

Repercussions of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Education Process and the Professional Development of Teachers from the Perspective of Preschool Teachers

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the repercussions of the pandemic period on the education process and the professional development of educators from the perspective of preschool teachers. According to the criteria set in the study that was built on the methodology of phenomenology, two groups were formed, each made up of seven preschool teachers, and focus group discussions were held. Data was collected through the Personal Information Form and the Semi-Structured Interview Form, while content analysis was used to examine this data. The study revealed that teachers tended to have had negative experiences of distance education; however, this situation has in fact affected their professional development positively. In addition, while this process has had a positive effect on teacher-family relationships, it has had a negative effect on teacher-child relationships. Teachers have required support for a variety of issues during this process, and have attempted to meet their needs through different sources (e.g. colleagues, social media applications). On the other hand, they expressed that they had experienced negative feelings during this process, with loneliness a common factor. In this article, a variety of recommendations were made for researchers and implementers in light of the findings.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Distance education, Phenomenology, Preschool teachers, Professional development

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Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Bakış Açısıyla COVID-19 Salgınlarının Eğitim Sürecine ve Öğretmenlerin Mesleki Gelişimine Yansımaları

Öz

Bu çalışmada okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin bakış açısıyla salgın döneminin, eğitim sürecine ve öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimine yansımalarının belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Fenomenoloji desenine göre tasarlanan çalışmada belirlenen ölçütler doğrultusunda, yedişer okul öncesi öğretmenin yer aldığı iki grup oluşturulmuş ve odak grup görüşmeleri gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler Kişisel Bilgi Formu ve Yarı Yapılandırılmış Görüşme Formu aracılığıyla toplanmış ve verilerin analizinde içerik analizinden yararlanılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitim sürecinde genellikle olumsuz deneyimler yaşadıkları ancak mesleki gelişimlerinin bu süreçten olumlu etkilendiği görülmüştür. Ayrıca öğretmen-aile ilişkileri bu süreçten olumlu etkilenirken, öğretmen-çocuk ilişkileri olumsuz etkilenmiştir. Öğretmenler bu süreçte çeşitli konularda desteğe ihtiyaç duymuşlar ve ihtiyaçlarını çeşitli kaynaklar (örneğin, meslektaşlar, sosyal medya araçları) kullanarak gidermeye çalışmışlardır. Buna karşın, süreç boyunca kendilerini yalnız hissettiklerinden olumsuz duygular yaşadıkları ortaya konulmuştur. Bulgular doğrultusunda araştırmacılara ve uygulayıcılara yönelik çeşitli öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: COVID-19 salgını, Fenomenoloji, Mesleki gelişim, Okul öncesi öğretmenleri, Uzaktan eğitim

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, which started to spread in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization on 30 January 2020 (WHO, 2020). National authorities throughout the world intervened by imposing various restrictions; schools were closed on a national or local level in 172 countries, and over 90% of the world's student population was affected by this situation (Global Education Cluster, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). This led educators to resort to online platforms in order to reach children, turning such platforms into temporary classrooms. This way, the aim was to minimise loss of learning by offering children distance education opportunities (Agnoletto & Queiroz, 2020; Brown et al., 2020).

In Türkiye, distance education activities for preschool children began to be conducted via the Educational Informatics Network Television (EBA TV) and the Educational Informatics Network (EBA), in cooperation with the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) as well as the Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2020). Teachers, who quickly had to adapt to distance education technologies following the outbreak, stated that they had experienced difficulties such as technical issues, limited interaction with children and their parents, and low participation rates (Bergdahl & Nouri, 2020; Kaden, 2020; Reich et al., 2020; Spoel et al., 2020). However, the fact that teachers were not provided with sufficient information led them to determine the structure, procedures and content of distance education by themselves (Gülay-Ogelman et al., 2021). Research conducted during the pandemic has revealed that such problems experienced by teachers has led to a decrease in self-efficacy levels and has intensified stress (Kim & Asbury, 2020; Klapproth et al., 2020; Reich et al., 2020). Nevertheless, it has been found that teachers who received adequate support from their colleagues, subject matter experts and parents overcame this process in a more positive manner (Obrad, 2020). In some studies, teachers stated that while the pandemic period brought about some difficulties, it also increased their technological knowledge and supported their professional development (Akin & Aslan, 2021; Spoel et al., 2020).

As was the case for all educators, preschool teachers were unexpectedly obliged to use distance education technologies due to the pandemic. However, with limited technological infrastructure and with schools being caught blindsided by distance education, it was difficult to

adapt to the process, both for teachers and for children and their families (Bergdahl & Nouri, 2020). Despite the unexpected nature of the pandemic, the aim of remote preschool education is to continue to offer children activities that are suitable for their development, enabling them to reveal their potential and supporting their learning through distance education. The role of preschool teachers is extremely important in achieving this goal. On the other hand, as the complex scenario created by the pandemic may have affected even the most highly qualified and experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020), it is very valuable to uncover the repercussions of the pandemic on the teaching process and the professional development of preschool teachers. This will allow the needs of teachers to be determined and an action plan for extraordinary circumstances such as pandemics to be developed.

Through the literature review, it has been seen that there are various studies carried out with preschool teachers regarding the COVID-19 pandemic (Alan, 2021; Chen & Rivera-Vernazza, 2022; Crawford et al., 2021; Dayal & Tiko, 2020; Gomes et al., 2021; Plotka & Guirguis, 2022; Sorrells & Akpovo, 2022; Yıldırım, 2021). It has been determined that studies in Türkiye generally focus on determining the views of preschool teachers on distance education (Bartan, 2022; Gülay-Ogelman et al., 2021; Tozduman-Yaralı & Özkan-Kunduracı, 2021; Yazıcı et al., 2022; Yıldırım, 2021) and the problems and needs they experience in the distance education process (Alan, 2021; Aral & Kadan, 2021; Yıldız & Şahin, 2022). On the other hand, it has been observed that there are limited studies examining the experiences of preschool teachers regarding the educational process (Aktan-Acar et al., 2021; Işıkoğlu et al., 2021; Yıldırım, 2021). The participants of only one of these studies consisted of pre-school teachers working in different regions of Türkiye. In addition, in this study, the views and experiences of preschool teachers regarding distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic were tried to be determined through the survey form (Aktan-Acar et al., 2021). Unlike this study, the current study focuses on both the educational processes and professional development of preschool teachers working in different regions of Türkiye. In addition, it was aimed to examine the repercussions of the pandemic process in depth by collecting data through focus group interviews and reflection papers. The regions where teachers work is an important factor that also affects their professional experience. When the educational structure of Türkiye is examined, it is seen that there are striking differences between regions. Examples of these are the geographical location of the region, the level of development, the schooling rates, the level of access to technological tools, allowance per student (Özdemir et al., 2015). Therefore MoNE (2018) has divided educational institutions into service regions in terms of the conditions of the settlements where they are located. However, the conditions of each educational institution in a province can be very far from each other. For this reason, service areas have also been created. In this study, care was taken to select teachers from different service regions and different service areas. This study is important in terms of revealing the professional experiences of preschool teachers working in different regions and residential areas during the pandemic process. At the same time, the current study is considered valuable in terms of revealing the repercussions of the pandemic process on the educational experience and professional development of teachers through their own voices. In this way, it is thought that when the pandemic and similar circumstances are encountered, necessary precautions will be taken and it will contribute to the quality of the preschool education process and the continuity of the professional development of teachers.

