Examination of the Opinions of Pre-School Teachers Regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic Period's Reflection of Pre-School Education

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Abstract

In this study, it was aimed to examine the opinions of preschool teachers about the distance education process in preschool education in the COVID-19 pandemic. The research is designed as a case study, one of the qualitative research designs. The working group consists of 22 preschool teachers. A semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool. The data obtained in the research were examined separately by the two researchers and content analysis was carried out. Miles and Huberman's formula was used to calculate reliability among researchers and the harmony was found to be 86. When the views of the preschool teachers who participated in the study are investigated, it is seen that the teachers carried out distance education activities through "the use of technology and the cooperation of the family" during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this process, teachers stated that they had problems with "children, families, participation and technology". It is seen that there are teachers who use different methods and techniques when preparing daily plans, as well as teachers who cannot perform activities that support social development. All preschool teachers participating in the research think that the COVID-19 pandemic process has negative effects on children such as social-emotional development, physical and psychological violence in the family environment. In distance education, it is seen that families support children especially in "preparing a learning environment". Teachers expressed that the COVID-19 pandemic process leads to a different experience in their professional development and that they use new methods and techniques.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound effects in many ways, especially in health and education, as also social and economic. The rapid spread of COVID-19 and its emergence as an epidemic and becoming a threat to all countries of the world has led to radical measures being taken in societies. During this extraordinary period, "education" is considered one of the areas experiencing the greatest change (Can, 2020). Face-to-face education has been suspended in schools all over the world and distance education has been started. Nearly 770 million students moved away from their schools with the closure of schools all over the world (Zhong, 2020). In this process, Turkey, like all countries of the world, has taken diverse precaution related to education. The transition to the distance education system by making various arrangements related to educational activities is within the scope of these measures (Ministry of Health, 2020). Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education decided to temporarily suspend face-to-face education and move to distance education for preschool, elementary, high school levels on March 16, 2020. It has been expressed that distance education will be expanded by providing compensatory training via the Education Information Network (EBA) and TRT via television (Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education, 2020). More than one million educators and more than 20 million students have transitioned to distance education and tried to maintain continuity in education (Karip, 2020).

Distance education is an educational model in which students contact synchronously or asynchronously with each other and their teachers via the internet through online platforms in e-learning environments and information is transmitted (Gökdaş & Kayri, 2005; Yorgancı, 2014; Akyürek, 2020). It is carried out in various ways such as computer, radio-tv broadcasts, video conferences, teleconferences, written materials, web and internet tools (Moore & Kearsley, 2011). In terms of time and space, distance education offers a more flexible environment than face-to-face education (Bozkurt, 2017; Solak, Ütebay & Yalçın 2020). It leads to communication between teachers and students living in different places and to the creation of a collaborative working environment (Altıparmak, Kapıdere & Kurt, 2011). Nevertheless, distance education has some limitations besides such advantages. Distance education prevents the development of students' socialization, skills and attitudes (Lau, Yang & Dasgupta, 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, distance education has had a critical effect on the lives of individuals besides preschoolers at all levels. In the preschool period, which is seen as the basis for future periods of life, children show important progress in all areas of improvement (Aryanti, Warsini & Haryanti, 2018). It is one of the periods when individuals are most open to learning. In this period, it is aimed to gain basic concepts; support cognitive, physical, social-emotional, self-care skills and language development. 0-6 years of age and education received during this period are of great importance because it affects the environmental individuals presented in the preschool period throughout their lives (Kağıtçıbaşı, Sunar, Bekman & Cemalcılar, 2005; Tabuk, İnan & Tabuk, 2018). Since preschool children are the smallest group in age compared to children at the other level, they are seen as one of the most affected groups in the process of transitioning from face-to-face education to distance education with the COVID-19 pandemic (Yalman Polatlar & Bayram Tuncay, 2020). While higher-level students can effectively benefit from the distance education process, preschoolers may have difficulty because their attention span is quite short (McNeill, 2020). Children learn by doing and living through various sensory and physical activities during this period. Therefore, it is thought that the preschool period is the most limited education level when applying distance education activities. Children should be hearten to learn through activities that require art, music, movement and practice. In addition, children during this period have social-emotional needs in the form of understanding/expressing emotions, engaging in empathic behaviors, taking responsibility, communicating and interacting with their peers and adults (Hao, 2020). Children's interactions and communication with their parents, as well as their friends and teachers, are very important (Aral &

Kadan, 2018). Preschool teachers, who have made a great contribution to the development of children and were taken as the first role models, have experienced many problems during the pandemic process. The remote online execution of training and the closure of schools have forced teachers and caused some problems. In the covid-19 pandemic that has influenced the whole world, an important task has been assigned to preschool teachers for the realization of a qualified education process (Balaman & Hanbal Tiryaki, 2021; Başaran, Doğan, Karaoğlu & Şahin, 2020). Teachers, while adapting to the distance education system in a short time, supported children and parents. Therefore, teachers have played a key role in this process (Demir & Özdaş, 2020).

