



EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION ON CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL PERIOD: TEACHERS' OPINIONS

Şermin Kuset¹, Kezban Özgem², Emine Şaşmacıoğlu³, Şebnem Güldal Kan^{4*}

^{1,2} Doctoral Student, Department of Preschool Education, Near East University, Nicosia, Via Mersin 10 Turkey. serminkuset@gmail.com , kezbanozgem@gmail.com

³ Master Student, Department of Preschool Education, Near East University, Nicosia, Via Mersin 10 Turkey. emine.sasmaci@gmail.com

⁴ Assist. Prof. Dr., Department of Preschool Education, Near East University, Nicosia, Via Mersin 10 Turkey. sebnem.guldal@neu.edu.tr

*Correspondence: sebnem.guldal@neu.edu.tr; Tel.:+90 216 345 90 90

Abstract

In this study; it is aimed to examine the effects of distance education on preschool children. In this study, a case study based on qualitative data made with semi-structured interview technique was conducted by the preschool teachers of children who went to the preschool institution to examine the effect of distance education on children, and analyzed by content analysis method. In the study conducted in the COVID-19 epidemic period in the 2019-2020 spring period, the teachers of the students going to public and private schools were interviewed from afar. When other results obtained from the study are analyzed, 35 preschool teachers participated in the study and the majority of the study consists of women between the ages of 30 and 35. The majority of the participants are undergraduate graduates, and it is stated that they work in a private school and are also teachers for 6 years or more. In addition, while it was stated that distance education is inefficient compared to face to face education, it was determined that the biggest problem in the distance education process was communication. It has been found that the greatest contribution of distance education in the pandemic process is that it ensures that children do not leave education.

Keywords: Education, preschool period, technology, distance education, preschool teacher.

Introduction

Education is the most important tool of change. Education plays an important role in the development of the individual, by realizing their cultural values and starting their own development process (Kıvanç, 2008). Education is of great importance in the development of skills such as awareness, interpretation, learning, and knowing of the individual (Rudge, 2008). Nevertheless, the fact that the child is at the center of the research conducted with education has revealed that preschool education is important, but it has kept preschool education on the agenda and made researches (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000; Krogh & Slentz, 2001).

Education is a process that starts from the womb and continues for life. There are critical periods that arise in this process. This period, which can be defined as 0-6 years or preschoolers, is considered to be very important in terms of development (Akyüz, 2004). It is observed that preschool education starts at 0-6 age including 0-3 age child care and 3-6 age nurseries (Karakparmak, 2008). Since the imagination open to children in this period is quite wide and full of energy, it is possible to organize the places where they will be educated by considering these characteristics of the children and increase their success (Özkubat, 2013). Although it is a very important period for the development of the child's social, emotional and creativity in preschool period, the developmental features gained by the individual in this period is a process that forms the basis of lifelong learning for the individual in the future (Sapasaglam, 2017).

In preschool education, it is very important for educators to know the developmental characteristics of children for effective education and training (Berk, 2013; Bredekamp, 2015; New, 2016). Knowing the developmental characteristics of the child in preschool period, it provides a guiding guide for educators, parents and children who work with children, to communicate well with children, and to plan education and training programs (Trawick-Smith, 2017).

Preschool education program aims to support the healthy development of children and to provide the necessary skills for the future harmoniously (Hirsh, 2004). The program should prevent the teachers from reaching the general goals of the education they apply with the children, what methods and activities the children will support, how to teach them, how to create the physical environment, how to support families in the education process and how to evaluate them in a concrete way (Dodge, 1995) .

In this context, it is revealed that children in preschool education period, which is accepted as the beginning of the life of education, are curious and interested in technological products, colorful, moving pictures, animations, videos of technological products such as computers, tablets and phones such as discovering the curiosity, creativity, discovery and independence of children in this period contributing to a permanent and entertaining learning by removing them, at the same time, it provides their correct learning (Demirel, Seferoğlu & Yağcı, 2004; Uluser-İnan, 2003).

Today, technology is a very important factor in accessing information with the rapid development of technology and changes, the rapid increase of information and the change of mass media with which information is transmitted, and the environment in which information is produced and shared (Yılmaz & Özkan, 2013). For this reason, information and communication technologies in the field of education, creating new educational environments, providing new teaching methods, changing the relationship between traditional educator and child, this leads to an increase in the quality of education (Yazıcı, 2015). In many studies, the active use of technology in pre-school education affects children's learning positively and increases motivation (Çakıroğlu & Taşkın, 2016; Huffstetter, King, Onwuegbuzie, Schneider & Powell-Smith, 2010; Kocaman-Karoglu, 2016; Şahin, 2006; Wolgemuth, et al., 2011).