Therefore, the aim of the study is to determine the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education process and the professional development of teachers based on the perspective of preschool teachers working in different regions of Türkiye. With this in mind, answers to the following questions will be sought.

1. What are the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education process of preschool teachers?
 - a. What are the thoughts of preschool teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - b. How are the feelings of preschool teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- c. What are the needs of preschool teachers and the ways to meet these needs during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - d. How are preschool teachers' relationships with children during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - e. How are the relationships of preschool teachers with families during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - f. What are the suggestions of preschool teachers for pandemic and similar circumstances?
2. How are the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic on the professional development of preschool teachers?

Method

Research Model

Phenomenology design, a qualitative research method, was employed in this study. With phenomenological design, the researcher tries to understand social events from the perspective of the participants, examining how the world is experienced through their eyes (Patton, 2014). In this approach, the main goal of the researcher is to describe the fundamental structure of individuals' experiences, and phenomenology is the most appropriate design for studying human experiences that are powerful, emotional, and mostly intense (Merriam, 2018).

Participants

A poster prepared to identify potential participants in the current research was shared via Instagram (April-May 2021). The participants were determined using the criterion sampling method, a type of purposive sampling method. The purpose of the criterion sampling method is to review and study cases that meet the predetermined criteria (Patton, 2018). Creswell (2013) recommends using the criterion sampling method in phenomenological studies. In this study, the criteria for the people included in the focus group are teachers working in different regions of Türkiye, all of different professional seniority levels. As explained by the researchers in the introduction, it is thought that teachers may have different experiences during the pandemic period depending on their professional seniority, the region of duty and the type of residential area of the school (city centre, district, village).

For this reason, attention was paid to include teachers who differ in these characteristics in both focus groups. In addition, two focus groups with similar characteristics were created to increase the reliability of the data obtained. The information of each of the seven preschool teachers in the focus groups is provided in Table 1.

Table 1.

Information on teachers in the focus groups.

	Focus Group 1 Frequency (f)	Focus Group 2 Frequency (f)
Gender		
Female	7	7
Age		
26-30	3	3
31-35	2	2
36-40	1	2
41 and older	1	
Professional Seniority		
0-5	1	1
6-10	2	3
11-15	2	3
16 and over	2	

Educational Status		
Bachelor's degree	4	5
Master's degree	3	2
Region of the School		
Central Anatolia	2	1
Marmara	1	1
Southeastern Anatolia	1	1
Mediterranean	2	2
Black Sea	1	1
Aegean		1
Type of Residential Area		
City centre	4	4
District	3	2
Village		1

Beforehand, teachers were given an explanation regarding the aim of the study. They were assured that participation was voluntary and that they could discontinue the study at any time without providing a reason. Moreover, they were told that the data obtained would be used only for research purposes and that their names would be kept confidential. All participants were provided with a participant information statement containing this information and provided informed consent. Besides, ethical approval for the study was obtained.

Data Collection Tools and Data Collection

Data was collected through the Personal Information Form and the Semi-Structured Interview Form developed by the researchers. The Personal Information Form, along with the informed consent form, has been uploaded to the online form builder (Google Forms). The Personal Information Form used to identify the participants consists of nine fields in total. These fields include gender, age, professional seniority, educational status, the region of duty and the type of residential area of the school (city centre, district, village), preference to participate in focus group discussions and contact information if they will participate, and a field for any repercussions on their experiences during the pandemic. There is no obligation to participate in the focus group discussions in order to fill in the reflection paper. In the reflection paper, it is aimed that preschool teachers explain their thoughts, feelings and experiences regarding the COVID-19 pandemic process, evaluate and analyze these experiences and offer solutions. For this reason, the Gibbs' Reflective Model was used (Gibbs, 1998).

A focus group discussion is a data collection method based on understanding the opinions and feelings of individuals who have knowledge on a subject by means of discussions (Kruger & Casey, 2015). Although there is not an exact number of participants set for focus groups, it is recommended that the group consist of 6-10 people who do not know each other (Merriam, 2018). Twenty (58.8%) of the thirty-four people who answered the Personal Information Form stated that they wanted to participate in the focus group discussion. The status of these teachers meeting the determined criteria was evaluated. During the evaluation process, sixteen out of twenty people were selected, as diversity was sought in terms of region and professional seniority. Teachers who met the criteria were contacted via e-mail, but two teachers did not respond to the e-mail. For this reason, two voluntary focus groups consisting of seven people were formed. While forming the groups, the researchers ensured that the teachers work in different regions of Türkiye and have different professional seniority levels. Afterwards, researchers scheduled a date and time which was suitable for all members of each group, and one focus group discussion was conducted for each group. The focus group discussions with the participation of all researchers were conducted online (Zoom). Face-to-face was not an option due to being in lockdown. The interview with the first group lasted one hundred and one minutes in total, and the interview with the second group lasted one hundred and eight minutes, and the interviews were video recorded with the consent of the participants. After the interviews, these records were transcribed. In these

