

The Problems Faced by Teachers in Turkey During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Their Opinions

Tufan Aytaçⁱ
Kırşehir Ahi Evran University

Abstract

The aim of this research is to reveal the problems faced by teachers in the education period during COVID-19 pandemic and to discuss their opinions regarding the process. As one of the qualitative research methods, the phenomenology pattern was used in the research. The study group consists of 80 teachers selected by using purposeful criterion sampling technique who work at public and private schools in different provinces of Turkey in 2019-2020 academic year. Within the context of the results of this study, it is observed that EBA TV/education portal plays an important role in meeting the educational needs of students and ensuring the continuity of education in COVID-19 pandemic process. Considering the themes and opinions that stand out in the context of teachers' opinions, EBA TV/education portal is considered positive while there are problems with content, presentation and connection. According to the findings, the most common problems faced by the teachers during COVID-19 pandemic are students' technical and hardware problems related to the internet connection, the inability of students to maintain their motivation to learn, the inability of parents to create a learning environment, and the lack of their support at home for their children. The majority of teachers have the opinion that the psychology of the students has been negatively affected during COVID-19 pandemic process, but there are also the students who could adapt to this process. An important finding in this study is that teachers think that their colleagues do not have necessary skills to use technology and they are low in motivation to use distance education technologies. Teachers think that after COVID-19 pandemic, things shall not be the same as before; the importance of school, teachers and face-to-face education shall be recognized again, and blended learning methods shall come to the fore.

Keywords: COVID-19, Pandemic, Education, Teacher, School, Student

DOI: 10.29329/ijpe.2021.329.26

ⁱ **Tufan Aytaç**, Assoc. Prof. Dr., Education Science, Kırşehir Ahi Evran University, ORCID: 0000-0002-6103-3530

Email: tufana60@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 pandemic is considered one of the biggest crises faced by education systems and humanity in the recent past. As schools are closed, the education process was interrupted and the children have started education from home. Described as the new normal in the world, this process affects the education and teaching processes and brings along many problems.

COVID-19 is the first pandemic caused by coronaviruses that spread rapidly all over the world. In early 2020, the World Health Organization called COVID-19, which is a new type of coronavirus disease, a serious acute respiratory syndrome (WHO, 2020). COVID-19 was first noticed in Wuhan Province of China's Hubei State in December 2019, and was identified as a new virus that spread rapidly all over the world on January 13, 2020. This pandemic has affected all fields of life beyond being just a public health issue (OECD, 2020). The education sector is also one of the most affected fields.

Most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions to control the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. These closures across countries affect more than 90% of the student population in the world. According to UNESCO data, as of May 8, 2020, a total of 1,268,164,008 students from preschool to higher education have been affected by this situation. In Turkey, the number of students affected by this situation is 24,901,925 (UNESCO, 2020). While the health of students and the whole society is important in this process in which schools are closed, ensuring the continuity of the education-teaching process has also become important. In this context, many countries and Turkey are implementing various alternative strategies and practices in order to continue education without interruption. An interesting research finding on this subject is the meta-synthesis study by Viner et al. (2020). In this study, it was stated that in COVID-19's latest modeling studies, the closure of schools prevented only 2-4% of deaths (much less than other social distance preventive measures).

Due to the high contagious COVID-19 pandemic, countries have temporarily interrupted their education, and continued their education with distance education applications (ETF, 2020; OECD, 2020; Üstün and Özçiftçi, 2020: 147). The transformation of the COVID-19 virus into a pandemic in the world has affected education systems in all countries where the epidemic was experienced and led to the use of distance education with the support of the states in order to ensure that this epidemic is slowed down in educational institutions (Yamamoto and Altun, 2020: 32). Turkey has been pursuing a distance learning process in two ways: (1) Education Information Network (EBA), the infrastructure of which has been established before, and the content is updated and new content is added; (2) TV channels (TRT-EBA TV) where video lessons are broadcasted in line with the schedule adjusted according to the class levels (Duran and Aytaç, 2016; TEDMEM, 2020). In this process, private schools continued their education by using various distance education programs within their own means.

Teachers are inexperienced about which online tools and resources they can use, and what methods they can apply; they need constant support. A qualified process management shall not be possible without this support. For students, not only academic support for continuing learning but also psycho-social support during the epidemic should be provided. Interrupting education at schools has created anxiety especially for students who have been preparing for exams (TEDMEM, 2020). After COVID-19 pandemic, it can be stated that the importance of the use of internet and synchronous education for education purposes have gradually increased, and that a new normal order has been started in which teachers work from home environment (Kırık and Özkoçak, 2020).

The fact that public and private educational institutions are not prepared for such a situation and that the only source to be used for all students to receive education is distance education has brought along many problems (Yamamoto and Altun, 2020: 29). COVID-19 pandemic has made it an obligation to shift learning-teaching environments from school/classroom environment to e-learning

environments quickly in both public and private schools in Turkey. Although Turkey has open learning and distance education experience, it is clear that school administrators and teachers will face various problems in meeting the learning needs of approximately 25 million learners, according to UNESCO data that covers all levels and all students. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has become one of the main actors in meeting the educational and learning needs of students. During the pandemic process, it is seen that MEB and the private sector can respond to the educational needs of the society quickly. However, it is a fact that there are still some problems experienced in this process.

For the success of the learning experience, the role of teachers during COVID-19 pandemic is more important than the physical environment or technological infrastructure of schools. Although online learning environments and distance education methods provided by schools are an important tool, the importance and duties of teachers has increased during this period. In synchronous and asynchronous distance education methods, teacher is the main actor and necessary in guiding students' learning (OECD, 2020).