It is seen that the first applications regarding distance education at higher levels date back to centuries ago (Kaya, 2002). On the other hand, when the relevant literature in Turkey and abroad on the practices related to distance education in the preschool period is investigated, it is seen that the studies are new and limited (Akkaş Baysal, Ocak & Ocak, 2020; Hartatik & Bia'yuni, 2020; Kim, 2020; Kuset, Özgem, Şaşmacıoğlu & Güldal Kan, 2021; Yalman Polatlar & Bayram Tuncay, 2020). For this reason, it can be said that new research is needed to determine and eliminate the deficiencies related to distance education in preschool education. It is thought that conducting research that includes the opinions of teachers, who are the most critical part of the process, about distance education activities will contribute significantly to the relevant literature.

In this study, it was aimed to examine the opinions of preschool teachers about the distance education process in preschool education in the COVID-19 pandemic. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. How did preschool teachers conduct the distance education process during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What kind of changes have preschool teachers made in pre-school education during the distance education process?
3. What kind of problems did preschool teachers experience in distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. How do preschool teachers think parents provide support to their children in distance education process?
5. What are the recommendations of preschool teachers regarding distance education in preschool education?

METHOD

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research is designed as a case study from qualitative research patterns. Case studies aim to examine an up-to-date situation holistically and in-depth from a realistic perspective (Akar, 2016). Case studies are indicated as a qualitative approach that examines limited events over time with data collection tools covering multiple sources such as observation, interviews, reports, documents and identifies themes related to events (Creswell, 2014). In case studies, based on the "How and Why" questions, an event that the researcher cannot control is examined in a real environment (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In this regard, the opinions of preschool teachers regarding the reflection of the COVID-19 pandemic process on preschool education were examined in depth.

SAMPLE

The study group was defined by using convenient sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods, which is easily accessible. Purposive sampling enables in-depth research by selecting rich situations in accordance with the purpose of the study. It is preferred when working on situations involving certain characteristics (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel,

2018). Researchers select the participants among the easy-to-reach and volunteer people in convenience sampling (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012).

The study group consists of 22 preschool teachers working in independent kindergartens affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in the Buca district of Izmir province.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

In this study, a semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool. A semi-structured interview form is a data collection tool that allows individuals to make comparisons by identifying common and different points between their thoughts about specific events or situations (Creswell, 2014; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012). So as to collect data in the research, a form containing 10 questions was created by the researchers by applying the opinions of experts in the field of preschool education. By piloting with five teachers, the level of comprehension of the questions was measured and the interview form was given its final form.

The questions on the interview form are as follows:
"How did you conduct distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic?"
"What kind of problems did you experience in distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic?"
"What changes do you think distance education has led to in your daily plans?"
"What are the behaviors you observed in children when switching from distance education to face-to-face education?"
"How do you think the COVID-19 pandemic affects children?"
"What kind of problems do you think children experience in distance education?"
"How do you think parents provide support to their children in distance education?"
"How do you think the COVID-19 pandemic affects your professional development?"
"How do you evaluate distance education activities during the COVID-19 pandemic?"
"What are your recommendations regarding distance education in preschool education?"

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Preschool teachers were informed about the purpose of the research by visiting independent kindergartens with a medium socio-economic level in Buca district of Izmir province. The 22 preschool teachers who agreed to participate in the study voluntarily were asked when they were available and interview dates were determined. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in order to obtain the data in depth. In the interviews, care was taken to establish a warm and comfortable environment with the teachers. The interviews lasted about 20-30 minutes with each teacher. The data of the interviews with the voice recorder have been converted into written documents by the researchers.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data obtained in the research were assessed by content analysis method. Content analysis is the systematic analysis and interpretation of information obtained from various documents, archives, visual documents and mass media (Gökçe, 2006). "Content analysis consists of four stages: coding the data, finding the themes, organizing the codes and themes, and defining and interpreting the findings" (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

The data obtained in the study were analyzed separately by two researchers and a content analysis was made. Categories and themes were created within the codes. Afterwards, the codes, categories and themes produced separately by the researchers were compared and clarified. The formula "Reliability = Consensus / Consensus + Disagreement" developed by "Miles and Huberman (1994)" was used to calculate reliability among researchers. According to the results obtained, the percentage of agreement among the researchers was found to be 86.

Obtained findings are presented in tables. While the findings were tabulated, the codes were specified as frequencies. The interview forms of the participants were specified as S1, S2, S3…. The reliability and validity of the study were increased by including the sentences belonging to the determined categories. For the internal validity of the study, expert review was sought. The research process is explained in detail to increase its external validity.