discussions, the Semi-Structured Interview Form developed by researchers with the opinions of five experts in the field of early childhood education were used. As a result of the expert opinions, two of the interview questions were removed and four of them were revised. In addition, a pilot focus group interview was conducted with three preschool teachers to check the clarity and comprehensibility of the interview questions. As a result of this interview, three questions were revised to increase clarity. For example, the following question has been removed: "What do you think about the concept of distance education, which we often encounter during the pandemic period?" Besides, the question "Would you like to share your experiences with family and children during the distance education process during the pandemic period?" was revised. Instead of this question, "Did your experiences with children differ during the pandemic process? Did your experiences with families differ during the pandemic process? How?" were used. This interview form included eleven questions on the following topics: teachers' thoughts and feelings about distance education during the pandemic, their experiences with children and families, the issues they need support and the ways to meet their needs, the repercussions of this process on their professional development, and recommendations for the effective conduct of early childhood education in extraordinary situations.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to examine the data obtained from the discussions and reflection papers. With this analysis, the researchers' aim was to reveal the concepts and relationships which can explain the data obtained. Through content analysis, the intention is to identify the data and uncover the facts that may be hidden within the data. In other words, the process involves gathering similar data together within the framework of certain concepts and themes, organizing and interpreting such data in a manner which readers can understand (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In order to increase the validity and reliability of the study, data collection and analysis processes are presented in detail. In order to ensure the reliability of the interviews, the data was individually coded by two researchers, and the results were presented by directly quoting the statements of the participants. Miles and Huberman's (1994) inter-coder reliability formula was used to measure inter-coder reliability $Reliability = \frac{\text{Number of consistencies}}{\text{Number of consistencies} + \text{Number of inconsistencies}} \times 100$. Inter-coder reliability was calculated to be 85% in the current study. Due to inter-coder consistency should be 70% at least in a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994), it can be stated that the consistency in current study is at a good level. The abbreviation T (Teacher) is used for direct quotations from the discussions, and the abbreviation RP (Reflection Paper) is used for quotations from the reflection papers.

Results

The findings of the study regarding the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education process and the professional development of preschool teachers have been grouped under five themes. These themes are (1) teachers' professional experiences in the distance education process, (2) teachers' professional development, (3) teachers' relationships with other stakeholders, (4) teachers' feelings, and (5) recommendations for pandemics and similar circumstances. The results are presented by directly quoting interviews with the teachers as well as by taking information from the teachers' reflection papers.

Professional Experiences of Teachers in the Distance Education Process

In the study, it was found that teachers had different professional experiences during the distance education process, each categorized as positive or negative. However, it was observed that the teachers mostly conveyed negative experiences, and positive experiences were limited. The experiences conveyed by the teachers under this theme are provided below:

"We were the first group to be affected. Many situations arose that we had to deal with. Preschool teachers really made great sacrifices during this process." (T6)

"It has been a challenging process. We have made efforts to integrate preschool education into the distance education procedures and carry out this process effectively. We have developed

professionally as we have learned, how we can use technology efficiently in education, through our own lived experiences.” (RP20)

Positive Professional Experiences

Positive professional experiences of teachers regarding the distance education process include the ability to communicate more with families and include them in the education process, as well as more opportunity for professional development. The positive experiences conveyed by teachers are as follows:

“We didn't just sit around during this distance education process; we attended a lot of training sessions to improve ourselves. We couldn't spare time for this while at school, nor could we attend training sessions that were not remote.” (T3)

“We formed a connection with families. We developed faster during this period. We learned how to integrate technology into preschool education.” (T10)

“It was a positive process in terms of education. I was able to give practical information to children and families about the use of technology.” (RP13)

Negative Professional Experiences

The codes referring to the negative professional experiences of teachers in the distance education process are grouped under the headings of policy makers, inequalities of opportunity, families, age groups of children and teachers.

Policy Makers. Almost all of the teachers stated that they thought they were thrown in the deep end by policy makers, and that they had difficulties due to uncertainties and the decisions that they made. Teachers' experiences under this heading are provided below:

“We felt that our branch was kind of left in the dark. We were upset by the decisions taken, while we were trying to explain the importance of preschool education and parental awareness, emphasising that we are the educators. As the statements in the official letters were ambiguous, management had to interpret them. We were subjected to inconsistent practices.” (T11)

“You wake up one morning and you don't have a school to go to. Schools were opened and closed on and off again. Why were the schools closed when everywhere else was open?” (T13)

“What was most wearisome about this process was, as everyone else mentioned, our inability to fully understand the details of the official letters we received, or the fact that the ideas expressed in these letters were changed the following day.” (T9)

“Opening kindergartens for working mothers when all schools were closed made no sense at all because all the mothers of the children in my class were housewives. There should be no such thing as school for working mothers. Either all schools should have been closed or none at all.” (T12)

Inequalities of Opportunity. Teachers stated that they had negative professional experiences due to inequalities of opportunity such as lack of technological means and internet, as well as the conditions of the region in which they work and the multiculturalism of classes. Quotes about these experiences are provided below:

“During this process, I was able to reach very few children because I work in an area with a low socioeconomic population and children' parents have problems accessing the internet. I tried to shoot videos and send them to parents along with some documents. They were going to their neighbours to download the videos.” (T5)

“Our friends living in villages had even bigger problems because the children in villages do not have the technological means for distance learning.” (T9)

“Most of my class consisted of Chechen children and their families. They didn't understand me as they spoke Russian. Unfortunately, my children who do not speak Turkish could not benefit from distance education.” (T11)

"We regretfully witnessed circumstances in which children who could not access the internet were unable to receive education." (RP16)

Families. Teachers stated that they had negative professional experiences due to parents' ignorance and neglect. In addition, they emphasised that it was critically important to ensure family support during this process, expressing their thoughts as follows:

"It is as if our branch is not important to the parents. When I contact the parents, they are like sorry, my elder child had to attend a lesson." (T7)

"The elder brothers/sisters had their lessons in a silent room while the young children attended our lessons while chatting with their parents in the kitchen. They don't care about the education we give." (T10)

"Although we are a school that is located in the city centre which has the necessary technological infrastructure, we had children, or rather parents, who did not want to participate in the activities. So, inclusion of parents is essential." (T6)

Age Groups of Children. Teachers stated that they had negative professional experiences as they thought that it was not appropriate for younger age groups to be exposed to distance education and technological tools. Quotes about these experiences are provided below:

"We exposed children to devices like tablets and mobile phones when should be trying to steer them clear of these. This type of education is harmful to young children." (T9)

"It was difficult to attract children' attention and keep them in front of the screen during live discussions." (T11)

"We were challenged by the fact that it was difficult for small children to stay in front of a screen, and that remote activities had a limited scope." (RP28)

Teachers. Some teachers' resistance to adapt to the distance education process and their lack of technological knowledge led them to experience negativity. Teachers' experiences under this heading are provided below:

"I had a hard time as I didn't have a good grasp of technological tools." (T1)

"While young teachers adapted to many things, those in the older age group experienced difficulties." (T7)

Professional Development of Teachers in the Distance Education Process

Three categories were formed under this theme in the distance education process of teachers, namely the sources supported by teachers, the cases in which teachers needed support, and the repercussions of distance education on the professional development of teachers. The findings demonstrate that the pandemic had a significant impact on the professional development of teachers.