This study analyzing and evaluating the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the education period from the perspective of teachers is one of the first studies carried out in order to summarize the situation of education in Turkey that is having the first wave of the pandemic. It can be predicted that such studies shall be a source for studies related to the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on education and what can be done after this period. Revealing the opinions of teachers and problems faced by them, who are one of the most important actors of the education process, regarding COVID-19 pandemic period will provide important data on how to establish the education system in the new normal order. Since the problem is a newly emerged one and still going on, there is not any national or international study discussing the opinions of teachers and the problems they have faced. In this context, the problem of this study is to reveal the opinions of teachers and the problems they have faced in the education-teaching process while COVID-19 pandemic is still going on.

The aim of this study is to reveal the opinions of teachers and the problems they have faced in the education-teaching process while COVID-19 pandemic is still going on. Within this scope, the following questions are attempted to be answered:

- 1) What is the perception of teachers regarding COVID-19 pandemic period?
- 2) What are the opinions of teachers regarding the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on education?
- 3) What are the problems faced by teachers in the education-teaching process while COVID-19 pandemic is still going on?

METHOD

Research Model

As one of the qualitative research methods, phenomenology model was used in this study. The major aim of phenomenology studies is to reveal and evaluate personal experiences related to a phenomenon at a more general level (Creswell, 2013, 2017; Marshall and Rossman, 2014). In phenomenology studies, it is generally aimed to reveal and interpret the attitudes, perceptions or opinions of people regarding a specific event or situation (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018). In this study, it is attempted to analyze the perception of teachers regarding the period of COVID-19 pandemic and the problems they have faced in the education-teaching process.

Study Group

Study group of the research was determined through criterion sampling method which is one of the purposeful sampling methods (Creswell, 2013, 2017; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018:107). Being a teacher is taken as the main criterion while determining the participants. There are four other criteria used while determining the study group: a) teachers educating at different levels and in different branches, b) being of different genders, c) being voluntary to participate in the study, d) heterogeneously working in public and private educational institutions. The study group of the research consists of 80 teachers who work in public and private educational institutions in different cities of Turkey in 2019-2020 academic year. Information about the teachers participating in the study is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Personal Information Regarding the Study Group

Gender	Number
Male	44
Female	36
Professional Seniority	
0 – 5 years	9
6 – 10 years	28
11 – 15 years	16
16 – 20 years	18
21 years and over	9
Level of Teaching	
Preschool	12
Primary education	32
Secondary education	28
Special education	8
Type of School	
Public	17
Private	63

Data Collection

Since the research was carried out based on the phenomenology pattern, interview technique was used as the data collection tool. Interview technique provides researchers with opportunities for interaction, flexibility and probing through revealing experiences and meanings about phenomena (Çepni, 2010; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018). Relevant literature was scanned in detail while the semi-structured interview form was formed; researches and reports related to the educational dimension and effects of COVID-19 pandemic were analyzed, and various dimensions and questions were determined. Data collection tool was created as semi-structured interview form considering the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on education (perception on COVID-19 pandemic, education-teaching, communication, psycho-social situation). Data of the study was collected by using the interview technique via semi-structured Teacher Interview Form. Teacher Interview Form consists of three sections as being statement, personal information form, and the dimension of effects of COVID-19 pandemic on education. Data of the study was collected through interview method on a voluntary basis. Interviews were carried out by the scholar who conducted the study. Each interview lasted for 15 to 30 minutes and all interviews were carried out in two months. Interviews were carried out through mutual synchronous interview by using Educational Project Based on Ahi Proficiency (EPBAP-AYDEP) platform and zoom programs; during this process, detailed written notes were taken. In addition, the interview form was sent to the teachers according to the selection criteria using the Google survey form program, and their answers were received and evaluated.

Validity and Reliability

Research questions consist of six open-ended questions prepared in line with the aims. While Teacher Interview Form was prepared, a literature scan was carried out and the researches and reports conducted on the issue were analyzed with the aim of increasing the internal validity. It was paid attention that the research questions have appropriate content and comprehensibility in the context of the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on education. Expert opinions (2 experts on curriculum and teaching, 1 expert on qualitative research, and two teachers) were taken to ensure the appropriateness of the dimensions and questions regarding the data collection tool for comprehensibility and clarity; as a result of the pre-application made to four teachers, the interview form was found appropriate. In order to increase the reliability (consistency) of the data collection tool, while creating themes in the content analysis process, the statements of the teachers directly related to the aim of the research were included.

At the beginning of the interview, teachers were informed about the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on education, and their dimensions were explained. In the context of the dimensions of the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on education, teachers were asked questions and their opinions were received, coded and interpreted. In the content analysis process, the consensus percentage formula of Miles and Huberman (1994) was used to determine the coherence between the code and themes determined by the researchers and two other independent experts in order to ensure reliability. Two other independent experts are two faculty members working in the field of educational psychology and educational management.

$$\text{Consensus Percent} = \frac{\text{Consensus}}{\text{Consensus} + \text{Divergence}} \times 100$$

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), if 90% and more researcher and expert consensus is provided in qualitative research, coding study is considered reliable. In this respect, it can be said that the study is generally reliable. In order to determine the coherence of the opinions of the teachers regarding the main categories determined by the researcher conducting the study in the process of coding of the qualitative data collected and the creation of the themes, opinions and evaluations of two field experts, apart from the researcher himself, were taken into consideration. In this study, consensus rate between coders was calculated as .95 for the 1st question, .92 for the 2nd question, .90 for the 3rd question, .94 for the 4th question, .91 for the 5th question, and .96 for the 6th question. Since the reliability calculations are over .90, it has been accepted as reliable for this study.