FINDINGS/RESULTS

This section provides codes, categories, themes and direct citations to determine the opinions of preschool teachers regarding the reflection of the COVID-19 pandemic on preschool education within the scope of the sub-objective of the research.

"How Did Preschool Teachers Conduct Distance Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic?"

The views of the preschool teachers who participated in the research regarding the distance education activities carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Distance education activities*

Theme	Categories	Codes	f
Distance Education Activities	Use of Technology	Zoom "T1, T4, T5, T7, T8, T9, T11, T12, T13, T15, T16, T17, T18, T19, T20, T21, T22"	17
		EBA "T3, T9, T14, T16, T17, T18, T21"	7
		WhatsApp "T6, T11, T15, T16, T19"	5
	Cooperation with the Family	Communication with parents "T2, T4, T10, T11, T15, T19"	6

When table 1 is examined, it is seen that the theme of "Distance Education Activities" is categorized as the use of technology and cooperation with the family.

The codes and frequencies obtained for the category of use of technology are as follows:
Zoom (f=17), EBA (f=7) and WhatsApp (f=5).
Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:
T6: *"We have conducted lectures and interviews through internet and WhatsApp groups."*
T12: *"During the pandemic process, we carried out live lessons through zoom as a lesson to the distance education application every day. In live lessons, we primarily made games with visuals. I tried to give all the students a say."*
T14: *"I conducted live lessons through EBA and individual interviews with children."*
T19: *" During the COVID-19 pandemic, I conducted distance education by giving lessons on Zoom for 3 hours a week and by sending examples of the activity flow, which we prepared in a way that could be applied under family guidance, via WhatsApp to families every day."*

The codes and frequencies obtained for the category of cooperation with the family are as follows:
Communication with parents (f=6).
Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:
T2: *"I have kept in contact with parents as much as possible. I think that I am successful, at least I ensure the communication with my students."*

T4: *"After collecting material at school, I tried to get them to the parents. We continued our lessons through Zoom."*

T15: *"I carried out the daily activity plan by sharing it with families on WhatsApp, giving live lessons via zoom, giving feedback to home studies and providing one-to-one communication with students."*

When we examine the views of the preschool teachers who participated in the study, it is seen that education activities are carried out through technology in order not to interrupt education during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, it can be said that some teachers spend most of their time together and carry out effective educational activities in this process in cooperation with families that have an undeniable effect on their development.

"What Kind of Problems Did Preschool Teachers Experience in Distance Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic?"

The opinions of the preschool teachers who participated in the study about the problems they experienced in distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Problems in distance education*

Theme	Categories	Codes	f
Problems in Distance Education	Children	Difficulty concentrating "T1, T5, T6, T13, T15, T21"	6
		Not communicating "T15"	1
	Family	Inability to use technology "T4, T11, T14, T15"	4
		Interfering with children "T6, T7, T8, T17"	4
		Not providing support to children "T12, T14, T19"	3
	Participation	The number of siblings "T2, T3, T9, T10, T11, T15, T16, T20"	8
		Economic inadequacy "T15, T19"	2
	Technology	Lack of infrastructure "T2, T11, T13, T16, T18, T22"	6

When table 2 is examined, it is seen that the theme of "Problems in Distance Education" is categorized as children, family, participation and technology.

The codes and frequencies obtained for the category of problems with children are as follows: Difficulty concentrating (f=6) and not communicating (f=1).

Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T15: *"There were many problems, such as the inability of students who are not accustomed to speaking in front of the screen to actively participate in the process, and the inability of introverted students to express themselves in this process."*

T21: *"This process was heavy for the age group and could not concentrate."*

The codes and frequencies obtained for the category of problems with families are as follows:

Inability to use technology (f=4), interfering with children (f=4) and not providing support to children (f=3).

Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T8: *"There was a lot of intervention and expectation from the parents."*

T11: *"I think that distance education in pre-school education is difficult and not efficient enough. The fact that parents did not know enough about computers prevented children from actively participating in some activities."*

T12: *"While there should be parent support for activities held at home, some parents could not spare time."*

The codes and frequencies obtained for the category of problems related to participation are as follows:

The number of siblings (f=8) and economic inadequacy (f=2).

Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T3: *"In children with a large number of siblings, the priority was older children and participation decreased."*

T19: *"It is very difficult to achieve equal opportunities between students when distance education is carried out. Due to economic difficulties, the ability to access the internet and computer varies."*

The codes and frequencies obtained for the category of problems related to technology are as follows:

Lack of infrastructure (f=6).

Some of the opinions of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T16: *"There were those who could not attend due to connection problems, conflicts with the other child's lesson in the family. I also had a connection problem. When the time was up, sometimes the activities could be left unfinished."*

When the preschool teachers who participated in the study examined the opinions, it is seen that preschool children have difficulty getting their attention in distance education. In this regard, it can be said that the distance education process is not suitable for the age group and developmental characteristics of children. In addition, the inability of families to use technology is cited as an element that prevents children from actively participating in the educational process. In cases where the number of siblings is high, it is stated that the participation of children decreases. It is thought that the lack of technological tools is having an effect on this situation along with the lack of economic opportunities. Connection problems arising from lack of infrastructure in the distance education process are thought to prevent both children and teachers from participating in the course and an interactive process.