Sources Supported by Teachers

It has been noted that the sources used by teachers during this process differ. These sources include colleagues, EBA, social media tools, online communication, and meeting applications. Quotes regarding this category are provided below:

"I learned by conducting research or exchanging information with my colleagues. My colleagues may have information on a different subject, and we can learn new things by sharing information in our common group." (T1)

"I used social media tools such as Instagram and Pinterest. The WhatsApp groups we created with our colleagues served as a source. My partner also supported me when it came to technology." (T10)

"I used the teaching materials, games, and interactive activities on EBA. Social media has also been an incredible source." (T11)

Cases in which Teachers Needed Support

Teachers stated that they were worn out due to the decisions taken, the ambiguity of official letters, and the inconsistencies in the practices of institutions. They stressed that they needed motivation, the supportive perspective of society, and the support of MoNE. Lack of technological infrastructure and tools is also among the points underlined by the teachers. Quotes regarding this category are provided below:

“Preschool teachers have made a lot of sacrifices. We all needed acknowledgement and appreciation to be motivated.” (T6)

“The ministry could have provided a support platform for teachers. We had deficiencies when it came to technology. We should have been given support regarding this issue, and our motivation should have been increased.” (T7)

“This whole process would have been more comfortable if our internet and technological (computer, tablet, mobile phone) needs had been met.” (T9)

Repercussions of Distance Education on the Professional Development of Teachers

Two codes, positive and negative repercussions, were created under this category. Teachers stated that they had the opportunity to improve themselves regarding the use of distance education tools, that they were able to enrich their activities in the home environment, and that in-service training sessions were more accessible - all of which they considered to have positive effects on their professional development. The situations which teachers stated to have negatively affected their professional development include the inability to conduct face-to-face in-service training and the pause in eTwinning projects. Quotes regarding this category are provided below:

“The in-service training sessions we were receiving face-to-face became more accessible in distance education. We were able to access more sources and training courses.” (T11)

“We learned to use EBA and Web 2 tools in distance education. I realised that I could enrich some activities with distance education and materials in the home environment.” (T12)

“While we had more opportunities for professional development before the pandemic, we were not able to do it in these circumstances. For example, we were going to have training courses on STEM and coding, but they were all interrupted.” (T9)

Relationships Established by Teachers with Other Stakeholders in the Distance Education Process

Two categories, relationships with families and relationships with children, were created under the theme of relations established by teachers with other stakeholders in this process. Teachers put more emphasis on the change in their relationships with families in this process.

Relationships with Families

It has been observed that teachers attached great importance to communicating with families to reach children, and families were involved in the education process. In addition, teachers reported providing guidance to families on the use of technology and home schooling. Quotes regarding this category are provided below:

“While we were experimenting, the mothers got involved in the process, which made me happy. Experiments with materials at home increased their awareness and increased their development.” (T9)

“We held meetings with children and families. They weren't participating as much through face-to-face education, so it was efficient.” (T6)

“During this process, I constantly provided reinforcing stimuli to the parents as well as the children. I gave motivational words of support.” (T11)

“We were able to communicate more with the family of my child with special needs. I made recommendations on how to support the child at home and obtained information about their emotional state.” (T1)

Relationships with Children

It has been shown that teachers tried to communicate with children by making audio or video calls, videotaped activities and reached children with educational materials. On the other hand, communicating with children in front of the screen affected the teacher-child relationship negatively. Quotes regarding this category are provided below:

“I sent the activities to the children in document form, shot videos every day, made video calls, and made efforts to get them to see me and hear my voice.” (T5)

“When there was no participation on WhatsApp, I performed the activities and videotaped them as if there were children in front of me. Even if the children could not attend the lesson, their watching that video was enough for me.” (T7)

“We could not have sufficient interaction with the children in front of the screen.” (T1)

Feelings of Teachers during the Distance Education Process

Teachers stated that during this process, they experienced feelings of anger, sadness and worry. While the uncertainties and inconsistent practices regarding the opening of the schools caused anger, they felt sad because they missed the normal school routine. Teachers felt worried due to the sudden transition to distance education, and the long duration of the pandemic and increased uncertainties heightened their worry. In addition, teachers reported that they felt worthless and that their motivation decreased due to the statements made. Quotes about teachers' feelings are provided below:

“We felt intense sadness and anger. We missed our children so much during this process.” (T11)

“The prevailing feeling was anger. Because the statements made wore us out a lot. We felt worthless because we were treated as if we were licensed caregivers while we were actually educators.” (T7)

“I was worried about how we would continue after the transition to distance education because we didn't know anything about giving live lessons either on EBA or Zoom; I hadn't used them actively before.” (T2)

“Worry and anger were at a high. We were thinking, why are the schools closed while everywhere else is open?” (T13)

“It was the time period in which my motivation was at the lowest level due to uncertainty and the constantly changing decisions.” (RP19)

Recommendations for Pandemics and Similar Circumstances

Teachers provided recommendations for policy makers to take into account regarding pandemics and similar circumstances. These recommendations include asking for teachers' opinions, increasing their motivation, diversifying digital platforms, making technological tools and internet accessible for every child, and having alternative legislation and programmes in place. In addition, one of the teachers stated that they were trained to give face-to-face education and that they were unfamiliar with distance education. This teacher recommended that institutions train teachers for this. Recommendations regarding this topic are provided below:

“Currently, we are carrying out this process with last minute information. Everything should be determined in advance.” (T2)

“We need to have legislation on extraordinary situations - a plan A and a plan B. We must know what to do when faced with such a situation. Our shortcomings must be determined and clarity should be provided.” (T6)