Analysis of Data

The data obtained from the interviews with teachers were examined after their consent was obtained, and coded in the context of the aim of the research and questions. Created codes were transformed into themes/categories to reveal the research findings, and descriptive and content analyzes were made. Using the descriptive approach, themes revealed by teachers' answers to interview questions were summarized and interpreted. In content analysis, relationships and concepts that can explain the collected data were reached. The data summarized and interpreted through descriptive analysis was discussed more extensively in the content analysis (Bilgin, 2006; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018). In order to obtain themes from the codes, written and verbal expressions of teachers were first coded by separating them into expressions and words representing the basic views for the aims of the research. The data coded in relation to each other was organized by combining them under main themes and grouping them within the framework of research questions. In the study, teachers were coded as (T) and by attributing a number. In the analysis of the data, frequency (f) was used, and direct quotations were included while conveying the opinions of teachers.

RESULTS

The themes/categories and codes created in line with the opinions of teachers regarding the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the education-teaching process are given below as dimensions, and opinions of teachers are supported with direct quotations. Themes that stand out during COVID-19 pandemic according to the opinions of the teachers are given in figure 1 and figure 2.

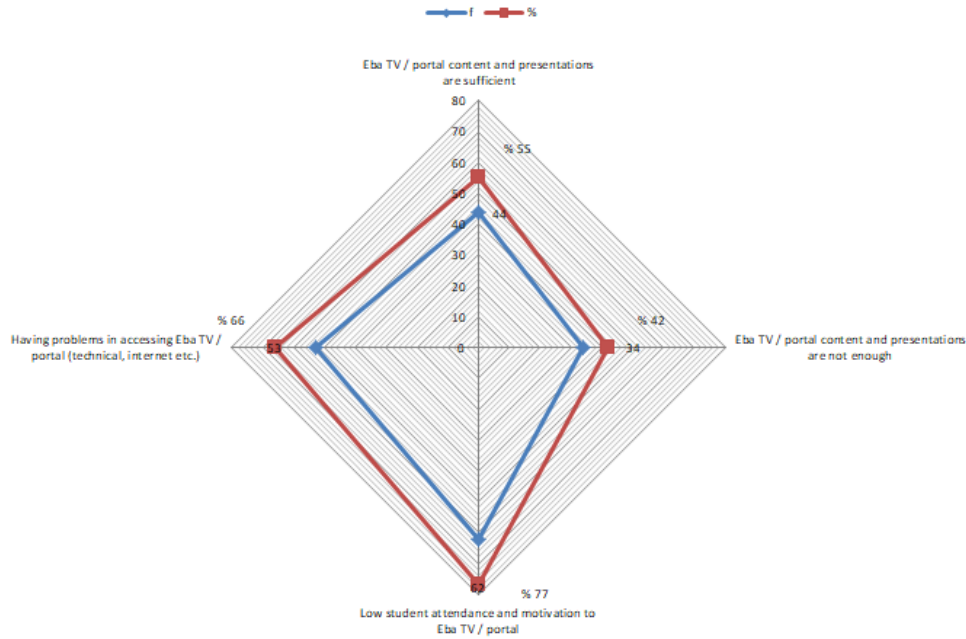


Figure 1. Thematic fields related to the use of EBA TV/education portal during COVID-19 pandemic

Considering the opinions and themes that stand out in the context of teachers' opinions, it is observed that while there are problems with content, presentation and connection, EBA TV/education portal is considered positive (Figure 1).

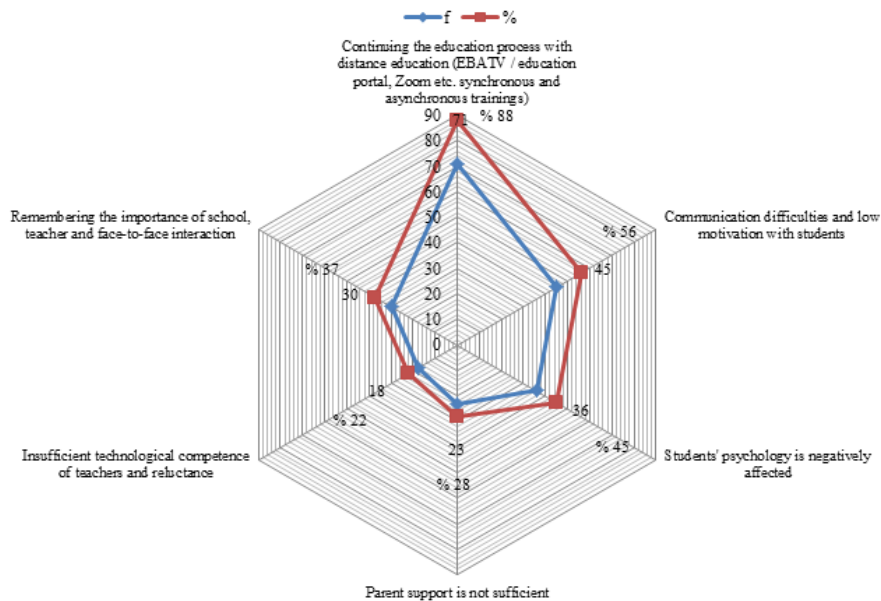


Figure 2. Problem areas faced by teachers during COVID-19 pandemic and their changing perspectives on education

Teachers state that they have difficulties in communicating with students in the distance education process, their learning motivation decreases and parents' support to students is not sufficient (Figure 2).

Opinions of teachers on the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on educational process

Opinions of teachers on the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on educational process are given in Table 2 as themes/categories.