"What Changes Has the Distance Education Process Led to in the Daily Plans of Preschool Teachers?"

The opinions of the preschool teachers who participated in the study regarding the changes caused by distance education in their daily plans are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Changes in daily plans in distance education*

Theme	Categories	Codes	f
Changes in Daily Plans in Distance Education	Using Different Methods and Techniques	Fun activities "T1, T2, T5, T6, T17, T20, T22"	7
		Home-accessible activity plans "T4, T11, T12, T15, T18"	5
	Limitation in Activities	Individual activity plan "T3, T10, T19, T22"	4
		Failure to perform activities supporting motor and social development areas "T8, T9, T12"	3
		Reducing the variety of activities "T7, T13, T14, T16, T19, T21"	6

When table 3 is examined, it is seen that the theme of "Changes in Daily Plans in Distance Education" is categorized as different method-technical use and limitations in activities.

The codes and frequencies obtained for the different method and technical usage category are as follows:

Fun activities (f=7) and home-accessible activity plans (f=5).

Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T2: *"Its content and method have changed, and I have prioritized fun activities."*

T15: *"In distance education, I mostly included activities that can be applied at home with the family in daily plans."*

The codes and frequencies obtained for the limitation in activities category are as follows:

Individual activity plan (f=4), failure to perform activities supporting motor and social development areas (3) and reducing the variety of activities (f=6).

Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T8: *"I had to reduce the variety of activities. This situation negatively affected the children's large-small motor skills and social skills."*

T14: *"During the distance education process, I had to limit the variety of activities because the live lessons were limited in time."*

T19: *"Our daily plans have been simplified. Activities that require group interaction have been removed. More individual and more basic acquisitions that do not provide peer learning were emphasized."*

When the opinions of the preschool teachers participating in the research are examined, it is seen that the teachers focus on activities that they can implement with their families and that can be fun for children while preparing their daily plans in the distance education process. In addition, teachers stated that they cannot support social development by applying individual studies. This situation is considered to be a significant problem especially in the pandemic process, where people need to be supported socially-emotionally. Integrating interactive group work into teachers' plans is seen as important for children's social development and psychological health.

"What are the Behaviors Observed by Preschool Teachers in Children when Switching from Distance Education to Face-To-Face Education?"

The behaviors observed by the preschool teachers who participated in the study in children when moving from distance education to face-to-face education are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Behaviors observed in children when switching from distance education to face-to-face education*

Theme	Categories	Codes	f
Behaviors Observed in Children When Switching from Distance Education to Face-to-Face Education	Positive Behaviors	Supporting social-emotional development "T1, T15"	2
		Sense of longing for school and peers "T5, T11, T12, T13, T14, T15, T16, T22"	8
	Negative Behaviors	Attention deficit and behavioral disorder "T2, T3, T4, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T12, T18, T19, T21"	12
		Hyperactivity "T12, T14, T19"	3
		Low self esteem "T16, T17, T20"	3

When table 4 is examined, it is seen that the theme of "Behaviors Observed in Children When Switching from Distance Education to Face-to-Face Education" is categorized as positive behaviors and negative behaviors.

The codes and frequencies obtained for the positive behaviors category are as follows:
Supporting social-emotional development (f=2) and sense of longing for school and peers (f=8).
Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:
T15: *"The students were very happy and very excited. They said they missed their school, their friends, their teacher at every turn. Playing together in groups of friends, talking face-to-face and communicating contributed positively to their social emotional development."*

The codes and frequencies obtained for the category of negative behaviors are as follows:
Attention deficit and behavioral disorder (f=12), hyperactivity (f=3) and low self esteem (f=3).
Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:
T2: *"They certainly exhibit much more aggressive behavior. They have absolutely no patience, they cannot tolerate the misbehavior of others."*
T12: *"Irritability and hyperactivity were observed."*
T16: *"Children's belief and confidence that they would do a job or an activity in particular had decreased."*

There are positive and negative behaviors observed by preschool teachers participating in the research when they switch from distance education to face-to-face education. Within the scope of positive behaviors, it has been determined that the social-emotional development of children whose social-emotional development has weakened during the pandemic process is supported when they switch from distance education to face-to-face education. It has also been observed that children feel a sense of longing for school and their peers, and their interactions are strengthened. Within the scope of negative behaviors, it was stated by the teachers that attention deficit and behavioral disorders were observed in children. In this context, it is thought that it is significant for teachers to carry out studies that will keep children's attention alive in the distance and face-to-face education process.
"How Has the COVID-19 Pandemic Affected Children, According to Preschool Teachers?"