“The infrastructure of distance education must be improved and the number of digital platforms must be increased. Every child must be provided with access. Opinions of teachers should be heard and their motivation should be increased.” (T7)

“The curriculum should be changed for new generations of teachers.” (T3)

Conclusion and Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it necessary to make radical changes in education, as in many areas of life, and has brought distance education to the forefront of the agenda throughout the world. Although educators were unprepared for such a situation, sufficient guidance and sources were not provided to them and yet they were expected to manage the process effectively (UN, 2020). Compared to other education levels, early childhood education has brought about some difficulties due to factors such as the developmental characteristics of children and the importance of cooperation between the school and families. It is essential to reveal the professional experiences of educators during this process and determine their needs based on these experiences so that action plans can be developed for extraordinary circumstances such as pandemics. In dealing with possible new risks, it is vital to put forward such special situations, which are particularly reflected in the classroom practices of teachers, based on the perspective of teachers. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education process and professional development of teachers based on the opinions of preschool teachers.

As a result of interviews with the teachers who participated in the study, it was noted that they had positive and negative professional experiences in the distance education process, and that negative experiences outweighed positive ones regardless of region of duty and professional seniority. In a similar study, it was determined that preschool teachers generally had negative experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic process (Aktan-Acar et al., 2021). Teachers indicated the following to be a cause of negative professional experiences in the distance education process: Uncertainties over the decisions taken by policy makers regarding the pandemic and the opening of schools; inconsistencies in official letters; the increasing digital divide resulting from inequalities of opportunity; neglect and ignorance of families; the young age of the children and teachers' lack of knowledge in technological pedagogical content. It is predicted that solving the aforementioned problems of teachers as a precaution for potential future cases such as pandemics will contribute to the improvement of education quality, which is one of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (UN, 2015).

Teachers working in regions with low socioeconomic status or multicultural regions who participated in the study expressed that they had a hard time reaching children and families in this process. As stated in other studies (Aykar & Yurdakul, 2021; Chen & Rivera-Vernazza, 2022; Yazıcı et al., 2022; Yıldırım, 2021), it is considered that this resulted from the fact that teachers tried to reach children by making audio-video calls and using a variety of educational materials, but the families lacked the sufficient knowledge and technological infrastructure required for this. Therefore, while it is stated in Article 8 of the Basic Law of National Education that equality of opportunity should be provided in education (MoNE, 2021), it can be said that the pandemic period has increased the digital divide and made it difficult for children living in these regions to access education. The term digital divide is defined by OECD (2001) as the gap between individuals with regard to opportunities to access information and communication technologies and their ability to use these technologies. The results of a plethora of studies have also revealed that the pandemic created a digital divide at the preschool education level by increasing inequality of opportunity (Aktan-Acar et al., 2021; Correia, 2020; Işıkoğlu et al., 2021; Kuş et al., 2021; Marcellis-Warin et al., 2020; Yıldız & Şahin, 2022). It is considered essential that every family has sufficient knowledge and every child has the tools and equipment necessary for education in order to overcome inequality of opportunity, particularly in circumstances such as the current one.

Furthermore, in the study, teachers stated that parents who have more than one child usually attached more importance to the education of the older child and neglected the education of the preschool child. This finding was also reported as a result of a study conducted in China (Dong et al., 2020). The fact that teachers have problems with families in this process, regardless of the region in which they work and their professional seniority, can be attributed to the fact that families are not aware of the importance of preschool education and that they think distance education has no benefit. In addition, as preschool children need the support of their parents to

benefit from distance education (Bartan, 2022; Lau & Lee, 2020; Tozduman-Yaralı & Özkan-Kunduracı, 2021; Yazıcı et al., 2022; Yıldız & Şahin, 2022), the beliefs and attitudes of parents towards distance education (Erdogan et al., 2019) and their negative experiences in this process are considered to affect the quality and quantity of children's learning experiences. Consequently, it has been demonstrated once again that families play a key role in the inclusion of children in the education process regarding distance education.

The teachers who participated in the study stated that they could not have sufficient interaction with children as they had a short attention span due to their developmental characteristics. They explained that the relationship between them was affected negatively, and therefore they did not regard distance education as an effective tool. In another studies, it was determined that online lessons were negatively affected by children's distraction and inability to wait their turn (Aktan-Acar et al., 2021; Tozduman-Yaralı & Özkan-Kunduracı, 2021). This can be attributed to the fact that children's self-regulation competences are not yet developed. Self-regulation is deemed as a prerequisite for participation in distance education, as well as for learning (Vlachopoulos & Chatzianni, 2017). There are different views in the literature regarding the exposure of children to technological tools (Aubrey & Dahl, 2008; Edwards et al., 2012; Yelland, 2006). In particular, when the developmental characteristics of preschool children are considered, it is seen that problems such as social isolation, screen addiction, self-regulation, interaction and insufficient participation in training may occur (Bergdahl & Nouri, 2020; Dong et al., 2020; Jiang & Monk, 2016; Khurana, 2016; Lau & Lee, 2021). Nevertheless, in a recent study by Arnott & Yelland (2020), it has been stated that technology becomes part of life in the early years, and therefore it should be used effectively by educators and parents and included in children's learning processes. On the other hand, it has been observed that teachers in Türkiye had difficulties enriching and supporting the learning process of children as their skills in technological tools remained insufficient, as is the case in all countries (Dayal & Tiko, 2020; OECD, 2020; Saxena et al., 2021; Spoel et al., 2020; Yıldız & Şahin, 2022). This demonstrates that teachers need technological pedagogical content knowledge. Today, the United States and countries of the European Union are insisting on discussing this issue and designing their teacher training programs accordingly (Koehler & Mishra, 2008). Therefore, it has been once more demonstrated that early childhood educators should be professionally supported so that they can integrate technology into education and provide children with higher quality learning experiences (Bartan, 2022; Crawford et al., 2021; Gomes et al., 2021; Işıkoğlu et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, it has been found that teachers also had positive experiences in the distance education process, especially in terms of their professional development, regardless of the region in which they work and their professional seniority. The teachers who participated in the study reported that they were able to participate in more training sessions in order to improve themselves during this process and that they also increased their knowledge of technology. The distance education process, which started unexpectedly, has aided the development of teachers, particularly in terms of technology. Literature reviews show that there are studies supporting this finding (Andrisyah & Ismiatun, 2021; Aytaç, 2021; Crawford et al., 2021; Gomes et al., 2021; Saxena et al., 2021; Winter et al., 2021; Yıldırım, 2021). In addition, teachers gained a positive outlook on the effective use of technological tools and stated that they would integrate technology into education in the face-to-face education process. The result of a study also shows that there is a relationship between teachers' attitudes towards technology and their integration of technology into education (Tzivinikou et al., 2021). In their study, Spoel et al. (2020) also obtained a similar finding. In conclusion, teachers tended to question and reshape their professional practices upon the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Hadar et al., 2020). In addition, it is an important finding for teachers' professional development that in-service training courses were more accessible during this process, and that teachers were able to enrich their educational activities and adapt them to the home environment. To sum up, the distance education process that started with the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of teachers continuing life-long professional development, following innovations in the field and learning from each other (Kruszewska et al., 2020).