Table 2. What schools and teachers do in the context of the continuity of education during COVID-19 pandemic

Interview Question	Themes/Categories	Frequency
1. When COVID-19 pandemic started and schools were interrupted, what did you do as individuals and schools as part of the continuity of students' education process?	Continuing the education process with synchronous (live)/asynchronous lessons using applications such as EBA TV/education portal, Zoom, Skype, Teamlink teleconference program, Google classroom, hangout, Duo, Whatsapp group,	71
	Weekly distance education program and implementation carried out by the school administration/district national education directorate	7
	Giving homework and exercises from textbooks and various sources, online trial exam, book reading assignments, sending and following the activity videos	13
	Live lessons through private educational institution TV platform and education portal	10
	Strengthening the communication with parents (helping them in this process and informing them about the participation of students, activating the guidance service, informing the parents group, supporting their home life skills)	15

Opinions of teachers during COVID-19 pandemic are collected under the following themes: “They continue their education through synchronous (live) lessons by using applications such as EBA TV/education portal, Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp etc.” (f=71), “They use various ways to strengthen the communication with parents” (f=15), “Giving students homework, exams and exercises from textbooks and various sources” (f=13), and “Weekly distance education program and implementation” (f=7) (Table 2). Examples of opinions under this theme are given below:

Two teachers working in public school stated as in the following:

“I made studies from EBA. I tried to ensure that students follow the distance education lessons given in EBA via EBA-TV or internet. I tried to communicate with students by giving them homework and having video calls by using Whatsapp” (T19).

“I send and follow up studies on EBA portal. I have live lessons from EBA or Zoom on certain days of the week” (T21).

Teachers working in private educational institutions state that they have been moving fast during the beginning and continuation of COVID-19 pandemic, and that they apply weekly curriculum with live lessons, albeit limited. Two teachers working in private educational institutions stated as in the following:

“I am in constant communication with my students. We are doing classes on zoom. After the lesson, I send assignments and follow them. As an institution, it is requested to follow up the psychological status of our students and to contact them so that they do not lose their connection with the school. We try to guide the parents during this process” (T14).

“We started our distance education program, we have lesson videos every day and then live lessons. In this process, we are daily in contact with our students and parents” (T24).

According to the findings, it is observed that the education process is continued by using EBA infrastructure after the school has been interrupted by the Ministry of National Education due to COVID-19 pandemic. It is seen that problems experienced in the first few weeks are tried to be overcome with different methods and solutions. In this process, it is seen that distance learning programs are implemented with short-term live lessons via EBA TV/education portal. It is observed that teachers working in private schools are faster and more effective in this process. In this process, it is seen that the importance of informing and supporting parents is realized by teachers, especially in increasing student motivation and ensuring the sustainability of education.

Opinions of teachers regarding the contents and presentations in EBA TV/education portal are given in Table 3 as themes/categories.

Table 3. Opinions of teachers regarding the contents and presentations in EBA TV and education portal

Interview Question	Themes/Categories	Frequency
2. How do you evaluate the content and presentations of EBA TV/education portal?	EBA is effective and useful, content is sufficient, some lessons are successful in EBA TV	44
	The content is not sufficient (it is far from being exam-oriented, it is simple and shallow, the content for the students in the 8th and 12th grades who are studying for the exams is inadequate and not suitable for the student level)	34
	Live lesson hours in EBA are short, quick explanation of the topics	10
	Late additions of content and activities for preschool education level in EBA, its inadequateness, parents are not able to log into the system	14

Opinions of teachers regarding the contents and presentations in EBA TV/education portal are classified in the following themes: “contents and presentations in EBA TV/education portal are sufficient” (f=44), “contents are not sufficient” (f=34), and “inadequateness of contents and activities for preschool education level in EBA” (f=14). In general terms, it is observed that EBA TV/education portal plays an important role in meeting the educational needs of students and ensuring the continuity of education during COVID-19 pandemic. In this process, as it was put into operation immediately, it is observed that there are problems in terms of access to the system, infrastructure and content. Examples of opinions under this theme are given below:

“Contents given on TV and EBA were explained very well. Especially for TV, I said, if I were in their shoes, I would also teach in this way. They listen and watch TV lessons eagerly, and even make comparisons, but they cannot benefit from EBA sufficiently via the internet. The biggest reason is technical problems just as I said (T26).

“I think EBA is a very good platform. Knowledge of the country’s competent teachers and the Ministry is reflected there. There are two prominent issues in EBA: a) Technical infrastructure which is sufficient for the whole country could not be created immediately. There were problems in access and live lessons. b) Applicability and sustainability are difficult when there is no follow-up and coordination in education. Monitoring is low when using EBA platform is only at the discretion of students. Schools and teachers should have the power of control, supervision, and monitoring.” (T4).

It is observed that EBA has problems in producing content and attracting students especially in preschool education level. Two teachers at preschool education level made the following statements:

“EBA started late for preschoolers. Preschool education institutions were ignored on EBA TV/portal in the first month. It was observed that parents had difficulties at logging into the system for preschool level. But I think it's more efficient now.” (T25, T15)

According to the findings, teachers stated that although EBA TV and education portal, which were put into practice by MEB due to COVID-19 pandemic, were positive and useful as an emergency measure, contents were not sufficient and there were technical problems in live broadcasts.

Opinions of teachers about the contents and presentations in EBA TV and education portal and students’ attendance and motivation for live lesson education are given in Table 4 as themes/categories.