The opinions of preschool teachers who participated in the study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic process on children*

Theme	Categories	Codes	f
The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic Process on Children	Negative	Negative impact on social-emotional development "T1, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11, T12, T13, T14, T15, T16, T17, T18, T19, T20, T21, T22"	21
		Physical and psychological violence in the family environment "T2, T7"	2
		Technology addiction "T2, T21"	2

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that the theme "The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic Process on Children" is categorized as negative impact.

The codes and frequencies obtained for the negative impact category are as follows:
Negative impact on social-emotional development (f=21), physical and psychological violence in the family environment (f=2) and technology addiction (f=2).
Some of the opinions of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T2: *"I think that children are addicted to screens during the epidemic. I also think that families are exposed to physical and psychological violence because their tolerance for their children decreases."*

T6: *"It negatively affected the social development of children. There were negativities in terms of game making and communication skills."*

T15: *"I don't think it has any positive effect. The pandemic has negatively affected children in all aspects, especially socially."*

T21: *"It has led to more technology-addicted, isolated children."*

All preschool teachers who participated in the study think that the COVID-19 pandemic process has a negatively affects children. It has been stated that children's social-emotional development is especially affected in this process. Therefore, it is thought that studies should be carried out to support the social-emotional development of children in face-to-face and distance education.

"What Kind of Problems Have Children Experienced in Distance Education According to Preschool Teachers?"

The opinions of the preschool teachers who participated in the research about the problems experienced by children in distance education are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *Problems experienced by children in distance education*

Theme	Categories	Codes	f
Problems Experienced by Children in Distance Education	Developmental Problems	Social-emotional problems "T1, T3, T4, T6, T8, T9, T10, T11 T13, T14, T15, T16, T17, T18, T20, T22"	16
		Excessive weight gain "T15"	1
		Technology addiction "T2, T5, T7, T12, T17, T18, T22"	7
	Educational Problems	Problems with children's learning "T1, T12, T15"	3
	Familial Problems	Inadequacies of families regarding the education of their children "T18, T19, T21"	3

When Table 6 is examined, it is seen that the theme of "Problems Experienced by Children in Distance Education" is categorized as developmental, educational and familial problems.

The codes and frequencies obtained for the category of developmental problems are as follows: Social-emotional problems (f=16), excessive weight gain (f=1) and technology addiction (f=7).

Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T7: *"Technology addiction emerged and behavioral disorders occurred."*

T14: *"As a result of the individual interviews I made, the children's statements that they miss their school, teachers and friends very much make us think that they are unhappy and have social-emotional problems in this sense."*

T15: *"Physically, the children experienced weight gain."*

The codes and frequencies obtained for the category of educational problems are as follows: Problems with children's learning (f=3).

Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T12: *"Due to the inability to use the five senses that are victims of technology, there was a lack of learning."*

The codes and frequencies obtained for the category of familial problems are as follows: Inadequacies of families regarding the education of their children (f=3).

Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T19: *"There were inequalities of opportunity for disadvantaged children depending on factors such as knowledge and skills of people who are interested in the home environment of children. Families also differed in terms of accessing the material."*

When the views of preschool teachers participating in the study are examined, it is seen that children experience social-emotional problems in distance education and become addicted to technology. In addition, the inequality of opportunity in face-to-face education has increased during the pandemic process and has negatively affected children and families. This situation makes us think that an efficient process is not realized in distance education.

"How Do Parents Provide Support to Their Children in Distance Education, According to Preschool Teachers?"

The views of the preschool teachers who participated in the research regarding the support that families provide to their children in distance education are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. *Support provided by families to their children in distance education*

Theme	Categories	Codes	f
Support Provided by Families to Their Children in Distance Education	Supportive Families	Psychological support "T1, T8, T10, T15, T19, T20"	6
		Preparing a learning environment "T2, T3, T4, T11, T12, T13, T14, T16, T19"	9
		Supporting education with in-home activities "T5, T6, T10, T11, T18"	5
	Unsupportive Families	Indifference "T2, T7, T9, T10, T17"	5
		Emotional abuse "T20, T21, T22"	3

When table 7 is examined, it is seen that the theme of "Support Provided by Families to Their Children in Distance Education" is categorized as supportive families and unsupportive families.

The codes and frequencies obtained for the supportive families category are as follows:

Psychological support (f=6), preparing a learning environment (f=9) and supporting education with in-home activities (f=5).