At the same time, the fact that teachers attached importance to communicating with families in this process and that they were able to include families in the education process is regarded as another positive professional experience. It has also been reported in numerous studies conducted during the pandemic that distance education has increased cooperation between teachers and families as well as family participation (Akin & Aslan, 2021; Aykar & Yurdakul, 2021; Dayal & Tiko, 2020; Dong et al., 2020; Hapsari et al., 2020; Tozduman-Yaralı & Özkan-Kunduracı, 2021; Yıldırım, 2021). This can be explained by the fact that cooperation between teachers and families, which is an indicator of quality early childhood education, has become more important than ever in this process (Alan, 2021; Bartan, 2022), families have supported their children (Aktan-Acar et al., 2021; Lau & Lee, 2020; Rahayu & Wirza, 2020) and teachers have undertaken the responsibility of guiding them (Plotka & Guirguis, 2022). Therefore, while the effects of the pandemic were generally negative in terms of preschool education, the involvement of families in the education process is promising in terms of increasing the quality of education (Castro et al., 2015). From this perspective, the professional empowerment of teachers to ensure family participation in a qualified manner suggests that the communication between the family, the child and the school may be of higher quality after transitioning back to face-to-face education.

On the other hand, the fact that the teachers mostly had negative experiences during the pandemic, regardless of the region in which they worked and their professional seniority, led to feelings of anger, sadness and worry. Teachers stated that they felt this way due to the statements of the MoNE regarding the education process and the uncertainty over the decisions made. It has been observed that teachers' negative feelings during this process caused them to lose their belief in their profession, decreased motivation towards education and training processes, and devaluated the teaching profession in the eyes of society and teachers. Studies conducted during the pandemic (Crawford et al., 2021; Dayal & Tiko, 2020; Işıkoğlu et al., 2021; Kim & Asbury, 2020; Klapproth et al., 2020; Sorrells & Akpovo, 2022) also reported that teachers had negative feelings during the distance education process. However, as stated in both the present study and other studies (Košir et al., 2020; Gomes et al., 2021; Obrad, 2020; Yıldız & Şahin, 2022), it is considered that if teachers received sufficient support from the state or society in this process, they would have had a more positive experience of this process. For this reason, it is considered essential to pay attention to the feelings of teachers, ensure their psychological well-being, and revise the mentoring processes and include them in the education process. However, in the study, it has been drawn to the attention of researchers that the support needs of teachers working in socioeconomically disadvantaged regions (especially in villages and rural areas) differed depending on the region in which they worked, and that they underlined the insufficiency of technological infrastructure and tools. In recent years, domestic studies on the pandemic have also supported this finding (Aktan-Acar et al., 2021; Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020; Canpolat & Yıldırım, 2021; Tozduman-Yaralı & Özkan-Kunduracı, 2021; Yazıcı et al., 2022; Yıldız & Şahin, 2022). It is important to provide uninterrupted access services to all stakeholders to obtain the targeted efficiency from distance education technologies. In addition, teachers stated that they needed an online platform to meet their information and support needs and that they must be guided by competent persons. There are studies in the literature in which teachers stated that they needed support and in-service training regarding the use of distance education tools (Canpolat & Yıldırım, 2021; Erbil et al., 2021). Nuland et al. (2020) underline those teachers needed more support in the distance education process and that teacher training plays a key role in the successful progress of this process.

Teachers tried to meet the aforementioned needs by receiving support from different sources during the pandemic, regardless of the region in which they worked and their professional seniority. These sources include technological resources such as EBA, communication applications and social media tools, as well as social resources such as colleagues and family members. In their study, Aral and Kadan (2021) also showed that preschool teachers used EBA, WhatsApp and Zoom applications as sources and that brainstorming with their colleagues supported them. It has also been reported in many studies that teachers used technological tools such as EBA, communication applications and social media tools as sources of support (Alper,

2020; Andrisyah & Ismiatun, 2021; Erbil et al., 2021; Saxena et al., 2021). Obrad (2020) stated that teachers who received support from colleagues, school management, parents and experts in the distance education process had decreased stress levels and that they were more resistant to stress factors during this process. Therefore, it is considered that if teachers receive support from such sources, it will give them a more positive experience of this process.

In the study, teachers made many recommendations to be taken into account regarding pandemics and similar processes, particularly for policy makers. These recommendations include receiving teachers' opinions, increasing their motivation, diversifying online platforms, strengthening technological infrastructure and making technology accessible to every child. In addition, teachers emphasised that alternative legislations and programmes are needed to carry out the process systematically in such extraordinary circumstances. It has been found that the recommendations of teachers working in regions of low socioeconomic status address inequalities of opportunity such as technological infrastructure and accessibility of technology. On the other hand, the fact that teachers working in regions with high socioeconomic status made recommendations for the systematic execution of the process and introduction of alternative legislations and programmes is regarded as a striking finding. In studies supporting these findings, teachers recommended that educational content be presented and a programme be created online for preschool education. They also suggested that in-service training is provided, families are informed and that internet access is made available across the board (Aral & Kadan, 2021; Kruszewska et al., 2020; Yıldırım, 2021; Yıldız & Şahin, 2022). This difference can be attributed to the fact that teachers have different needs due to the differences in the regions in which they work. In addition, as also reported in another study (Atiles et al., 2021), a teacher in the present study recommended that children in teacher training institutions be trained to have the knowledge and skills for distance education. When the Preschool Education Undergraduate Programme of the Council of Higher Education (CHE, 2018) in Türkiye was reviewed, it was noted that a course entitled Open and Distance Learning was included as an elective course only. However, technological developments and extraordinary circumstances such as pandemics lead us to believe that distance education courses should be compulsory.