Table 4. Opinions of teachers on students’ attendance and motivation in EBA TV and education portal

Interview Question	Themes/Categories	Frequency
3. What are the opinions of teachers regarding the contents and presentations on EBA TV and education portal and students’ attendance and motivation for live lesson education?	Motivation of students decreases (In the exams to be held, it is said that distance education subjects are not included, no exams, no attendance control, lack of monitoring and evaluation, no feedback for the students, internet is not limited, lack of attention, not being able to watch EBA TV and internet lessons because other members of the family do not give opportunity, and support of parents decreases)	62
	Suitable for individual differences and different learning styles of students (Conscious students are watching and solving their tests and their motivation levels are good (EBA, reading, doing activities), some students organize their own learning process)	22
	Statements made on social media and TVs, as well as the news that this period will be spent in this way, and the negative news about EBA also decreases the motivation of students (getting into the holiday mode)	7
	Live broadcasts from EBA by the teacher of the course at school increase the motivation of students.	11

Considering Table 4, opinions of teachers can be summarized as follows: “It is observed that motivation of students to continue the learning-teaching process from EBA TV and education portal has started to decrease” (f=62), “Level of motivation of students is high” (f=22), “Live broadcasts from EBA by the teacher of the course at school increase the motivation level of students” (f=11), “Social media and TV news decrease the motivation” (f=7). Below are examples of teacher opinions regarding the decrease of students’ motivation under this theme:

“One-week break in the period of transition to EBA caused students to perceive this situation as a holiday. Therefore, I do not think that children can get through this perception and follow the distance education program completely. At the same time, announcing that the topics explained in distance education will not be included in the exams may decrease the motivation of children. In this situation, it is normal that students have such a perception thinking what is the need of distance education then.” (T32)

Motivation of students is weak. It is difficult for children to watch television, especially in patriarchal families and when fathers are at home. As there is no monitoring mechanism, it is very difficult for children to follow and motivate. There are no alternatives for children who do not have internet at home.” (T29)

Examples of opinions regarding the high motivation of students during the process when EBA TV and education portal are watched by students and live lessons are carried out are given below:

“Students continuously and actively use EBA network. Some of them are calculating their scores. It is useful.” (T28)

“Participation and focus are more successful when students are taught from EBA education portal by their classroom and branch teachers through distance education programs.” (T20)

According to the findings, the majority of teachers think that there is a decrease in the time and motivation of students, watching EBA TV and education portal, for various reasons. However, it is seen that students who have the ability to manage their own learning process, are prone to distance education, and receive parent support are satisfied with this process.

Opinions of teachers on the problems they faced during the teaching process in the context of COVID-19 pandemic are given in Table 5 as themes/categories.

Table 5. Problems Faced by Teachers in the Education-Teaching Process Within the Scope of COVID-19 Pandemic

Interview Question	Themes/Categories	Frequency
4. What are the problems you have encountered during the teaching process in the context of COVID-19 pandemic?	Students having technical and connection problems in their live broadcasts from EBA TV/education portal (technical problems, limited internet quota, lack of computers etc.)	53
	Low communication and low learning motivation of students (Decrease in the attendance in EBA TV/Education portal, changing class hours and short lessons, exam anxiety regarding YKS/LGS, lack of monitoring and evaluation, lack of face-to-face education)	45
	No distance education support for inclusive and disabled students who need special education (return to old negative behaviors, neglecting preschool education for a while)	9
	Family concerns and inadequate parent support (lack of knowledge about distance education, parents' inability to create a home learning environment and to motivate their children)	23
	Inability of teachers to use distance education technologies (negative attitudes, lack of experience, unwillingness to live education)	18
	Students use too much technology (Computer, telephone and internet addiction, socialization decreases)	7

Teachers state that they mostly encounter problems in accessing EBA education portal and in internet infrastructure, and students who do not have computer and internet facilities are negatively affected from this process (f = 53). During COVID-19 pandemic, it was observed that some of the students did not have the computer and internet facilities that enable them to communicate synchronously/asynchronously from both EBA and other platforms. In this process, the fact that students' internet quota is limited, that they do not have a computer or that they have problems sharing the computer at home negatively affected teachers. In a sense, this brought digital inequality to the agenda. In terms of disadvantaged regions and families, this process does not proceed soundly. Some teachers who support this view expressed the following opinions;

“Since not every child has a tablet or a computer, we did not have access to all of them. However, studies were given from EBA but there were few students who achieved it. Internet quotas of students are limited or they do not have.” (T31)

“Equality of opportunity cannot be fully achieved. Most students do not have internet, computers, smart phones etc. Live lessons quickly finish internet quotas of students because those with internet have a quota limit.” (T4)

Another problem faced by teachers is that the communication, monitoring and evaluation processes with students are not healthy and the motivation of students decreases gradually (f=45). Some teachers supporting this view underlined the following statements;

“Students are reluctant to study because they consider the process at home as a holiday.” (T7)

“Students have difficulties in self-regulation. Participation is decreasing. Their motivations have decreased, and limited social life has caused many problems. I can't monitor the students in academic terms, I feel like I'm just saving the day.” (T65)

Teachers consider the fact that parents cannot provide adequate support to their children at home during COVID 19 pandemic, that they cannot create a home learning environment, and that they cannot motivate them (f =23) as a problematic issue. In an interesting finding, teachers criticized themselves and stated that they had a lack of knowledge and experience in using digital technologies, they were reluctant to live education for various reasons, and they experienced motivation problems in monitoring students (f=18). Some teachers who support this view expressed the following opinions;

“Some teachers’ ability to use technology is inadequate. Some teachers are reluctant to make live lessons due to the lack of sanctions that make live education mandatory. Some teacher friends did not make live lessons from EBA even after 1 and a half months. We hear that there are teachers who send the same tests and videos so that they will perform high in EBA, then they are under investigation, this process is not going well and sound.” (T19, T2, T48)

According to the findings, the most common problems faced by teachers during COVID-19 pandemic are respectively that students’ have technical and hardware problems related to the internet connection, that students are not able to keep their motivation to learn, and that parents are not able to create a learning environment at home and do not support their children. In addition, the low ability of teachers to use distance education technologies and their lack of motivation, in this regard, are considered a problem area.