With the active use of technology, distance education started. In this context, distance education is a system in which teachers and students interact with each other by means of technological tools in order to provide education services to larger groups and to ensure equality in education (Yalın, 2001). The different ways of learning made the school not only a place of learning, but a common space that provides socialization and guidance, as well as inequalities in education, difficulties in learning activities, and most importantly, understanding the role of the school outside of education (Anderson, 2020). Although the distance education platform is a fairly foreign platform to teachers, studies are being

conducted on how to use the learning platform, how to help teachers in the implementation of online learning and how to be active, how to reach people who do not have a technological device at home and have no internet access (Atchoarena, 2020). According to Anderson 2020, “The pandemic forces educators, parents and students to think critically, solve problems, be creative, communicate, collaborate and be active”. In order to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus (covid-19) epidemic, millions of children, young people, adults cannot go to schools due to the obligation to take measures such as school closure, staying at home, stopping domestic and international departures, and this situation is equal for students in their further academic periods can cause great difficulties if they are trained (Giannini & Lewis, 2020).

In this context, due to the Covid-19 outbreak in the world, distance education has been started for the sustainability of education and training (Kayıhan & Tönük, 2011). It is observed that teachers, students, administrators and parents have great difficulties in order to ensure continuity of learning with the closure of schools (Chang & Satako, 2020). In addition, with the closure of schools, it forces innovations to keep the education system alive, and the whole world is shaped by new education systems and by finding new solutions to continue continuous education, the quality of learning largely depends on the level of digital access (Gilani, 2020). It is observed that studies related to the use of technology in preschool education are not related to distance education in preschool education.

For this purpose, descriptive content analysis will be carried out in the qualitative research method to examine the effect of distance education on preschool children through teacher views. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What is the socio-demographic distribution of teachers?
2. What are teachers' thoughts on distance education?
3. What are the problems of distance education for teachers?
4. What is the contribution of distance education to the education of children according to the opinions of the teachers?

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Method

Research model

This study was designed as a qualitative study to determine the effect of distance education on children with the opinions of teachers and to present them in detail, and the case study method was used. In the research, a holistic single case pattern, one of the case study patterns, was used. In holistic single state patterns, there is a situation where a single analysis can be perceived as holistic by itself. The holistic single state pattern exists in three situations: First, if there is a well-formulated theory in the middle, this pattern has been used to confirm or refute it. If the latter does not comply with the general standards, a holistic single state pattern can be used in an overly contradictory and unique case study. Finally, a holistic single-state pattern can be used in cases where no one has ever worked or reached (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The case study states that it provides the opportunity to draw in depth about the effect or relationship on the individual and society without interfering with an event (Saban & Ersoy, 2017).

Study group

In this study, a path was followed for the easy accessibility of giving speed and practicality to the purposeful sampling situation. 35 teachers working in preschool education

institutions participated in the study. The overall work was composed of a female teacher. Demographic information about teachers is given in Table 1.

Data Collection Tool and Data Analysis

This study was carried out by obtaining the necessary permissions from the Ministry of Education and Culture for the implementation of the semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers, and it was created with a semi-structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. In a structured interview, questions are determined in advance and data is tried to be collected with these questions (Karasar, 1998). While preparing the interview form used in this study, in order to establish a more effective and efficient communication with the interviewed individuals; Care has been taken to ensure that the questions are as clear as possible, easy to understand, to provide explanation and to give detailed answers, and not to be multi-dimensional in order not to create an unnecessary burden of questions on the interviewed individual. In addition, care was taken to prepare alternative questions and some clues in case the individual did not understand the question (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The interview form prepared by the researchers was shown to three field experts. Semi-structured interview form of the experts were prepared by examining their writings. The statements in the interview form were prepared for distance education in pre-school education and consist of 8 questions. Due to the situation we were in during the pandemic period, the questions were prepared in Google form and the qualitative data obtained by the answers uploaded to Google Drive were written down by the researchers and prevented data loss and analyzed by content analysis method. During the interviews, the data saved in Google drive has been analyzed and the interview transcript has been created by numbering each dimension. With the interview transcript, the cassettes were given to an expert from the field and the wrong or missing sections were checked. After the interviews were made, the data obtained from the participants were analyzed and divided into meaningful sections, and these sections that constitute meaningful integrations in themselves were named and coded. After all the data was coded in this way, a code list was created and served as a key list in the examination and editing of this data. Then, coding keys and interview transcripts were read separately by the researchers, and necessary arrangements were made by discussing the issues of “consensus” and “disagreement”. The reliability formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used to calculate the reliability of the research. As a result of the calculation, the reliability of the research was calculated as 92% for the first question and 100% for the second question and 96% for the average. Over 70% of the reliability calculations are considered reliable for research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The result obtained here is considered reliable for research. Codes that show harmony in the coding made by the researchers were based on organizing the data according to the codes and themes in reaching the themes.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis technique was used to analyze the data. The purpose of descriptive analysis is to put the raw data in a format that the reader can understand and use if they wish. The data obtained in the descriptive analysis are summarized and interpreted according to the previously determined themes. In this analysis, direct quotations are often included to reflect the views of individuals interviewed or observed (Altunışık et al., 2010; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2014).