Some of the opinions of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T11: *"Without the support of the families, the distance education process could not be carried out. Children were able to participate with the help of their parents in both home activities and online lessons."*

T13: *"Our parents provided support in every way. They prepared the materials for the activities we planned."*

T15: *"In distance education, families have great duties and responsibilities. They were one-on-one psychologically and socially supportive."*

The codes and frequencies obtained for the category of unsupportive families are as follows:
Indifference (f=5) and emotional abuse (f=3).
Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:
T7: *"They weren't interested. I think families also need support."*
T20: *"We have noticed that unconscious families make children more emotionally depressed."*

When the opinions of the preschool teachers participating in the study are examined, it is seen that the families especially support the children in "preparing the learning environment" in distance education. However, it has been stated that there are families who do not take care of their children as well as supportive families. The first effects of parents, who have a key role, on children are of utmost importance. In this context, it can be said that it is important to increase awareness of parents so as to realize and maintain an efficient education process in distance and face-to-face education.

"How Do Preschool Teachers Think the COVID-19 Pandemic Affects Their Professional Development?"

The opinions of preschool teachers who participated in the research on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic process on their professional development are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. *Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the professional development of preschool teachers*

Theme	Categories	Codes	f
Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Professional Development of Preschool Teachers	Positive	Variety of methods and techniques "T1, T17"	2
		A different experience and development "T3, T4, T6, T7, T8, T10, T15, T20, T22"	9
		Development of the use of technology "T2, T5, T11, T12, T13, T14, T19, T21"	8
	Negative	Intolerance "T9"	1
		Feeling inadequate "T16, T18"	2

When Table 8 is examined, it is seen that the theme "Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic Process on The Professional Development of Preschool Teachers" is categorized as positive and negative.

The codes and frequencies obtained for the positive category are as follows:

Variety of methods and techniques (f=2), a different experience and development (f=9) and development of the use of technology (f=8).

Some of the opinions of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T17: *"I was able to ensure the active participation of children in education through various activities using different techniques."*

T7: *"I had a different experience and tried to improve myself so I could do something remarkable for the kids."*

T5: *"I saw all my shortcomings in digital. I did my best to learn. I got to know various web tools and used my lesson in the most appropriate way."*

The codes and frequencies obtained for the negative category are as follows:

Intolerance (f=1) and feeling inadequate (f=2).

Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T9: *"Staying at home for a long time led to laziness. I can't stand the voice of children."*

T16: *"Of course it had a negative impact. Since I could not come to school and be with the children, I could not feel that I was a full teacher."*

When we examine the views of the preschool teachers who participated in the study, it is seen that the COVID-19 pandemic process leads to a different experience in their professional development. Teachers stated that this process supports their professional development, especially in terms of technology use skills. However, there are teachers who are positively affected, as well as teachers who are negatively affected. With the psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic process on all individuals, it is seen that there are teachers who have decreased tolerance for children and feel inadequate. It is thought that various educational activities should be presented taking into account the psychological health of the teachers.

"How Do Preschool Teachers Evaluate Distance Education Activities During the COVID-19 Pandemic?"

The opinions of the preschool teachers who participated in the research regarding distance education activities during the COVID-19 pandemic are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. *Evaluation of distance education activities during the COVID-19 pandemic*

Theme	Categories	Codes	f
Evaluation of Distance Education Activities During the COVID-19 Pandemic	Positive	Being organized and successful "T1, T2, T10, T12, T13, T19, T20"	7
		Using new methods and techniques "T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T15, T16, T22"	8
	Negative	Inability to provide group activity "T3, T18, T21"	3
		Feeling inadequate "T9, T11, T14, T17"	4

When table 9 is examined, it is seen that the theme of "Evaluation of Distance Education Activities During the COVID-19 Pandemic" is categorized as positive and negative.

The codes and frequencies obtained for the positive category are as follows:

Being organized and successful (f=7) and using new methods and techniques (f=8).

Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T13: *"I think that the activities were successful because I aimed to attract children's attention, to use time efficiently, and to reach every child."*

T5: *"I used different activities in different ways so that children could be more active, and this practice contributed a lot to me professionally."*

The codes and frequencies obtained for the negative category are as follows:

Inability to provide group activity (f=3) and feeling inadequate (f=4).

Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T3: *"Limited participation negatively affected group dynamics. Since the children were at home, I had a hard time offering different opportunities."*

T14: *"I tried my best, but I would like to point out the fact that I am not as good as face-to-face training."*

When the views of the preschool teachers participating in the study are examined, it is seen that they evaluate the distance education activities in the COVID-19 pandemic process positively and negatively. While some teachers stated that they used new methods and techniques in this process and offered a successful education; some teachers stated that they felt inadequate and could not provide group activity. It is thought that the inability of preschool teachers to provide group activity in the distance education process prevents children from socializing. However, since the preschool period is one of the most open to social-emotional development, teachers should create an effective educational environment. In this context, it is thought that various opportunities should be provided to improve teachers' skills in classroom management in the distance education process.

"What Are the Recommendations of Preschool Teachers Regarding Distance Education in Preschool Education?"