Opinions of teachers on students’ psychology during COVID-19 pandemic process are given in Table 6 as themes/categories.

Table 6. Opinions of Teachers on Students’ Psychology During COVID-19 Pandemic

Interview Question	Themes/Categories	Frequency
5. How do you evaluate the psychology of students during COVID-19 pandemic? Has any research been carried out by your school, MEB or other institutions regarding this issue?	Their psychology is negatively affected (confusion, displeasure and unwillingness, the desire to go out with the arrival of the summer season, the desire to play with friends, the disturbed sleep order, they want and miss the school)	36
	No research or study on the psycho-social status of students in public schools	28
	No difference, getting used to the situation (Under-age students are not aware, there is guidance and teacher support)	19
	We carried out a study	3

Teachers state that the psychology of students was negatively affected during COVID-19 pandemic (f =36). Some teachers who support this view expressed the following opinions;

“Students have missed their friends and teachers. They are tired of getting education through computers” (T29).

1/3 of the teachers stated that there is not any change in the psychology of students or that they adapt. It is observed that a study/research has not been conducted to determine the psycho-social status of students (f =28).

“Of course, students get bored because they stay at home, classroom teachers and school counselors contact with the students who have problems. We made a scan through Ankara MEB’s project, ‘stay at home, your teacher is with you’ (T13).

According to the findings, it is observed that the psychology of students was negatively affected during COVID-19 pandemic but there are also students who adapted to this process.

Opinions of teachers on their changing educational perspectives during COVID-19 pandemic are given in Table 7 as themes/categories.

Table 7. Opinions of teachers on their changing educational perspectives during COVID-19 pandemic

Interview Question	Themes/Categories	Frequency
6. As a teacher, has your perspective on the educational process changed during COVID-19 pandemic? Can you explain if it has changed?	Realizing the importance of school, teacher and face to face education	30
	Using digital and alternative learning-teaching methods at schools	14
	Understanding the value of life and health, experiencing the moment, the importance of hygiene and cleanliness, students should be taught life skills (learning to learn, adaptation to change, crisis management, etc.).	14
	The importance of equal opportunities and facilities in education and prevention of digital inequality	5

Teachers state that there is a change in their perspective on education in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers state that the importance of school, teacher and face-to-face education is realized once again (f = 30). Some teachers who support this view expressed the following opinions;

“I think the statement that ‘education is given at schools’ is understood well by students.” (T60)

“We have seen that being a teacher will not be among the jobs which will be taken over by robots in future. It is not appropriate without face-to-face education. Yet, this process has also given us many new experiences. Students consider lessons that they are not interested in as drudgery and do not participate” (T73).

Teachers think that digital and alternative learning-teaching methods should be used at schools and teachers should improve themselves on these issues (f=28).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the research, it was observed that the majority of teachers started distance education process by using EBA infrastructure in public schools and their own education portals in private schools after schools were interrupted by MEB due to COVID-19 pandemic. In this process, teachers implemented distance education programs through live lessons via EBA TV/education portal or other programs (Zoom, Skype, Whatsapp, Hangout etc.). It is also observed that teachers have gained new knowledge and skills towards distance education methods and programs in this process.

Many teachers in public and private schools, who did not receive sufficient training on how to deal with such a crisis in the pre-service and in-service training processes prior to COVID-19 pandemic, were caught unprepared for this process. During the pandemic, education systems and schools had to give priority to preparing necessary infrastructure, programs, and contents for providing distance education to students (TEDMEM, 2020a). Covid-19 pandemic in the world has shown that distance education should be taken to the Emergency Action Plan after the infectious disease outbreaks (Yamamoto and Altun, 2020: 29-32). MEB launched EBA TV/education portal during COVID-19 outbreak. In Turkey, teachers were deprived of adequate information and technical

support, especially in public schools during this process. Teachers working in disadvantaged areas and schools have faced more difficulties during this process and have difficulties in reaching their students (TEDMEM, 2020a). When significant differences between teachers in terms of having digital tools, access, and skills are also added to this situation, important problems are experienced in reaching students.

EBA TV and education portal applications, which were implemented by MEB due to COVID-19 pandemic, were evaluated positively by teachers; however, it was also observed that the contents were not rich and that there were technical problems during the internet connection process. The majority of teachers have observed that there is a gradual decrease in the time and motivation of students watching EBA TV and education portal for various reasons. The failure of EBA TV/education portal to meet all the learning needs of the students can also be effective in this. However, it is seen that students who are prone to distance education and receive parent support are not affected from this process.

It is observed that the psychology of the majority of students has been negatively affected during COVID-19 pandemic but there are also students who are able to adapt or not affected by the process. In this process, it is observed that there is no planned and effective psycho-social support for students, especially parents do not have sufficient cognitive infrastructure to support their children in this regard. In the study carried out by Cao et al. (2020), it was seen that anxiety level of $\frac{1}{4}$ of university students has increased during COVID-19 pandemic; and the delays in academic activities are positively associated with anxiety symptoms. Physical, mental and psycho-social health of children who have to stay at home with long-term closure of schools during COVID-19 pandemic may be adversely affected. Stress factors such as children's obligation to stay at home for a long time, fear of infection, uncertainty, disappointment, insufficient information, lack of face-to-face communication with their classmates and teachers, lack of personal space at home, and financial loss of the family can have permanent effects on their psychology. Researches (Brazendale, Beets, Weaver et al., 2017; Brooks, Webster, Smith, et al., 2020; Leung, Lam and Cheng, 2020) show that children are less physically active when they do not go to school (for example, weekends and summer holidays); they watch the screen for a longer period of time, sleep irregularly, and do not have a balanced diet which causes weight gain. In a study carried out by Sprang and Silman (2013), it was found out that children quarantined had an average of four times higher stress scores than children who were not quarantined. In addition, psycho-social stress and anxiety caused by sudden lifestyle changes and lockdown of children can worsen the harmful effects on their physical and mental health. In the study carried out by Brazendale, Beets, Weaver et al. (2017), schools have been found to play a crucial role not only in providing educational materials and conducting distance learning to children, but also in providing opportunities to interact with students and teachers and to provide psychological counseling.