Findings and Comments

The themes obtained from the opinions of the participants were tabulated together with their frequency distributions and interpreted. In this study, it was aimed to evaluate the effect of distance education on preschool children. For this purpose, the findings obtained from the opinions of preschool teachers are given in

Table 1.
Teacher's Socio-Demographic Distribution

	N	%
Teacher's Age		
29 and Under	6	17.1
30-34	11	32.4
35-39	10	28.6
40-44	6	17.1
45-49	1	2.9
Gender		
Woman	34	91.1
Male	1	2.9
Education Status		
License	20	57.1
Master	11	31.4
Doctorate	4	11.4
Professional Experience		
5 years and under	4	11.4
6-10 years	11	31.4
Between 11-15 years	8	22.9
16 years and over	10	28.6
Institution of Teaching		
Special	27	77.1
State	8	22.9
How Long Have You Been Working At The Institution You Are Teaching		
2 years and under	4	11.4
3-5 years	7	20
6 years and over	24	68.6

Table 1. When it was examined, it was determined that 91.1% of the participants in the study were women, 28.8% were between the ages of 35-39, 57.1% were at the undergraduate education level. It was found that 31.4% of the participants had 6-10 years of experience in the profession, 77.1% of them worked as teachers in private schools and 68.6% of them worked as teachers in the same institution for over 6 years.

Table 2.*Thoughts on Distance Education*

Themes	N	%
Efficient	11	31
Insufficient	13	37
Family supported	8	23
Extra effort	3	9

As seen in Table 2, 37% of the participants who participated in the research stated that distance education is inefficient compared to face to face education. However, 31% of the participants found that distance education was sufficient to prevent children from leaving school during the pandemic period. Findings obtained from teachers' opinions are given in Table 2.

T17: *“Participation is fine and I think it is beneficial for children.”*

T2: *“It should be supported with face to face education. There can be moments when it is insufficient.”*

T11: *“I don't think our children are educated as efficiently as real classrooms.”*

T14: *“It cannot be sufficiently efficient and interactive in young age groups, so we need family support.”*

T29: *“It is a very tiring process for teachers, more energy and research is needed to increase student motivation and participation.”*

Table 3*The Problems of Distance Education in Terms of Teacher*

Themes	N	%
Low turnout	4	11
Material shortage	6	17
Student follow-up	8	23
Communication difficulties	12	34
No	5	14

As seen in Table 3, it was seen that 34% of the respondents experienced in the communication were the difficulties in communication with the answers given by the participants to the problems caused by distance education. Besides, the findings obtained are given in Table 3.

T7: *“We have difficulties regarding the participation of the students in the studies and their reluctance. Because we cannot see the student, we try to motivate the child by phone or video call.”*

T1: *“Before sending the activities to the children, attention is paid to the materials that may be at home. It is not possible to include every activity in the desired way.”*

T33: *“It takes a lot of working and preparation hours. This is very tiring for us.”*

T26: “The most important point is that the student did not understand the questions he made wrong, or did he read it because he was tired, or he could not write the places he left blank, or whether it was a problem with the computer or not. I'm thinking.”

T5: “The children do not have the necessary technological tools and equipment for distance education, so it is very difficult to reach the children with the smart phones of the parents.”

T13: “The internet's not working at the same speed every day causes lessons to be interrupted.”