The recommendations of the preschool teachers who participated in the research regarding distance education in preschool education are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. *Recommendations on distance education in preschool education*

Theme	Categories	Codes	f
Recommendations on Distance Education in Preschool Education	Recommendations for practice	Family participation "T3, T11, T12"	3
		Enriched event content "T1, T2, T5, T6, T7, T8, T19, T20, T22"	9
		Face-to-face education "T2, T4, T9, T10, T12, T13, T14, T15, T18, T21"	10
	Recommendations for teachers	Training teachers "T16, T17, T19"	3

When table 10 is examined, it is seen that the theme "Recommendations on Distance Education in Preschool Education" is categorized as recommendations for practice and teachers.

The codes and frequencies obtained for the category of recommendations for the application are as follows:

Family participation (f=3), enriched event content (f=9) and face-to-face education (f=10).

Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T5: *"Considering the attention span of children, different studies that can activate more auditory and other sensory organs should be planned. Daily lesson hours should be planned appropriately so that children do not spend too much time in front of the computer."*

T12: *"Guidance can be given to parents on issues such as spending quality time at home with the student. Thus, family participation should be allowed."*

T15: *"I think that face-to-face education has a positive effect for children rather than distance education in pre-school education."*

The codes and frequencies obtained for the recommendations category for teachers are as follows:

Training teachers (f=3).

Some of the views of preschool teachers regarding this category are as follows:

T19: *"Teachers' ability to use technology should be developed. Unfortunately, most of us are still not good enough. An evaluable distance education process should be planned and teachers should be included in it. I think we are lacking in getting feedback."*

Preschool teachers participating in the study made recommendations for practice and teachers in the distance education process. Within the scope of the application, teachers stated that distance education should not be applied to preschool children due to their developmental characteristics; emphasized the need for face-to-face education. Nonetheless, if distance education will take place, it is suggested to implement enriched activity contents that allow children to have fun. In addition, teachers suggested that they should be trained in order to develop their own skills and to provide a better education process to children.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study, it is aimed to examine the opinions of preschool teachers regarding the reflection of the COVID-19 pandemic process on preschool education. In conclusion of the research, it is seen that preschool teachers carried out distance education activities through technology use and family cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the studies on the applications used by teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic process are examined, the Zoom application according to Kılıç (2020), the WhatsApp application according to Hartatik and Bia'yuni (2020), the Education Information

Network (EBA) Pınar and Dönel Akgül (2020) has been actively used. This situation supports that the technological tools used by teachers in the distance education process are similar. It has been stated by preschool teachers that parents support children and teachers in the distance education process (Aykar & Yurdakal, 2021). In this regard, it is considered that preschool teachers carry out distance education activities in cooperation with families and this support is important.

Preschool teachers stated that children have difficulties in communicating and concentrating in the distance education process. It has been determined that families have problems such as not being able to use technology, interfering with children and not providing support to children. In addition, it is seen that there are problems in the distance education process due to the large number of siblings and economic inadequacy.

In the research, it is seen that children have difficulty getting their attention in distance education. In the research carried out by Yürek (2021), it was stated that the activities for play/movement should be carried out because the attention spans of preschoolers are short. In this study, the inadequacy of families in using technology and lack of infrastructure are also mentioned as the factors preventing an active education process from taking place. Similarly, it has been stated in the relevant literature that the lack of equal infrastructure and the inadequate level of knowledge of families regarding the use of technology can lead to disruptions in education (Brom, Lukovsky, Gregor, Hannemann, Strakova & Svoricek, 2020; Viner, Russell, Croker, Packer, Ward, Stansfield, Mytton, Bonell & Booy, 2020). Additionally, in this study, it is seen that children's participation in lessons decreases in cases where the number of siblings is high. The research carried out by Mohan, McCoy, Carroll, Mihut, Lyons and Domhnaill (2020) also found that other siblings had a negatively affect on children's participation in the distance education process. In this regard, it can be said that execute studies that will keep children's attention alive, raise awareness of the use of technology and improve infrastructures in the distance education process can reduce the problems experienced in the distance education process.

It has been determined that preschool teachers utilize various techniques and methods that are fun for children and that they can apply with their families when preparing daily plans during the distance education process. Additionally, it is seen that there are teachers who practice personal activities and cannot perform activities that support social development. It has been stated by Kırık (2014) that in order to execute the distance education process efficiently, the gains should be accurately determined, and activities related to group work should be established. In this study, since it covers preschool period, various studies that children can apply at home with their families can be presented by teachers. It is considered that it is critical for children's development and mental health for teachers to create activity content enriched with interactive group work.

In this study, it is seen that teachers observe positive and negative behaviors such as " sense of longing for school and peers, attention deficit and behavioral disorder" in children when they switch from distance education to face-to-face education. In the study carried out by İçen (2021), it was indicated that the pandemic process had compelling effects for all children in social isolation. It can be said that it is significant for teachers to carry out studies that support their social-emotional development in order to reduce these negative effects on children.

