on distance education for teachers are the factors that will increase the quality of education"

"Legalization of online education, elimination of device deficiencies in students and teachers by the state, and allocation of an additional budget by the state for distance education"

"Infrastructure and technical equipment should be provided, rewarding should be implemented, evaluation processes should be established and parental interest should be created more efficiently"

"Motivation studies for students can be increased, course contents can be kept shorter, and instead short applications can be made that will enable the student to be active in front of the screen."

"Due to the fact that our age is the age of technology, many countries in the world have switched to the distance education system many years ago. Therefore, it is unrealistic to completely exclude and ignore distance education. In our country, 40% of the education needs in high schools and universities should be arranged in such a way that they will be done remotely."

7.3. What are your suggestions for solutions to the difficulties experienced in the distance education process during the Covid-19 pandemic and to increase the quality of education? To the question, the opinions of the parents stated that the necessary devices for distance education should be provided, infrastructure and technical equipment should be provided, the course topics should be kept short and homework should not be given continuously. Some of the parents' opinions are as follows:

"Distance education should not be used as the main educational tool for primary education levels. However, it would be more accurate if it is implemented outside of school hours to support face-to-face education. In addition, eliminating the deficiencies of equipment in general, strengthening the technical infrastructure, increasing the ability of both the teacher and the student to use distance education tools can enable more efficient use of distance education."

"Overcoming the internet problem, making effective planning in this regard, and providing all students with access to information under the same conditions will increase the quality of education."

"The topics should be more concise. Private schools should not keep students in front of the screen all day, and students should not be given homework all the time."

7.4. What are your suggestions for solutions to the difficulties experienced in the distance education process during the Covid-19 pandemic and to increase the quality of education? To the question, the opinions of the students stated that the necessary devices for distance education should be provided, infrastructure and technical equipment should be provided. Some of the students' opinions are as follows:

"It can be effective for teachers to work to increase students' interest in the lesson."

"Raising awareness of all teachers and students about online education"

"Activities that motivate students will increase productivity"

"Teachers should open everything on a board or a page in the middle and write it down and explain it or solve it."

"The communication problems of every house should be solved by the state"

"We can get through this period with fifth, eighth and twelfth grades face-to-face education, and intermediate grades with distance education"

"Distance education can be supported more with research-oriented activities by giving projects"

Conclusion-Discussion and Recommendations

According to the results of the research, it is seen that distance education cannot meet the educational needs of students at the desired level compared to face-to-face education during the COVID-19 epidemic. In line with the opinions received from the stakeholders, it is concluded that distance trainings can be partially efficient in order to meet the training needs in this process, although they are not as efficient as face-to-face trainings. In a study conducted by Chan (2007) during the SARS epidemic, they revealed that information can be shared and multiplied by creating platforms that can provide distance education during the epidemic and that the educational needs of the students can be met in this way. It is seen that the results obtained from the research and the results obtained from the literature are compatible with each other. In line with the opinions received from the stakeholders, it was concluded that the educational needs of the students could not be met by distance education, the curriculum and programs were tried to be implemented in some way, but they were not sufficient, the technical problems related to the internet and the shortage of technological tools required for the students to attend the classes, and accordingly, the targeted education needs for the students could not be met efficiently. In his study, Fidan (2020) examined the views of primary school teachers on distance education. According to the results obtained in the study, teachers believe that the most beneficial aspect of distance education is that students do not fall behind in lessons and provide independence from time. In the research, it is seen that distance education is a different experience for students and teachers during the pandemic process, both sides have difficulty in adapting to the system and being motivated, their motivation in the first time decreases as time progresses, they cannot prepare for lessons and concentrate in the home environment. In a study by Koçyiğit and Uşun (2020) examining the attitudes of teachers towards distance education in Turkey, it has come to the fore that the most important point that teachers see regarding distance education is that they provide education and training opportunities to individuals who are excluded from the current education for various reasons.

The technical problems experienced during the distance education courses during the pandemic process obtained in the research can be listed as internet-related technical problems, lack of computers and inequality of opportunity in education, which the stakeholders mostly show as problems. Ramos-Morcillo et al. (2020) have highlighted that one of the disadvantages of distance learning is that students do not have equal rights. In the study, it is emphasized that students in rural areas are more disadvantaged than students in urban areas.

Another finding obtained from the study is the solution suggestions to increase the quality of education in the distance education process. The solution proposals received from the stakeholders are mainly in the form of legalizing the distance education process, creating equal opportunities by providing access to resources such as internet and computers that can provide distance education, giving importance to teacher training, strengthening the systemic infrastructure, keeping the course topics short and not giving too much homework in this process. Kaden (2020) emphasizes that distance learning can provide support to many students, but it must be carefully designed and personalized to avoid deepening the social divide. In a study conducted by Yılmaz-İnce, Kabul and Diler (2020), it was determined that students' opportunities to have computers and internet affect their views on distance education. Therefore, the ease of access to resources such as the internet and computers that provide distance education is important in terms of preventing social divisions, ensuring equal opportunity in education and therefore measuring and evaluating in a healthy way.

In his research, Attri (2012) offered suggestions to increase communication and classroom interaction between students and teachers by receiving feedback from teachers in order to improve the quality of distance education. In addition, it is seen as a need to increase the quality of distance education in distance education by creating the infrastructure in distance education applications at all levels from pre-school education to higher education and graduate stages, preparing course content and its effective presentation and use (Sarı, 2020).

Çalışmanın sonuçları ve yöntemi açısından uygulayıcılara ve araştırmacılara yönelik olarak aşağıdaki öneriler ileri sürülebilir:

• Since it has been determined in the research that there are some deficiencies in the infrastructure, technology, equipment and skills of the stakeholders in the distance education process, in-service trainings on distance education should be given to teachers by the Ministry of National Education (by necessity), and in this process, it is recommended that teachers work devotedly in order to have the technical equipment and the competencies to use them in order to improve themselves.

• Since it has been determined that there are some problems in the measurement and evaluation process of distance education, the measurement and evaluation methods that can be applied to the distance education system can be determined and trainings can be organized with the courses to be held.

• In this study, interview method, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used. In other studies on similar subjects, experimental research can be conducted on the effect of distance education on various cognitive and emotional characteristics of students (such as academic achievement, attitude, interest).

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