T28: “As a mother, I have to constantly check the child, I have to follow the topics she does not understand in the lesson and find solutions. I think that children will not have any problems with the support of parents in the distance education process. As a teacher, I did not have any problems. ”

T23: “It does not cause any trouble.”

Table 4

Contribution of Distance Education to the Education of Children

Themes	N	%
Responsibility awareness	6	17
Academic learning	4	11
Not breaking with education	14	40
Self assessment skills	1	2
Ability to use technology	2	6
Time with family	5	14
No	4	11

As can be seen in Table 4, 40% of the participants who participated in the study were found to have the greatest contribution of distance education to children, and 17% of them believed that responsibility was settled in children in this process. In addition to all these, it has been concluded that 14% of the relations with the family are strengthened. Other findings are given in Table 4.

T2: “Since the responsibility is in the student, the sense of responsibility develops further.”

T19: “This is a learning. It has no contribution to the sensory and social process. Just an academic learning.

T13: “It helps them to stay away from education.”

T26: “I believe that they contribute to this process at least how much they can learn from not leaving the school and the lessons and learning from school habits, such as working, question solving, research, and project preparation.”

T5: “It contributes to children to develop their own autocontrols. Especially self-assessment skills are improving. ”

T24: “They learn to use technology in the productive field.”

T34: “They are developing in different fields, not in the academic field, they gain gains in social connection with the family, home and life.”

T4: “It does not contribute to the education of children.”

Discussion and Conclusion

Distance Education is one of the education models that require expertise in the globalizing world process. It is becoming widespread all over the world without any limitation. At the same time, it is subject to scientific research in every field and provides many quantitative and qualitative data. While there is no difficulty in implementing by countries with developed technologies, the spread of distance education process in developing or less developed countries changes the effect of those countries on the development process of information technologies. Therefore, each country will take part in the distance education process in order to develop methods and methods that will meet their own needs. They will restructure their learning-oriented education policies by making the necessary cognitive preparations.

In this study, it is aimed to get the opinions regarding the evaluation of the teachers' views on the effect of distance education on preschool children. For this purpose, answers were sought for the socio-demographic characteristics of teachers, their thoughts on distance education, their difficulties, and their contribution to the education of children. Accordingly, the majority of the teachers participating in the study with their socio-demographic characteristics are women, the age range is between 35-39, they have completed their language education level, their experience in the profession is between 6-10 years, they teach at the private school and they work for 6 years as teachers in the same institution. results have been reached. In a similar study, in Demiray (2013), the positive and negative aspects of distance education for women were examined and the importance of distance education for women was emphasized. The majority of prospective teachers participating in our study are women.

The participants expressed their positive and negative thoughts on Distance Education. In addition, they expressed their thoughts on the fact that Distance Education had more communication problems than the Teacher Perspective. It was concluded that the contribution of distance education to the education of children is not to be disconnected from education. According to the results of these three sub-problems, the participants stated a negative statement about the fact that distance education is inefficient compared to face-to-face education. However, some of the participants found that distance education was sufficient to prevent children from leaving school during the pandemic period. When the relevant field article was examined, it was concluded that in-service training activities organized by the Ministry of National Education for teachers, in-service training activities specific to their branches, can be supported with face-to-face training in their research in Fingerless and Hot (2015). The ratio of teachers who think that the opinions of the teachers about the education center where the distance education activity is organized is positive but insufficient in terms of physical and technical equipment (heat, light, sound, ventilation) is higher than the other dimensions.

Based on the results obtained from this study, the following suggestions can be made;

1. The study is a qualitative study and the research data is limited to 35 teachers.

Based on the data obtained in this study, a wider questionnaire can be developed to reach all preschool teachers across Northern Cyprus. This study can be considered as a step for a research that can be studied with more pre-school teachers across the island.

2. It is seen that the teachers look more traditionally to the method of education. From this point of view, it should be given importance to use online training more frequently in any possible situation (epidemic, pandemic, etc.) by making necessary arrangements.

3. In the studies carried out, it was observed that the teachers had difficulties in using the technology or could not communicate. It is recommended that the trainings for the related service should be increased and oriented towards implementation.

4. It is suggested that a quantitative study on this study can also be done.

5. In this study, it is determined that teachers need support from families and family information meetings and trainings to improve families' ability to use technology in order to increase family awareness and to include more frequent activities with family participation and to develop families in technology and use them more efficiently.

Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments should be inserted at the end of the paper, before the references, not as a footnote to the title. Use an unnumbered section heading for the Acknowledgments, similar to the References heading.

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