As a result of this study, which was carried out to determine the repercussions of the pandemic period on the education process and the professional development of educators from the perspective of preschool teachers, it was determined that teachers working in villages, in particular, had different experiences. Therefore, one could argue that a similar study should be conducted with teachers working in villages.

In the study, teachers stated that they received support from various sources during this process. The content of these sources (e.g. in-service training, social media) can be examined qualitatively in future studies.

In the study, it was found that one of the educational needs of teachers is to improve their knowledge, particularly regarding technology and the integration of technology into education. Pre-service and in-service training can be given to teachers according to these needs. In order to increase the accessibility of these training courses, it is considered important to offer the training in a hybrid model. In addition, due to the psychological burnout of teachers during the pandemic, it is recommended that support services be provided to them in such situations.

In the study, it was seen that not all children were able to benefit from education equally due to inequality of opportunity. In order to prevent this, one recommendation is that various tools (e.g. television channels) that people on every socioeconomic level can access be used effectively in education.

In the study, it was noted that one of the biggest sources of support for teachers during this process were their colleagues. Therefore, one thing that is considered necessary is the formation of a preschool teaching network in order to increase interaction and cooperation amongst educators.

In the study, it was observed that supporting activities in the home environment during the pandemic helped the teacher, the children and families. For this reason, it is recommended that learning models (e.g. flipped learning model), in which teachers can involve families in the education process at a higher level, are used after the pandemic.

The present research has some limitations. First of all, this study is limited to fourteen preschool teachers due to the nature of qualitative research. For this reason, it is necessary to be careful when generalizing the results of the research to other teachers. In addition, focus group interviews were used in the research in order to learn the opinions of the teachers. Therefore, the data obtained is limited to the opinions of teachers only. Finally, the interviews were conducted online within the scope of the research. Instead, it is thought that face-to-face interviews will strengthen the researcher-participant and participant-participant communication and contribute to the participants' ability to express themselves more easily.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Giriş

2019 yılında başlayan ve Dünya Sağlık Örgütü tarafından pandemi olarak ilan edilen COVID-19 salgını, tüm dünyada eğitim sistemini doğrudan etkilemiştir. Birçok ülkede olduğu gibi Türkiye’de de aniden uzaktan eğitime geçilmiş ve bu durum öğretmenlerin eğitim sürecine ilişkin deneyimlerinde ve mesleki gelişimlerinde önemli farklılıklara yol açmıştır. Alanyazın incelemesi sonucunda COVID-19 salgınına yönelik olarak Türkiye’deki çalışmaların okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin uzaktan eğitime ilişkin görüşlerini belirlemeye odaklandığı ve eğitim sürecine ilişkin deneyimlerin incelendiği sınırlı çalışmanın olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bu çalışmalardan farklı olarak mevcut çalışma, Türkiye’nin farklı bölgelerinde görev yapan okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin hem eğitim süreçlerine hem de mesleki gelişimlerine odaklanmaktadır. Ayrıca odak grup görüşmeleri ve yansıtma yazıları aracılığıyla veri toplanarak pandemi sürecinin yansımalarının derinlemesine incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır.

Bu çalışma, farklı bölgelerde ve yerleşim yerlerinde görev yapan okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin pandemi sürecindeki mesleki deneyimlerini ortaya koymasından önemlidir. Aynı zamanda mevcut çalışma, pandemi sürecinin öğretmenlerin eğitim deneyimlerine ve mesleki gelişimlerine yansımalarını kendi ağızlarından ortaya koymasından değerli görülmektedir. Bu sayede pandemi ve benzeri durumlarla karşılaşıldığında gerekli önlemlerin alınarak okul öncesi eğitim sürecinin kalitesine ve öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimlerinin sürekliliğine katkı sağlanacağı düşünülmektedir. Bu sebeple araştırmanın amacı, Türkiye'nin farklı bölgelerinde görev yapan okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin bakış açılarına dayalı olarak COVID-19 salgınının öğretmenlerin eğitim sürecine ve mesleki gelişimine yansımalarının belirlenmesidir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda aşağıdaki araştırma sorularına cevap aranmıştır:

1. COVID-19 salgınının okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin eğitim sürecine yansımaları nelerdir?
 - a. COVID-19 salgını sürecinde okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin düşünceleri nelerdir?
 - b. COVID-19 salgını sürecinde okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin duyguları nasıldır?
 - c. COVID-19 salgını sürecinde okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin ihtiyaçları ve bu ihtiyaçları karşılama yolları nelerdir?
 - d. COVID-19 salgını sürecinde okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin çocuklarla ilişkileri nasıldır?
 - e. COVID-19 salgını sürecinde okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin ailelerle ilişkileri nasıldır?
 - f. Salgın ve benzeri durumlar için okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin önerileri nelerdir?
2. COVID-19 salgınının okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin mesleki gelişimine yansımaları nasıldır?

Yöntem

Nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenoloji deseninin kullanıldığı araştırmanın katılımcıları amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden ölçüt örnekleme yöntemi aracılığıyla belirlenmiştir. Bu ölçütler; okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin Türkiye’nin farklı bölgelerinde görev yapıyor olması ve farklı mesleki kıdeme sahip olması şeklindedir. Ölçütler doğrultusunda, yedişer okul öncesi öğretmenin yer aldığı iki grup oluşturulmuş ve her grup ile birer defa olmak üzere odak grup

görüşmeleri gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler kişisel bilgi formu, yansıtma yazıları ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Yansıtma yazısını yazabilmek için odak grup görüşmelerine katılım zorunluluğu bulunmamaktadır. Yansıma yazısında, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin COVID-19 pandemi sürecine ilişkin düşünce, duygu ve deneyimlerini açıklamaları, bu deneyimleri değerlendirip analiz etmeleri ve çözüm önerileri sunmaları amaçlanmaktadır. Bu nedenle Gibbs'in Yansıtıcı Modeli kullanılmıştır (Gibbs, 1998).