In this study, teachers stated that the most important problems faced during COVID-19 pandemic were the lack of distance education due to students' internet connection problems, the inability of students to maintain their learning motivation, the inability of parents to create a learning environment at home, and their inadequate support for their children. Teachers state that students' participation in synchronous education on both EBA and other learning platforms is low due to various reasons. It shows that there is digital inequality between some houses and students. In Beijing and Wuhan, during and after the epidemic, parents were given the role of being their child's home teacher and they are supported. Parents were asked to find the contents which are appropriate for their children from the educational content on the learning platform and to follow the process (UNESCO, 2020a). In Turkey, during COVID-19 pandemic, students who need special education and those who take part in inclusive classes have suffered a significant loss in the learning process. Customized education programs could not be realized for these students, and communication could not be established even through EBATV/education portal.

An important finding in this study is that teachers stated that their colleagues were low in skills to use distance education technologies and motivation to use these technologies. Teachers think that nothing shall be the same after COVID-19 pandemic, that the importance of teachers and face-to-face education is realized again as a part of new normal, and that the excessive use of technology negatively affects the learning-teaching process. According to the findings, the importance of the role of teachers and face-to-face interaction, as well as the socialization function of the school, once again emerges in the context of the deterioration of learning comfort during COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, it is important for teachers to focus on alternative learning-teaching methods and to improve themselves on these issues.

In the near future, it is predicted that distance education and even with its new name, digital learning, shall become the fundamental ground of education instead of being the secondary (passive) alternative or support for the face-to-face education. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, digital learning shall increase and become the main learning structure all over the world in the near future with rapid adaptation (Yamamoto and Altun, 2020: 33). Especially in this process, it can be predicted that blended learning methods shall be brought to the agenda and used more in the new normal education system. Reverse learning approaches, in which the transfer of knowledge mostly happens in e-learning environments and the focus is on practice and discussion in the classroom, shall be used. After COVID-19 pandemic, although the importance of teachers has been understood again after a bad experience, it can be predicted that blended learning methods shall be used more in the new normal education system as a consequence of experiencing e-learning environments in this process. Teachers' e-learning skills and competences shall need to be further developed. Unfamiliarity to distance education practices that were suddenly implemented during COVID-19 pandemic, concerns about the pandemic and anxiety to support students, and possibility of unemployment and financial concerns for teachers working in private educational institutions made this process highly stressful for them (TEDMEM, 2020a).

World Economic Forum, with the emphasis on "*COVID-19 Pandemic is the Litmus Test of Stakeholder Capitalism*" (Schwab, 2020), stated that it is necessary to secure the job and personal rights of teachers working in public or private educational institutions and to provide psycho-social support in this process. Within this scope, in order to protect the employment and wages of teachers working in private educational institutions in Turkey, the legal regulation preventing layoffs for three months is a positive practice. In the context of the results of this study, following suggestions can be presented:

1. Digital infrastructure and contents of EBA TV/education portal that can support the access of millions of students should be enriched. The infrastructure created in the context of FATİH project should be improved and strengthened. The infrastructure should support both simultaneous education through video conferencing and the use (monitoring, downloading and uploading) of digital learning resources (video, e-material, game etc.). Monitoring and evaluation studies can be conducted on how much of the students have received education through EBA TV/education portal and on the duration they have received this education. Deficiencies of EBA system should be identified and developed by considering COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity and test.

2. With an interdisciplinary approach, it can be suggested to the Ministry of Education to establish a COVID-19 Pandemic Education Scientific Board consisting of academicians, especially from universities and the Ministry of Health, with knowledge and experience in this process. The pandemic should be evaluated from a holistic perspective, not only in terms of health but also in education, students, teachers, administrators and parents. In the OECD (2020) report, it is suggested that the ministries of education of countries form a steering committee or scientific board for COVID-19 pandemic. In Turkey, the fact that people and experts from different fields give different news about education on social media and television and the concerns of education stakeholders show that such a structure is needed.

3. After COVID-19 pandemic, teachers shall have important duties during the process of adapting students to school and of normalization. Teachers need to be supported on how to support students when they return to school during and after COVID-19 pandemic, and to identify learning gaps in the context of missing achievements and topics. Otherwise, this process shall be referred as a significant period of loss.

4. Students and teachers should come together at least once a week and communication should continue through various programs. Online platforms should be used by giving group assignments and studies.

5. A communication platform can be created to enable teachers to share knowledge and experience with their colleagues.

6. During COVID-19 pandemic, parents should be informed about monitoring and supporting their children's learning process at home. Parents should be informed about how they are a part of learning process and supported on how to create and manage a learning-teaching environment at home.

7. Internet quotas of students should be increased during this process by making agreements with mobile network operators and telecommunication service providers.