All preschool teachers participating in the research think that the COVID-19 pandemic process has negative effects on children such as social-emotional development, physical and psychological violence in the family environment. In the study conducted by Kuset, Özgem, Şaşmacıoğlu and Güldal Kan (2021), it was stated that distance education is "inefficient" compared to face-to-face education in children receiving preschool education and that the biggest problem in the distance education process is "communication". In this regard, it can be said that face-to-face education is suitable for preschool children. In cases where face-to-face education will be limited, it is considered that distance

education is supportive for preschoolers, and it may be appropriate to realize a hybrid model in which face-to-face applications are performed alternately.

In the distance education process, it is seen that children have problems socially and emotionally. The study conducted by Erbay (2008) determined that the social skills of children who started first grade without pre-school education were lower than that of children with preschool education. This situation shows that preschool education supports children's social skills and that teachers should do supportive work in the distance education process. In consequence of this study, it is seen that preschool children become dependent on technology during the distance education process. In the research conducted by Akkaş Baysal, Ocak and Ocak (2020), parents expressed that children want to stay on screen longer and screen addiction occurs. The study also shows that there are problems with children's learning during the distance education process. It is known that the time limit in online courses leads to problems in education (Yılmaz, Güner, Mutlu, Doğanay & Yılmaz, 2020). In this case, it can be said that the flexibility in the face-to-face training process cannot be achieved in online courses. In the study, it was determined that some families have inadequacy in the distance education process. A study by Dong, Cao and Li (2020) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese parents had negative attitudes and a sense of inadequacy regarding online education. It is thought that it is significant for teachers to carry out the process consciously in cooperation with parents in order to achieve efficient distance education.

It is seen that families especially support children in "preparing a learning environment" in distance education. However, in this process, it is stated that there are families that support children as well as families that do not care for their children. Parents' attitude towards children is very important in children's cognitive and personal development (Aslanargun, 2007). In this context, it is thought that children's development will be adversely affected if parents do not provide support to children. In parallel with Genç (2005), the importance of parents working closely with teachers on the needs and wishes of children was emphasized.

Preschool teachers indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic process led to a different experience in their professional development. Teachers stated that this process supports their professional development, especially in terms of technology use skills. In the research conducted by Özkul, Kırnık, Dönük, Altunhan and Altunkaynak (2020), it is seen that distance education activities contribute to the personal development of teachers and effective learning process planning by using various methods and techniques that are not used in face-to-face education. In this context, it is considered that the distance education process plays a role in the development of teachers' knowledge and skills. However, in this study, it is seen that besides the teachers who were positively affected in their professional development during the pandemic process, there were also teachers who were negatively affected. In order to eliminate the negative effects of this process and to provide an effective education, it is thought that it is important to implement various practices to improve the mental health of teachers.

Preschool teachers who participated in this study evaluated the distance education activities in the COVID-19 pandemic in a positive and negative way. Some teachers say that they use new methods and techniques in this process and offer a successful education; some teachers stated that they felt inadequate and could not maintain group activeness. In the research conducted by Demir and Kale (2020), teachers stated that distance education activities were sufficient or moderately adequate during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, the majority of teachers evaluate distance education activities positively. In this context, it can be said that the findings are supportive of each other.

Preschool teachers believe that distance education should not be applied to preschool children due to their developmental characteristics; emphasized the need for face-to-face education. Similarly, in the research conducted by Balaman and Hanbal Tiryaki (2021), teachers stated that they do not see distance education as the first choice and that distance education can not replace face-to-face

education. Additionally, in this study, if distance education is going to be realized by teachers, it is recommended to apply enriched activity contents that allow children to have fun. Various activity practices are seen as an effective tool in the development of preschool children (Can Yaşar & Ünsal Kaya, 2018). Therefore, it is thought that it is significant to present enriched activity contents to children in the distance education process, as stated by the preschool teachers in the study. In addition, in this study, pre-school teachers suggested that "teachers should be trained" in order to develop their own skills and to offer a better education process to children. When the relevant literature was examined, no finding was found that the teachers made suggestions regarding their own education. However, it is thought that it is important for teachers, who have a critical effect on children's lives, to be aware of this situation and to offer them training on the use of technology, which they think is inadequate.

In line with the results of this research, the following recommendations are presented:

- Regarding crisis management and an efficient training process in distance and face-to-face education, parents and teachers should be trained.
- Preschool teachers should cooperate with the family in order to enable children to participate in distance education and to increase family support.
- Preschool teachers should plan enriched activities suitable for children's development, considering the psychological health of them.
- Preschool teachers should implement interactive studies to support children's social-emotional development.
- In order for distance education to be carried out successfully, infrastructure works must be improved.

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- First author have made significant contributions to conception, design, and acquisition of data.

- The second author have been involved in drafting the article, analysis and interpretation of data.

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