Araştırmanın geçerlik ve güvenilirliğini artırmak için veri toplama ve analiz süreçleri ayrıntılı olarak sunulmuştur. Görüşmelerin güvenilirliğini sağlamak için veriler iki araştırmacı tarafından ayrı ayrı kodlanmış ve sonuçlar katılımcıların ifadelerinden doğrudan alıntılar yapılarak sunulmuştur. Araştırmada kodlayıcılar arası güvenilirlik %85 olarak hesaplanmıştır. Kodlayıcılar arası tutarlılığın en az %70 olması gerektiğinden (Miles & Huberman, 1994), mevcut çalışmada tutarlılığın iyi düzeyde olduğu söylenebilir.

Bulgular

COVID-19 salgınının, eğitim sürecine ve okul öncesi öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimine yansımalarına ilişkin araştırma bulguları beş tema altında toplanmıştır: (1) uzaktan eğitim sürecinde öğretmenlerin mesleki deneyimleri, (2) uzaktan eğitim sürecinde öğretmenlerin diğer paydaşlarla kurduğu ilişkiler, (3) uzaktan eğitim sürecinde öğretmenlerin duygu durumları, (4) uzaktan eğitim sürecinde öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimi ve (5) salgın ve benzeri süreçler için öneriler. Araştırmada öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitim sürecindeki mesleki deneyimlerinin olumlu ve olumsuz olmak üzere iki kategoride toplandığı, buna karşın olumsuz deneyimlerin çoğunlukta olduğu belirlenmiştir. Öğretmenler bu süreçte daha fazla eğitime katılarak kendilerini geliştirebildiklerini ve aileleri eğitim sürecine dâhil edebildiklerini bildirmiştir. Buna karşın olumsuz mesleki deneyimler yaşamalarına sebep olarak şunları göstermişlerdir: Politika yapıcılar tarafından alınan kararlar, okulların açılma durumu ve resmi yazılar ile ilgili belirsizlikler, fırsat eşitsizliklerinden kaynaklı artan dijital uçurum, ailelerin ilgisiz ve bilgisiz olması, çocukların yaşlarının küçük olması ve öğretmenlerin teknolojik pedagojik içerik bilgisinin yetersiz olması.

Araştırmada öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitim sürecinde ailelerle ve çocuklarla ilişkilerinde değişimler olduğu belirlenmiştir. Öğretmenlerin bu süreçte ailelerle iletişim kurmayı önemsedikleri, onlara rehberlik ederek eğitimler sundukları ve onları eğitim sürecine dahil ettikleri saptanmıştır. Ayrıca öğretmenlerin çevrimiçi uygulamalar ile sesli ve görüntülü arama yaparak ve çeşitli eğitsel materyaller göndererek çocuklara ulaştıkları tespit edilmiştir. Öğretmenler bu süreçteki deneyimleri sonucunda kaygı, öfke, üzüntü, özlem, endişe, motivasyon düşüklüğü ve değersizlik hissi gibi çeşitli duygu durumları yaşadıklarını belirtmiştir. Araştırma bulguları; öğretmenlerin salgın öncesinde uzaktan eğitim araçlarına ilişkin teknik ve kuramsal bilgi düzeylerinin sınırlı olduğunu göstermektedir. Öğretmenler uzaktan eğitim sürecinde EBA, iletişim uygulamaları, sosyal medya araçları gibi teknolojik kaynakların yanı sıra; meslektaşlar, aile bireyleri gibi sosyal kaynaklardan da yararlanmışlardır. Ayrıca öğretmenler pek çok konuda desteğe ihtiyaç duyduklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Bunlara örnek olarak; toplumun destekleyici bakış açısı, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı desteği ve motive edilme ihtiyacı gösterilebilir. Uzaktan eğitim sürecinin öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimine yansımalarının genellikle olumlu olduğu görülmüştür. Öğretmenler aniden ortaya çıkan uzaktan eğitim sürecinde hizmet içi eğitimlerin daha ulaşılabilir olduğunu, bu sürecin kendilerini özellikle teknolojik anlamda geliştirdiğini ve yüz yüze eğitim sürecinde de teknolojiyi eğitime entegre edeceklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Son olarak öğretmenler salgın ve benzeri süreçler için öğretmen yetiştiren kurumlara ve politika yapıcılara yönelik önerilerde bulunmuştur. Bu öneriler; yeni nesil öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitim ile ilgili bilgi ve beceriye sahip olarak yetiştirilmesi, kendi görüşlerinin alınması, motivasyonlarının artırılması, çevrimiçi platformların çeşitlendirilmesi, teknolojik altyapının güçlendirilmesi ve fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanması ile ilgilidir.

Sonuç

Öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitim sürecinde genellikle olumsuz deneyimler yaşadıkları, buna karşın mesleki gelişimlerinin olumlu anlamda etkilendiği ortaya konulmuştur. Bununla birlikte

öğretmen-aile ilişkilerinin bu süreçten olumlu etkilenirken, öğretmen-çocuk ilişkisinin olumsuz etkilendiği belirlenmiştir. Öğretmenler salgın sürecinde çeşitli konularda desteğe ihtiyaç duymuşlar ve ihtiyaçlarını farklı kaynaklar kullanarak gidermeye çalışmışlardır. Buna karşın süreç boyunca genel anlamda kendilerini yalnız hissettikleri için olumsuz duygular yaşamışlardır.

Araştırmanın sonuçları doğrultusunda şu öneriler sunulmuştur: Öğretmenlerin salgın gibi süreçlerde, dezavantajlı bölgelerde yaşayan çocuklara ulaşabilirliğini artırmak için her sosyoekonomik düzeyin sahip olabileceği çeşitli araçlar (örneğin, televizyon kanalı) eğitsel amaçlı kullanılabilir. Salgın sürecinde etkinliklerin ev ortamında desteklenmesinin öğretmene, çocuğa ve aileye katkılarının olduğu görülmüştür. Bu sebeple salgın sonrasında da öğretmenler tarafından ailelerin eğitim sürecine daha fazla dahil edilebileceği öğrenme modellerinin kullanılması (örneğin, ters yüz öğrenme modeli) önerilmektedir. Öğretmenlerin bu süreçte en çok destek aldığı kaynaklardan biri meslektaşları olduğundan, öğretmenler arasındaki etkileşim ve işbirliğini artırmak için okul öncesi öğretmen ağı oluşturulabilir.