REFERENCES

- Aktaş, M. C. (2014). Nitel veri toplama araçları. *Kuramdan Uygulamaya Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri*. Ed. M. Metin, Ankara: Pegem Akademi Yayıncılık.
- Bilgin, N. (2006). *Sosyal Bilimlerde İçerik Analizi: Teknikler ve Örnek Çalışmalar*. 2. Baskı, Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi.
- Castellano, W. G. (2016). *21. yy İşgücü Adanmışlığı için Uygulamalar*. Çev. Editörü: Doç.Dr. Özlem Kunday, Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık.
- Brazendale, K., Beets, M.W., Weaver, R.G. *et al.* (2017). Understanding differences between summer vs. school obesogenic behaviors of children: the structured days hypothesis. *International Journal of Behaviour Nutrition Physical Activity*, vol. 14: p. 100. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-017-0555-2>
- Brooks, S.K., Webster, R.K., Smith, L.E., et al. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence. *Lancet 2020*, Vol. 4., No. 5, p. 397-404. [https://doi:10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30460-8](https://doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30460-8)
- Cao, W., Fanga, Z., Houc, G., Hana, M., Xua, X., Donga, J., Zhenga, J. (2020). The psychological impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on college students in China. *Psychiatry Research*, Vol. 287, 112934. <https://doi: 10.1016/j.psychres.2020.112934>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. New York: Sage.
- _____. (2017). *Nitel Araştırmacılar için 30 Temel Beceri*. Çev: Hasan Özcan. Anı Yayıncılık. Ankara.
- Çepni, S. (2010). *Araştırma ve proje çalışmalarına giriş*. Trabzon: Akademi Kitabevi.

- Duran., M. and Aytaç, T. (2016). Students' Opinions on the Use of Tablet Computers in Education. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, Vol.(15), Is. 1, pp.65-75. [https://doi:10.13187/ejced.2016.15.65](https://doi.org/10.13187/ejced.2016.15.65).
- ETF (2020). *Coping with COVID-19: Mapping education and training responses to the health crisis in ETF partner countries*. Torino, Italy: ETF Publishing.
- Huang, R.H., Liu, D.J., Tlili, A., Yang, J.F., Wang, H.H., vd. (2020). Handbook on facilitating flexible learning during educational disruption: The Chinese experience in maintaining undisrupted learning in COVID-19 outbreak. Beijing: Smart Learning Institute of Beijing Normal University. <https://iite.unesco.org/news/handbook-on-facilitating-flexible-learning-during-educational-disruption/> adresinden erişildi.
- Kırık, A. M. ve Özkoçak, V. (2020). Yeni dünya düzeni bağlamında sosyal medya ve yeni koronavirüs (covid-19) pandemisi. *Akademik Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Yıl: 7, Sayı: 45, Nisan 2020, s. 133-154. <http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/SOBIDER.43146>.
- Leung, C. C., Lam, T. H. and Cheng, K. K. (2020). Mass masking in the COVID-19 epidemic: people need guidance. *The Lancet*. Vol.395, No. 10228, p.945. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30520-1.
- Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. B. (2014). *Designing Qualitative Research*. New York: Sage.
- Miles, M. B. ve Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. 2nd Edition, CA: Sage Publication.
- OECD (2020). *A framework to guide an education response to the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Özer, M. (2020). Vocational education and training as “a friend in need” during coronavirus pandemic in Turkey. *Bartın University Journal of Faculty of Education*, 9(2), 1-7
- Schwab, K. (2020, 25 Mart). COVID-19 is a litmus test for stakeholder capitalism. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/covid-19-is-a-litmus-test-for-stakeholder-capitalism/> adresinden erişildi.
- Sprang G. and Silman, M. (2013). Posttraumatic stress disorder in parents and youth after healthrelated disasters. *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*, Vol.7: p.105-10. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2013.22>
- Tashakkori, A. ve Teddlie, C. (2010). *Sage Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*. 2nd Ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- TEDMEM. (2020). COVID-19 Salgınında Öğrenmenin Sürdürülmesi. <https://tedmem.org/covid-19/covid-19-salginiinda-ogrenmenin-surdurulmesi#return-note-3280-1> adresinden 25 Nisan 2020 tarihinde erişildi.
- TEDMEM. (2020a). COVID-19 Salgını Sürecinde Öğretmenler. <https://tedmem.org/covid-19/covid-19-salgini-surecinde-ogretmenler> adresinden 25 Nisan 2020 tarihinde erişildi.
- UNESCO. (2020). COVID-19 educational disruption and response. <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse> adresinden 25 Nisan 2020 tarihinde erişildi.
- UNESCO. (2020a). Webinar: UNESCO learning cities respond to COVID-19. What happened and What we done in Beijing and Wuhan?

https://uil.unesco.org/system/files/gnlc_webinar_beijing_wuhan.pdf adresinden 25 Nisan 2020 tarihinde erişildi.

- Üstün, Ç. ve Özçiftçi, S. (2020) COVID-19 Pandemisinin Sosyal Yaşam ve Etik Düzlem Üzerine Etkileri: Bir Değerlendirme Çalışması. *Anadolu Kliniği Tıp Bilimleri Dergisi*, Ocak 2020; Cilt 25, Ek Sayı 1, s.142-153.
- Viner, R. M., Russell, S. J., Croker, H., et. al. (2020). School closure and management practices during coronavirus outbreaks including COVID-19: a rapid systematic review. *Lancet 2020*, Vol. 4., No. 4, p. 397-404.[https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(20\)30095-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30095-X)
- WHO. (2020). World Health Organization. Director-General's remarks at the media briefing on 2019-nCoV on 11 February 2020. <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-remarks-at-themedia-briefing-on-2019-ncov-on-11-february-2020> (Son Erişim: 5 Mayıs 2020).
- Yamamoto, G. T. ve Altun, D. (2020). Coronavirüs ve Çevrimiçi (Online) Eğitimin Önlenemeyen Yükselişi. *Üniversite Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Cilt 3, Sayı 1, s.25-34.
- Yıldırım, A. ve Şimşek, H. (2018). *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*. 11. Baskı., Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık.