



PRESCHOOL TEACHER OPINIONS ON ADAPTATION TO SCHOOL DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the opinions of preschool teachers on preschool adaptation during the Covid-19 pandemic process and to determine what can be done to facilitate the adaptation of children to school in such negative situations. The research was carried out as a multiple case study with 22 preschool teachers working at private and governmental institutions in seven different regions of Turkey. The data were collected by means of phone conversations using an interview form prepared by the researchers. The results of the research determined that children's adaptation was affected by masks and social distance requirements, necessitating teachers to prepare their activities accordingly. Teachers' opinions about the effect of gradual transition on the adaptation process to the school were found to differ. The findings and results of the research are detailed in the study.

Keywords: Pandemic, Covid-19, preschool education, adaptation to school, gradual transition.

INTRODUCTION

School is often the first place children spend long hours away from their families and where they may encounter novel difficulties. It is also where they encounter teachers and peers for the first time. An important factor in the positiveness of subsequent adaptation processes is a problem-free adaptation when initially starting school. Likewise, any difficulties encountered during this same period are important factors in the persistence of issues to adaptation in future situations. Therefore, adaptation to school can also affect children's development (Docket & Perry, 2016; Margetts 2009; Saribaş & Akduman, 2020).

Borbélyová (2017) stated that adaptation to school should be addressed from three perspectives: socially, psychologically, and biologically. Ladd and Burgess (2001), on the other hand, asserted that school adaptation is a concept covering school success and social behaviour towards school. Gennadevna (2012) also defines school adaptation as children's adaptation to new social institutions, where they develop new social relationships and accept new social roles (as cited in Borbélyová, 2017). Therefore, adaptation to school can be expressed as a broad concept that includes the academic, social, and psychological adaptation of children. Children with easy and early adaptation to school are considered to have a high level of readiness, positive social and emotional skills, the ability to establish healthy peer relationships, and high academic success (Betts & Rotenberg 2007; Bono, Sy, & Kopp, 2016; Estell, Jones, Pearl, Van Acker, Farmer, & Rodkin, 2008; Onder & Gülay, 2010). Children who have problems adapting to school may experience low academic success, psychological



problems, and negative peer relationships, with the possibility of these difficulties continuing in following years (Brown & Lan, 2015; Flouri & Sarmadi, 2016).

Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecological Systems is an approach that deals with the transition process between home and school. The ecological model states that children shape their own experiences of transition to school and that these experiences in turn shape them (Docket & Perry, 2016). Bronfenbrenner's theory also holds that the development of a child is best explained in the context of family, education, and society, and that this development process consists of intertwined circles. Within this context, the child is at the centre and the innermost circle is that child's experience. The microsystem, which is the innermost level of the environment, includes the personal development of the child and the closest environment the child is in, such as home, parents, school, teacher, and peers (McBlain, 2018). The mesosystem forming the outer circle emphasises communication between these microsystems. As the child starts school, the interaction between home and preschool education forms the mesosystem. The mesosystem includes every situation that does not directly involve the child but affects his or her experiences. The outermost level of Bronfenbrenner's model is called the macrosystem. It includes cultural values, laws, customs, and traditions. According to Bronfenbrenner, the environment has a variable power that affects the child and is known as the chronosystem. Situations such as starting school affect the development of the child and these effects vary depending on environmental opportunities, personal, physical, and mental characteristics. Situations such as conflict, tension, and indecision can turn school adaptation into a negative experience (Docket & Perry, 2016; Hertler, Figueredo, Peñaherrera-Aguirre, & Fernandes, 2018). Ratelle, Duchesne, Litalien, and Plamondon (2021) state that family has a significant effect on a child's adaptation to school. Other research also emphasises the child-teacher relationship (Lan & Moscardino, 2019) and teacher-child dependency (Lifshin, Kleinerman, Shaver, & Mikulincer, 2019). Teachers and families are the child's microsystem and thus have an important effect on the child's adaptation to school. Bronfenbrenner also emphasised the importance of the microsystem in which the child is located.

In Turkey, preschool education is optional and covers children who are 36 months to 5 years of age. The net rate of 3- to 5-year-olds in preschool education in this country is 39.11%, with participation rates of 50.79% and 68.30% for 4- to 5-year-olds and 5-year-olds, respectively (National Education Statistics, 2019). In this case, there are children starting preschool at the age of 3 and others at the age of 5. Studies have shown that children who have received preschool education for a few years have an easier adaptation process to school, while those who start school for the first time and receive preschool education for the first time at the age of 5 experience more adaptation problems (Başaran, Gökmen, & Akdağ, 2014; Datar, 2006; Kahraman, 2018). The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) developed a five-day programme covering the week before schools open in order to facilitate the adaptation process of preschool children to school (MoNE, 2013). This programme was implemented for two days (September 5-6th School Adaptation Programme-Preschool) in the 2019 academic year: however, the school adaptation process changed in the 2020 academic year due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

The Covid 19 pandemic, which emerged in China in December 2019, was detected for the first time in Turkey on March 11th, 2020 (Ministry of Health, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020). Alongside this global pandemic and health crisis (United Nations Development Programme, 2020), a challenging era of quarantine processes in which many places with close human contact like schools have been shut down, affecting the whole world in terms of health, policies, economics, and education. This pandemic has also created a new culture of remote work and education, which many countries around the world have turned to (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Gupta & Goplani, 2020; Reimers, 2020).

With the start of 2020 academic year on September 21st, children were provided a one-day integration programme before the first week of school, with parental consent. In the following weeks, children were permitted to attend in-person classes for two days per week with parental consent. It was then decided to allow preschool institutions to allow students to attend five days per week effective October 12th. This differed in private preschool institutions as they allowed their students to attend classes five



days per week effective July 1st, 2020. This process ended after public schools re-opened and continued for a week as of November 16th, and then closed completely. When schools finally reopen, the adaptation process of children will need to be restored. Understanding what happened as of September is important in terms of determining what can be done during the new period. It is also important to understand the adaptation process of children who start school for the first time or who get education in different regions and institutions and whose education has been interrupted by the Covid 19 pandemic in order to help reduce future risks for school children. Can (2020) believes that implementations for preschool children should be prepared. However, little research has been conducted to examine how teachers generally view children's school adaptation in preschool education in Turkey (Bağçeli Kahraman, 2018; Bağçeli Kahraman, Şen, Alataş, & Tütüncü, 2018; Başaran, Gökmen, & Akdağ, 2014). In addition, only one study was found examining the school adaptation process after Covid 19. Ogelman, Güngör, and Göktaş (2021) conducted research to determine teachers' views on the school adaptation process after the initiation of measures designed to prevent the spread of Covid 19. This research is different in terms of evaluating how teachers in both public and private schools view preschool adaptation during the opening and closing processes of schools in seven different regions of Turkey. Understanding the school adaptation processes of children who started preschool with the opening of schools during Covid 19 is important in determining what methods should be used in preschool education for any subsequent difficult situations such as pandemics. Therefore, using preschool teacher evaluations about the school adaptation process during an extraordinary situation that they themselves have likely experienced for the first time as well can be helpful in preparing for such incidents in the future. For this purpose, the present study aims to determine the opinions of preschool teachers on preschool adaptation during the implementation of Covid 19 measures and aims to determine what can be done in order to facilitate adaptation of children to school in case of such pandemics or diseases or in negative environments, considering the experience of teachers. In line with this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. How do teachers view the school adaptation process?
2. According to teachers, how has the pandemic process affected children's adaptation to school?
3. How has the pandemic process been managed in schools?

METHOD

The research was carried out using the qualitative research method of the multiple case study, which aims to examine an event or phenomenon deeply in a limited system that cannot be controlled by the researcher (Akar, 2017; Merriam, 2018). Through this method, the researcher reveals experiences and processes in their natural environment (Yin, 2014). Individual interviews were conducted in this study to determine the opinions of teachers based on their experiences during the school adaptation process over the course of measures implemented to slow the spread of Covid 19. Since the research included teachers working in schools from different regions and from different socio-economic levels, it was planned as a multi-case design. There are sub-units or sub-cases in the multi-case design from which data are collected and analyses are carried out (Merriam, 2018).

The Study Group

Maximum diversity sampling was used to examine the differences or similarities between private and public schools from seven different regions in Turkey. This sampling method allows researchers to use a small sample size which reflects the diversity of a particular situation to the greatest extent (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2012). This study sampled public and private schools based on region and teachers employed in these schools were determined through the use of the snowball sampling method. In this sampling method, volunteer participants are asked to identify one or two others who would be willing to participate, thus growing the sample size (Christensen, 2014). Being employed at a preschool education institution, having at least an undergraduate degree in preschool education, as well as having a minimum of two years teaching experience were determined



as criteria. An attempt was made to ensure maximum diversity during participant selection by snowball sampling. Phone interviews were carried out with the participants and the interviews were recorded as digital audio files upon their consent. The records were later transcribed. Demographic information of the teachers participating in the study is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of participants

Teacher	Age	Years of Service	Type of Institution	Region	Province	Time spent with the current class	Class Size	Age Group (in months)
ID1	37	15	Public	CA	Nevşehir	0-4 months	14	61-72
ID2	34	11	Public	CA	Nevşehir	0-4 months	16	36 - 48
IID3	48	26	Public	CA	Eskişehir	0-4 months	10	49-60
IID4	30	3	Public	CA	Sivas	2 years and above	8	49-60
II01	25	3	Private	CA	Eskişehir	2 years and above	13	49-60
ED1	37	14	Public	A	Muğla	0-4 months	15	61-72
ED2	37	15	Public	A	Muğla	0-4 months	11	61-72
EO1	29	8	Private	A	Izmir	4 months and above	8	54-78
MD1	25	4	Public	M	Istanbul	0-4 months	14	49-68
MO1	27	4	Private	M	Bursa	2 years and above	6	49-60
MO2	29	5	Private	M	Yalova	2 years and above	11	61-72
KD1	28	4	Public	BS	Amasya	0-4 months	13	61-72
KD2	39	16	Public	BS	Giresun	2 years and above	18	61-72
KO1	28	5	Private	BS	Samsun	4 months and above	8	61-72
DD1	27	4	Public	EA	Ağrı	0-4 months	8	49-60
DO1	25	3	Private	EA	Malatya	0-4 months	11	49-60
DO2	37	17	Private	EA	Erzurum	0-4 months	16	61-72
AO1	24	3	Private	Med	Mersin	0-4 months	11	36 - 48
AO2	23	2	Private	Med	Mersin	2 years and above	14	49-60
AD1	28	6	Public	Med	Antalya	0-4 months	8	61-72
GDO1	24	2	Private	SEA	Gaziantep	2 years and above	11	61-72
GDD1	27	5	Public	SEA	Kilis	0-4 months	22	49-60

CA: Central Anatolia, A: Aegean, M: Marmara, BS: Black Sea, EA: Eastern Anatolia, Med.: Mediterranean, SEA: South-Eastern Anatolia

Of the sample of 22 volunteers, 10 work in private preschool institutions and 12 in public. Five of the teachers included in the study are from Central Anatolia, three each from the Aegean, Marmara, Eastern Anatolia, and the Mediterranean, while two are from South Eastern Anatolia.

Data Collection Tool

An interview questionnaire consisting of semi-structured questions was prepared in order to determine opinions of teachers on school adaptation processes of children during Covid-19. After an extensive literature review, the form was designed and semi-structured interview questions were created in accordance with the scope of this research. In order to ensure validity, two teachers experienced in the school adaptation process were consulted, and the questions were put into final form after revisions were made regarding questions to be added, eliminated, or changed. Eight open-ended semi-structured questions were thus prepared for teachers. The questionnaire was tested on two other teachers who were not part of the study in any way and it was determined at the end of the analysis that the questions were understood. Finally, the opinions of two further experts were taken and the questionnaire was put into its final form. The final version of the questionnaire has two sections. The first deals with questions about experience, demographic information, class sizes, and age groups among other information. The second part contains eight semi-structured interview questions to determine opinions on the school adaptation process. The following questions were asked regarding school adaptation: “In your opinion, what makes a child adapt to school?”, “Are there differences in the traits of children who had difficulty compared to before the pandemic?”, and “As you know, it is



said that there are differences in the attitudes and behaviours of families with the pandemic process. What do you think about it?" In order to determine how the pandemic process affected children's adaptation to school, the following questions were asked: "Do you think there is a difference between a child who received online education last year and one who did not? Could you compare?", "What do you think about the adaptation process of children to school after the pandemic process?", "Some children may have been affected more by the pandemic process compared to other children. Are there children in your class that you think are affected much? Why do you think these children are affected more?" and "What kind of studies have you carried out with children this year during the adaptation process? Has the pandemic affected your activities? Can you explain?" Finally, to determine how the pandemic process was managed in schools, the following questions were asked: "Last year, schools were closed due to the pandemic process. What did you do during this process?", "As you know, the Ministry of National Education implemented a gradual transition during the pandemic process by ensuring that children come to school first one day per week, then two days in the following weeks, until finally they were attending five days per week again. What do you think about this process? How did it affect their adaptation to school?"

Validity and Reliability

Lincoln and Guba (1986) stated that the concepts of credibility, transferability, reliability, and verifiability are used in qualitative research to ensure validity and reliability. However, reliability is not necessary per se in qualitative research. In order to ensure credibility in this study, it was carried out using known participants and the group was expanded with the suggestions of these participants, thus establishing a friendly atmosphere. The use of a semi-structured interview questionnaire allowed for a more genuine collection of data. Participant interviews were all recorded and opinions were confirmed at the end of each question, and participants were asked if they wanted to add anything further.. Diversity was ensured by conducting research in different schools and using participants having a variety of demographic differences. Creating questionnaires utilizing expert and teacher opinions also supports credibility.

Recording the research data and revealing the data without comment support the transferability. The storage and coding methods for the data show the verifiability of the research. Data were encoded separately to ensure the verification of the study, and the coefficient of concordance between encoders was determined to be .73. A coefficient of concordance over .70 between encoders indicates consistency (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Finally, during the creation of themes, two researchers discussed and reviewed the codes together and finalised the themes.

Data Collection Process

Before starting the research process, ethical permission was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Bursa Uludag University (dated 02/10/2020 and numbered 2020/07). After obtaining permission, the first volunteer teachers were determined, and then the teachers recommended by these volunteers were determined considering maximum diversity. Telephone interviews were held between November 1 and December 1, 2020, with teachers who consented to be interviewed. Participants were first informed about the scope and purpose of the research and the content of the interview and advised that they could terminate the interview at any time if they so choose. They were informed that the interviews would be recorded and that these records would be kept confidential. Each interview started with informal small talk to ensure a friendly environment so that participants would feel comfortable answering the questionnaire items. At the conclusion of the questionnaire, the opinions obtained were read back to the participant and confirmation of the opinion was requested. Participants were then asked if there was anything further they wished to add or remove from the record. Throughout this process, no guidance was given to the participants. The interviews lasted for about 20 minutes, excluding conversations and confirmations.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used in the study as the stages of data preparation, encoding, theming, organisation of codes and themes, identification, and interpretation of the findings were followed



(Creswell, 2013). During the preparation of the data obtained from the interviews with the participants, the audio recordings were transcribed to paper. Two researchers collaborated to determine codes for each individual question y and then the questions were grouped into themes. During the process of interpreting the data, codes were given to the teachers and direct quotations were included. Institutions were classified as “O” for private and “D” for public school. Regions were coded similarly with Marmara as by “M”, Black Sea as “K”, Aegean as “E”, Mediterranean as “A”, Eastern Anatolia as “D”, Central Anatolia as “II”, and South-eastern Anatolia by “G”. Thus, for example, a preschool teacher working in a private school in Eastern Anatolia would be encoded with the number 1 and would be indicated as “DO1”, while another teacher working in a state-affiliated public school would be encoded as “DD1”.

RESULTS

The Opinions of Teachers on the School Adaptation Process

In this section, teacher’s opinions on the first sub-problem of the study, the process of adaptation to school, were examined. Table 2 provides the opinions of teachers on the factors affecting a child's adaptation arranged in themes and codes.

Table 2. The factors affecting a child's school adaptation according to teachers

Theme	Code	Participants
Family	Parental Attitudes	ID3, DD1, MD1, DO1, IO1
	Communication of Family with Child	ID1, MO2, AD1, DO2
School	School Environment	ID3, KD2, DO1, ED2, AO1, ID2
	Stimuli in the Classroom Environment	ID3, DD1, EO1, DO1
	Trust in the School	MO2, ID2, ID1
Teacher	Trust in the Teacher	ED1, MO2, ID4
	Teacher's Support	ID1, GDO1, ID4, MO1
	To Endear themselves	ID4, IO1, MO1, KD1
	Teacher's Attitude	AO2, KD2, DO1, GDD1
	Communication of teacher	KD1, ID3, ID4, AD1, DD1, MD1, MO2
Child's Personal Traits	Readiness Level	ID4, DO1, GDD1
	Communication with Friends	ED1, MO1, AO2, KO1
	Child's Character, Temperament	IO1

As seen in Table 2, teachers’ opinions regarding the factors affecting adaptation to school are classified under four main headings. Under the theme of “Family”, teachers emphasised the attitudes of parents and the communication of family with child. It was determined that among the responses of the teachers towards the family theme, they mostly emphasised the parental attitude code (n=5). Opinions about parental attitudes are as follows:

The family pressure on the child. Let me give an example, I personally witnessed it. In the hallway, the parents were telling the child to go into the class immediately or else they would beat him and that they wanted the child to get used to the school, but when you approach children with such an attitude, the child will inevitably dislike school (DD1).

MD1, on the other hand, stated their opinion emphasising the communication of the teacher under the teacher theme together with the parent attitude, saying *“the attitude of the family, and then communication with the teacher when the child enters the social environment... Before starting school, for example, some promises are made to children, but they are not kept. Children lose their trust in their parents and likewise when they start school... it is difficult due to parents' attitudes. Then, the teacher's approach is also important. When teachers are involved for the first time, they should ensure that the child is in contact with other friends as much as possible, and the rules should be softened a little, not strictly. They should make the school loved”*.



DO2, emphasising the communication of family with child, said, *“Because parents share their concerns in the first place while they are preparing their child for school. If they do not share these, the child sees the environment s/he is in as insecure and it would be difficult to adapt that child to school, but if parents make the child understand that they trust the teacher... that child would be advantaged. S/he would listen to everything that teacher says and trust him/her”*.

The second theme was determined as “School” in which teachers emphasised the school environment, stimuli in the classroom, and trust in school. It is seen that the most emphasised code within this theme was the school environment (n = 6). Participant DO1 expressed the school environment and stimuli in classroom as follows: *“Children having attention catching toys such as pictures that draw their attention visually or other materials, whether inside or outside the classroom”*. ED2 discussed environment by saying: *“Child believing in the environment because it is often the first time that children are separated from parents. Feeling safe when they are in the environment. When a child feels safe, s/he gets used to the process”*. ID2, emphasising trust in school, said, *“It is the feeling of trust. It is the trust of the child in school, and the fact that there is nothing that might cause phobia”*.

Participants emphasised the concepts of trust in the teacher, teacher support, endearing themselves, teacher’s attitude, and teacher’s communication within the third main theme of “Teacher”. Most participants focused on the idea of communication within this theme (n = 7). MO2 discussed trust in teacher and teacher's communication by saying, *“For example, let us assume that a child came to class and I said that when the lesson finished, I would call the mother of that child. So, if I do not call, that child will lose trust in me. The next day that child will not want to come to school because s/he will know that I lied to him/her”*. Another participant, GDO, believes that *“If the communication between teacher and child is good, you will have difficulty for maximum 2 weeks”*.

The final theme was that of “Personal Traits” where the concepts of basic sense of trust, readiness level, communication with friends, and temperament were determined. Communication with friends was seen as the most significant within this theme (n=4). In this scope, AO2 said, *“... when the child sees a friend, s/he adapts by seeing what they do. At least this is how the process in our school starts. It progresses with gaining social skills”*. MO1 said, *“When child starts to get along with his/her friends, a healthier process continued to progress.”*

In terms of readiness level, DO1 said *“I could not make some children adapt to school psychologically, even though I exerted effort for some children for 2 to 3 weeks, the age of the child is the age of separation from the mother. For example, there was a child who could not adapt and then had to disenroll”*. Regarding temperament, IO1 said, *“If expectations from the school match the child's character, this also is very effective”*.

The Opinion of Teachers on the Effect of the Pandemic Process on Children’s School Adaptation

According to the second sub-problem of the study, teachers were asked what they thought about the ability of children to adapt to school after the implementation of pandemic measures in schools. Their opinions are collated in Table 3.

As seen in Table 3, two main themes emerged from teacher responses on school adaptation after the pandemic process: factors that facilitate adaptation and factors that make it difficult to adapt. Longing for school, classification, not letting parents into school, and family sensitivity to pandemic rules were stated as factors that facilitate adaptation after the pandemic, with longing for school seen as the most significant (n = 9). ID2 exemplified longing by saying, *“I think they adapt more quickly because they miss their friends, playing, and being part of society”*. Similarly, MO2 said, *“Children did not have difficulty when they first came to school because children miss school, their friends and me so much... They were so happy”*.

ED1 referred to classification and not letting parents into school codes by saying, *“I did not have problems with masks, face shields, or sitting separately but classification was good. It was good to not let parents into school. This year we realised that they were different when they looked through the*



door and saw them. You know, there was no such situation before, mothers used to come to classrooms and take photos, when one of them cried, the others used to want their mothers. It happens that way, with the parents withdrawing, I think we got through this process well”.

Table 3. Teachers’ opinions on adaptation of children to school after the pandemic process

Theme	Code	Participants
Factors that facilitate adaptation to school	Longing for school	AO2, ID2, ID1, DO2, MO2, GDO1, IO1, EO1, KO1
	Classification	ED1
	Not letting parents into the school	ED1, ED2
	Family's sensitivity to pandemic rules	KD1
	Developing self-care skills	MO1
	Fear and Anxiety	ID1, ID4, MD1, GDO1, KO1, IO1
Factors that make it difficult to adapt to school	Activities being distant	ID1, KD1
	Social emotional difficulty	MO1, AO2, IO1
	Distractibility	DD1
	Rules	ID3, MD1, KD2, AD1, DO1, IO1, GDD1, AO1
	Academic skills	AO2
	Technology exposure at home	AO2, KD2, DD1
	School transfer	GDO1

In regard to factors making school adaptation difficult, responses were grouped into the following codes: activities being distant, fear and anxiety, social emotional difficulty, distractibility, rules, academic skills, technology exposure at home, and school transfer. The most significant factor in this sub-theme was rules (n = 8) with opinion such as:

I think the use of masks also affected the adaptation process. And as for hygiene rules, we have to use disinfectants, and we have to have cologne constantly. We have to wash our hands frequently. The pandemic process made the adaptation process long (IO1).

We had to constantly warn (the children) by saying do not take off your masks, do not let your noses appear (AD1).

KD2 felt that the most significant factors making it difficult to adapt to school were rules and technology exposure at home and stated that *"Since children are at home, they do not follow certain rules... even if we talk to parents every day and tell them to wake their children up within the framework of the schedule, home comfort is not like school. Children become addicted to the internet because they can engage in things like computers and tablets and phones because they stay with the caregiver or because they are in different places from their parents. Since this process is not in school, there is a little adaptation problem"*.

KO1, on the other hand, combined opinions regarding the school adaptation process within the themes of facilitating adaptation to school and making it difficult to adapt to school and emphasised longing for school and fear and anxiety by saying, *"I saw they were more enthusiastic. They were a bit shy because of the mask, because they also had fear, but I did not see any dislike of school ... They missed school"*.

Participants were also asked to expand on the reasons for the problems that were experienced in the school adaptation process pre-pandemic and whether there were any differences in the traits of children who had difficulties before the pandemic. These reasons were categorised into problems arising from family, problems arising from school, and problems arising from children. Under the theme of problems arising for family, the following issues were identified: family’s attitude towards school (ID1, ED2, MO2, ID2, GDO1, KD2), change of residence and school transfer (KO1), divorce of parents (ID1), grandparent caring for child (ID2), family commitment (KD1, KD2, GDO1, AD1,



IO1, GDD1), parental attitude (ID2, ID4, DD1, MD1, KD2, AD1, ID1, ED1), and the readiness of family (ID2, MO2, ID3, IO1). Problems arising from school were identified as communication with family (MO1, MO2, KO1, DO2), intraclass conflicts (AO2), not having an adaptation process (DO2), and the class being crowded (MD1, EO1). Finally, problems arising from children were expressed as excessive use of technological devices (ID2, KD2), behavioural disorders (ID1), sibling factor (KD1, ID1), children with special needs (KD1), children with no self-confidence (ID3, KD2), and the readiness of the child (ID4, DD1, AO1, KD2, AO2).

Teacher opinions about the post-pandemic process were gathered under the themes of rules and problems arising from children. Participants stated that they saw differences due to masks and distance (KD1, MD1, MO2, DO1, GDD1) regarding the theme of rules after the pandemic, and stated that they saw differences in speech disorder (AO2) and commitment (D1, IO1, DO1, GDD1) regarding the problems arising from child.

DD1, in discussing problems arising from the child and family, stated that there was not much difference after the pandemic. *"The child not being ready for school and family pressure on the child. Let me give an example I personally witnessed. In the hallway, the parents were telling the child to go into the class immediately or else they would get a beating. They wanted the child to get used to school, but when you approach children with such an attitude, the child will inevitably dislike school"*.

ID1, addressing family problems pre-pandemic and emphasising commitment after the pandemic stated *"Children have behavioural disorders, families are inconsistent, so there are problems, divorce of parents and sibling jealousy were problems before and they still are problems, but the pandemic got ahead of these problems. The fact that a child does not want to leave, overprotective families, etc. are difficult for the teacher and for adaptation to school as well, these problems exist right now too but children subconsciously put them in second place because now there is a word called pandemic in their lives"*.

IO1 stated: *"They got very attached to their families, so it was difficult for them to leave their parents and start school again. Even the children who normally did not have trouble with the adaptation process left their parents crying in the first week in the morning, the issue of fear became even more challenging, it was not that difficult when they started school for the first time last year. Wearing masks at school also affected children, they cannot attribute a meaning as to why they have to wear masks... We cannot touch, we cannot hug, they cannot share their toys, everyone plays with their own toy, but they get curious and want to touch. But they could not, therefore it was very challenging for them"*.

EO1 believed that there were problems arising from school before the pandemic but no new problems after the pandemic: *"I mean in general, even before the pandemic, there were many problems, because classrooms are too crowded. One child sees more children and they cannot adapt to each other. In the post-pandemic period, I did not start with 8 students one came and one went, one came and one went, now I have 8 students, I did not have problems because children started gradually and got to know me"*.

In order to evaluate the school adaptation process after the pandemic, teachers whether they believed some children had been more affected by the pandemic than others, and whether there were in their classes that were greatly affected. Interestingly, some stated that the children had been affected by the pandemic, while others stated that they had not. The opinions of the teachers who stated that children were affected by the pandemic were evaluated under two themes: traits and reasons. The opinions of the teachers who stated that children were not affected by the pandemic were examined under the theme of reasons for not experiencing any problems.



Teachers who believed that children were affected by the pandemic stated characteristics such as child of a strict family (ID1, GDO1, EO1), having negligent parents (MO1), and anxious children (ID1, KD1, DD1, AO2, KO1).

Teachers believed the reasons why children were affected included concepts such as exposure to coronavirus news at home (ID1, DD1, ID4, KO1, KD2, DO2), overexposure to technology (ID2, MO1), due to experience (parents who are doctors or working in this sector) (MO2, DO1, IO1, DO2) and the inability of children to perceive the virus concretely (ID4). Some of the teachers' opinion on this regard are as follows:

DD1 emphasised anxious children and exposure to the news: *"Parents do not use media consciously. Children are constantly exposed to the news. There was an inevitable reaction from the children. Honestly, I thought that one of my students would not even come to school because the child said 'what if there is corona at school, I do not want to go to school then'. As soon as they enter the classroom, there are constant warnings like wash your hands, wear your mask, cover your nose. Even in children's drawings, we see covid, corona, microbe, and many others"*.

DO2 discussed experience and the news by saying, *"Children of healthcare professionals have adopted this situation in their lives a little more because it is mentioned a lot at home, they listen to the news as well, but children whose parents work outside the health sector or are professors at university and teach from home have routinised this situation"*.

The characteristics of children who were not affected by the pandemic were identified as environmental (place of residence, socio-economic level, etc.) factors (ED1, IO1, GDD1), becoming used to the process (ED2, ID3, AO1, MD1, AD1), and the sibling factor (IO1).

In this regard, ED stated that *"They were very good, as I said, they adopted this situation. So, I did not have to make them adopt it. Family gave that awareness to the child, so they were ready when they came"*. Similarly, GDD1 said that *"Children who have experienced the Syrian war environment have gone through a lot and are not affected by the pandemic that much. They have already come out of a war and come to another country. They have gone through a lot before, so they got used to this pandemic as well"*.

In terms of environmental factors, ED1 stated that children were not affected by the pandemic. *"There was no pandemic in the city where I live or the village where I work. Schools were closed, but no one wore masks, or nothing prevented them from travelling, so there was no change"*.

In order to determine how the pandemic process affected children's adaptation to school, participants were asked whether they thought there were any differences between children who had received online education in the previous academic year and those who did not. Opinions on this situation are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Teacher opinions regarding the adaptation of children who received previous online education and those who did not during the pandemic process

Theme	Category	Code	Participants
Positive opinions	Prior School Experience	Knowing Some Subjects	ID3, GDD1, MO2, DO2, ID4, GDO1, DO1
		No Adaptation Problem	KD1, ID4, KO1, EO1, KD2, AD1, ED2
	Contribution of the Child to Academic, Motor, and Social Domains	Stimulus Difference	ID2
		Motor Skills	MO1, MO2
		Social emotional domain	MO1, KD2, AO2, MO2,
Negative opinions	Communication with the child	Academic skills	ID2, ID4, AO2, EO1, KD2, ED1, DO2
		One to One Communication	DD1, MD1



Educational Perspective

Technology exposure
Academic Education

DD1
MD1

According to Table 4, teacher opinions on this situation fall under two themes: positive and negative opinions. The positive opinion theme is sub-divided into two categories: prior school experience and contribution of the child to academic, motor, and social domains. The most significant points under the prior experience category are having some knowledge (n=7) and no adaptation problem (n=4). Some opinions regarding the code of "no adaptation problem" are as follows:

... even if we weren't face to face, we spent time together and fulfilled our longing for each other. Otherwise, we observe shyness even if the child is very used to class. But that did not happen. I think there is a huge difference (KO1).

... at least they have an idea about their teacher. Even if not as much as face-to-face education, the child at least sees their teacher... Because the other ones come without knowing their teacher... It makes a difference (ID3).

In terms of having some knowledge, ID3 stated that "...a child who has received online education at least has some knowledge in some things, but how can a child who has never received online education have knowledge". Similarly, EO1 said, "Children receiving online education were the children who were together with me at least for 4 to 5 months. Of course, they were very ready, while the others were not. There is absolutely a difference". In the same vein, regarding the stimulus difference concept, ID2 said "Of course there will be a difference between those who received (online education) and those who did not. There is a difference in stimuli, after all".

Under the category contribution to academic, motor, and social domains of the child, the most significant factor was academic skills (n=7). One participant, KD2, said "Some of them had been taught the concepts but others had not, when I asked them if they remembered what we did, children that received online education remembered. There was a difference between the two".

Another code under the same category is social emotional domain. AO2 stated that "As for social skills, since they continued to communicate and see each other, they could share some things in front of the camera even for 5-10 minutes a day. Children who did not attend, forgot. There is something we shouldn't miss in that social skill, the social skill with the group, they lost it to such an extent...". Another participant, MO1, discussed social emotional domain and motor skills by saying, "Of course there are serious differences in their motor skills and pencil holding skills. And I see very serious differences in the social emotional domain... I can say that (the ones with prior experience) are one or maybe a few steps ahead".

The theme of negative opinions is again sub-divided into two categories: communication with the child and educational perspective. Regarding one-to-one communication under the category of communication with the child and academic education under the category of educational perspective, MD1 stated the following:

I can say there is no difference. As you know, preschool education, which should be handled face to face, is a type of education where the child is taken from the family environment and put into the social environment, but it has now been eliminated ... We used to teach our students how to be a good child and a good person, to have harmony with the community, and what good behaviours are rather than 1-2-3-4-5. During this time, of course, we could not provide these in remote education. We just tried to give something academically. Many children were already learning that too.

Regarding the code of one-to-one communication under the category of communication with the child and the code of exposure to technology under the category of educational perspective, DD1 said:

"There is no difference... one-to-one communication is another thing when it comes to children. We do not want to expose children to too much media, to those tablets. There is a problem between the communication channels there too, so nothing happened, no effect".



In terms of individual difference, IO1 believe that *"It depends on the individual characteristics of the child. Not only on whether a child receives online education or not, because in both situations there were children who had difficulties or for whom it was easy"*.

In order to determine teacher opinions on the adaptation process to school, participants were asked what they thought about potential differences between the attitudes and approaches of families related to the pandemic process. Responses regarding this issue were classified under three themes: insensitive, cautious, and overprotective. Teachers stated their opinions regarding families that are insensitive to the pandemic process as insensitive/disobedient parents (ID2, AO2, GDO1, EO1, KD2, AD1, GDD1, ID4, MO1) and parents that are of the opinion that everyone will have the disease (EO1). In terms of insensitive/disobedient parents, AO2, stated that *"Some of them did not use masks to such an extent that (the children) did not know what a mask was...The difference between children originates here. Children are shocked while telling each other"*. MO1 similarly said, *"I have observed that they do not make any sacrifices from their social life and they do not abide by the flexible rules we have at school... I have observed that they do not show the sufficient sensitivity outside, as well"*.

Under the same theme, regarding parents that are of the opinion that everyone will have the disease, EO1 regarding the code of "parents that are of the opinion that everyone will have the disease" under the same theme, said "There are parents who think that this virus will infect everyone, some parents do not believe in the pandemic." said, *"There are parents who think that this virus will infect everyone, some parents do not believe in the pandemic"*. Under the theme of cautious, parents were perceived as belonging to three different groups: understanding parents (IO1), parents who accepted the pandemic process (AO1, KO1, AD1, DO1, DO2), and parents who think that their children are bored (ID2, EO1). In this regard, IO viewed understanding parents in this way: *"...there were parents that were more understanding that listened to me and asked what else we can do for child"*. EO1, on the other hand, said of parents who thought their children were bored: *"Some of them say that their child is too bored. The pandemic has bored us, it is not psychologically good, therefore they are sending their child to school... there are parents that are rigorous and send their child to school but always warn them by saying 'wear your mask, never take it off'"*. Similarly, ID said *"There are conscious parents that think their children are bored"*. Parents who accept the pandemic process was the most significant factor (n = 5) with the following opinions:

Later they enrolled in school and schools started, yes, they were always saying 'Teacher, do not let them take off their masks and make them disinfect their hands constantly'. As I said, those sending their children to school were not that rigorous. Inevitably, people relax a little. They have to be comfortable. We will catch [Covid-19] from outside, it is safer for child to be at school. In terms of trust, in terms of education (DO1).

Those who let it go and think that eventually all of us will have the disease... they are cautious, but they let it go. They are calm in terms of whether they will catch [Covid-19] or not, they just let it go (DO2).

Most participants were of the opinion that the most significant characteristic under the overprotective theme was rigorous/anxious/self-focused parents (ID1, KD1, ID3, DD1, MD1, AO1, GDO1, EO1, KD2, IO1, DO2) (n = 11). Some of the teacher opinions on this are as follows:

The more families care about this, the more fear problematic children will have. Fear develops in children...For example, a child spat in class last week. Another started to cry because of the spitting thinking that we would all be infected. Some children do not care much, while others care a lot. It is reflected in children (GDO1).

Some families act as if they were the only ones experiencing the problem. For example, we are experiencing most of the stress compared to what they are experiencing at the moment. They say that they are working and that their child is more problematic and needs more. Due to this point of view and this anxiety, they were stressed ... (IO1).



Another significant code was that of parents who do not send their children to school (EO1, KD2, TP1, GDD1) under the same theme. EO1 stated that *"When I talked to 18 parents, most of them said that they would disenroll [their children] due to the pandemic. There are also parents who do not send their children to school. That's why we had a lot of trouble enrolling"*. Similarly, GDD1 said *"Some of them were overprotective, they said that they could not risk it under any circumstances and they could not send their children to school"*.

Continuing under the overprotective theme and the code parents biased towards school (ED2, MO2), ED2 stated the following opinion: *Parents are worried when sending their child to school now, they are worried that something might happen at school or that their child might get infected from others but the same parents take their child to parks or shopping centres. I mean they let their child into the community, but they are biased when it comes to school. They are more worried thinking that their child will get infected with corona. I can say that they reflect this concern to the school and to the teacher more. But they may not be that careful outside"*.

In addition, ID2 said that they did not see a difference in the attitudes and behaviours of families regarding the pandemic process by indicating that *"...there are not very obvious differences"*. ED1 also said *"When comparing parents pre- and post-pandemic, I haven't seen any. I mean there was no difference. None of the parents have taken it seriously so far"*.

In order to determine how the pandemic process affects children's adaptation to school, participants were asked what kind of activities they had used in their classrooms related to the pandemic measures, and how the pandemic had affected their classroom activities. The teacher opinion on this situation are provided in Table 5.

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that the activities of teachers in the process of adaptation to school are gathered under the themes of adaptation activities regarding the pandemic and activities affected by the pandemic. Participants evaluated adaptation activities regarding the pandemic as activities suitable for transmission prevention, activities suitable for social distance, activities provided by the Ministry, musical games, online acquaintance, and familiarisation letters. It was determined that teachers mostly coded activities adaptable to masks, distance, and hygiene rules (n = 11) and activities suitable for social distance (n = 10). The opinions regarding these codes are as follows:

In general, we went through social distance, mask, and pandemic rules by recalling their favourite games we implemented last year (AO2).

Our favourite is the ring game. We played ring games by adjusting our distance and we did not hug in the mornings. Because the mask covered the teacher's mouth and hid his/her gestures, the teacher looked like a robot to [the children]. From time to time, I showed them that I also have teeth and lips by wearing a face shield. Today, they play by paying attention to social distance, before, they used to sit side by side and wrestle over and over (DO2).

One participant, GDD1 discussed gift giving and stated that *"Normally we used to play games. We were not able to play much this year. We were able to play name learning games ... Apart from that, we tried to attract them to school with small gifts such as balloons or pencils. We let them do the things they loved most from day one. You know, they played with the toys they wanted, painted the pictures they wanted"*.

On adaptability, DD1 stated that the process was initiated with activities suitable for social distance: *"We started with songs and games that are more active for a while, games of getting to know each other, and if there were activities that involved touching, we adapted them"*.

KD1 incorporated family participation with studies regarding hygiene rules: *"First of all, on the first day I did a microbe experiment. I explained that microbes do not appear, but somehow, they do and showed them pictures and told them to what extent they need to wash their hands. Then I supported it"*



with videos and then I sent them home with paintings with masked animal figures for 1 or 2 weeks. After that, I provided information through a parent information booklet".

Table 5. The activities of teachers in the process of school adaptation this year

Theme	Code	Participants
Adaptation activities regarding the pandemic	Adaptability to mask, distance, & hygiene rules	ID1, ED1, KD1, ID4, AO2, EO1, KD2, DO1, IO1, DO2, GDD1
	Activities suitable for social distance	ED2, DD1, AO1, AO1, MO2, GDO1, AD1, IO1, DO2, GDD1
	Activities provided by the Ministry	MD1, AO1
	Musical games	MO1, DD1, MO2
	Online acquaintance	ID3
	Familiarisation letter	ID3, KD2
	Gifts	KO1, KD2, GDD1
	Free Events	GDD1
	Family participation studies	ID3, IO1
	Orientation	MO1, ED2
	Intraclass activities	AD1
	Family participation / parent visits	AO1
	Field trips	AO1, KD2
	Large group activities	ED2, MO1, KD1, AO2, MO2, EO1, KD2
Activities Affected by the Pandemic	Games	ID1, ID2, ED1, ED2, MO1, ID4, MD1, MO2, GDO1, KD2, AD1, DO1, IO1, DO2, GDD1
	Having to intervene in the activity processes	KD1, AO2, DO1, IO1
	Involving families in the process more	KO1
	Directing to academic activities	MO1
	Values education / sharing	ID3, ID4, DD1
	Science and nature activities	AO2, AD1
	Culinary activities	ID4, MD1, AD1
	Art activities	ID3, AD1, IO1
	Turkish language activities	AD1, GDD1, ID2
	All activities without a desk	ID1, AO2, KO1
	Starting the day / centre / free time	ID3, KO1
	Stage (cultural) activities	KO1

Under the theme of activities affected by pandemics, participants clearly felt that games were the most affected (n = 15). Regarding this code, ED2 said, “[The pandemic] affected games a lot. I can say that it has also affected a lot of activities. Since we are required to seat children using social distance, we do not do group activities, we try to spend time in individual activities and mostly table activities”.

Opinions on the activities affected by the pandemic process were given as follows:

Now, there is definitely a mask in front of our mouths in Turkish Language activities. When I read with a mask, they can get distracted easily. For example, we cannot carry out many types of games in game activities because they have to be together. We can organise one-to-one activities and one-to-one game activities. I used outdoor game activities which required children to be more independent. Apart from that, as I mentioned, we showed them art activities from a distance... Apart from that, in other science experiment activities, for example, there were tasting and smelling activities, we could not do



them in any way, or for example, we could not make sandwiches or make cakes, or we could not pretend as if we were cooks in culinary activities (AD1).

As for the field trips, we used to go to the library or post office or the seaside or collect tangerines from gardens We used to do all of these trips but we cannot not do any of them [now], this also was affected (KD2).

We could not organise game activities, we were only able to do activities with pencil and paper because it used their personal belongings ... We could not do breathing exercises in Turkish Language activities. I mean, [the pandemic] caused problems for many of our activities (GDD1).

Teacher Opinions Regarding the Management of the Pandemic Process in Schools

Regarding the sub-problem of how the pandemic had been managed in schools, participants were asked what they did during the periods when schools were closed. Teachers working in private schools stated that “online education was started” (MO2, GDO1, KO1, IO1, DO2). Teachers stated activities during this period as follows: sending activities via social media (ID2, ED1, KD2, DO1, MD1), having video calls (ED1, AO2, KO1, KD2, DO1, GDD1), activities with family participation (ED2, ID4, DD1, AD1, IO1, GDD1), sending videos (ID2, ID4, DD1, AO2, KO1), receiving feedback from activities (ED2, DD1, AD1, DO1), sending classroom activities to home (ID1, ED2, ID4, AO1), communicating (ID2, DD1, GDD1), and graduation with social distance (ID2). Some comments related to these activities include: *At first, we did not give anything to the children because we did not know that the process was going to be that long. Later, when we stayed that far, we switched directly to online education...In education, we paid attention to contents of activities so that children would not be sitting in front of computer constantly (MO2).*

After the schools were closed, I sent activities to parents via EBA or WhatsApp. We told the children that this process would pass by making video calls (ED1).

In this process, I first sent activities that they could do at home and other activities that they could do with their families that do require paper. I sent stories and we had phone calls together. We were in contact with all of them (DD1).

I created a weekly schedule by adapting classroom activities to home. I wrote them in an explanatory way daily and sent it to parents. They also applied as much as they could at home. Actually, of course, I followed it with visual feedback (ED2).

I shot videos for them for several times a week. I sent those videos to them. We shared it on the school page... I shot it for children to do activities. We also shared so that they participate in the activities. So, I'm experimenting, I want them to experiment as well (KO1).

I sent the daily education flow to parents through social media. They tried to have it done at home, but it lost its naturalness after a while. Parent took pictures and made their children do the activities just to send them to me. They could not have a natural process with the child because of taking pictures ... I read their books. I shot videos. I sent them... But of course, I talked to my students privately, I texted them... Then, when the curfews started to be cancelled, I organised graduation outdoors, in a hotel garden suitable for social distance and said goodbye to them for the last time. I did not want anything negative to remain in their minds due to such a pandemic. I wanted something positive to remain (ID2).

Also, one of the teachers, ID4 said that they could not have online education: “*Unfortunately, my communication is not online or anything since it is a village school*”. Similarly, ED2 said, “*The electronic equipment of parents is very insufficient. Their phones are very insufficient*”.

Regarding the same sub-problem, a question was asked about the gradual transition back to in-class teaching implemented at schools after the pandemic. Some teachers stated that they approved of this, while others stated that they do not. Teachers validated their approval with reason such as easy adaptation (ED1, ED2, ID3, ID4, IO1, KD1, MD1), small number (ED1, ID3), advantage to see their



teacher (ID1), chance to do exercises (ID1) and schools being ready (DO1). Teachers not approving of the gradual opening of schools expressed their reasons for this to be a prolongation of adaptation process (DO1, DO2, KD2, AD1, DO2, GDD1, DD1, ID2, GDO1), face-to-face education (ED2, KD2), not different (AO1, AO2) and decreased socialisation (KD1). In addition, there were teachers (MO1, AO1, AO2, MO2, GDO1, DO2, KO1, IO1) who stated that different implementations were being carried out in their schools. The views of the teachers who approved of gradual transition process are as follows:

Some teachers stated that slower or gradual adaptation was better. . For example, ED1 said, *"Rather than taking a child out of a game and introducing that child to unknown children and bringing them all together, it is better to gradually and slowly adapt to the school environment"*. ED2 shared that in their institution *"[The children] stayed for about two and a half hours. During these two and a half hours, we played games or introduced our school. The next week, the children came to school for two days, for example, so they knew that they would be separated from their mothers for two days and came with the comfort of that"*.

BC1 stated that *"We did not implement this because we were in a private school...In the transition, they increased from one day to 3 days then to 5 days. But in our school, our first day they started with their mothers and it took half a day and after it was full days. I think it was an implication that their mother was outside, waiting for her child. It may have made it easier for them to adapt"*.

KD2, one of the participants who did not of the gradual opening of schools, stated that the adaptation process is prolonged this way and face-to-face education is a necessity: *"I got really tired of teaching the same things...If schools are opened, I prefer it to be 5 days, not gradual, and prefer them to be together for a shorter period of time. It affects their adaptation, so we come one day and then we do not come for five days. It is like a vacation for 5 days. We find it difficult to explain abstract things to children in this age group. When I say their other friends will come the next day, they say things like 'why can they come but we can't?' and 'I miss my friends', etc."*.

GDD1 also disapproved of the gradual transition process because it prolonged school adaptation and emphasised that *"A child who comes for one day takes a break before they can adapt again until they come for a week. They come for two days and there is a break for five days, so when children come again, they feel like they are starting all over again. We had that problem in terms of adaptation"*.

DO2, whose institution did not implement the gradual transition process, was another participant who did not approve of the process: *"Children come for one day and that is for 2-3 hours, then they the rules until next week"*. GDO1, similarly did not approve of the process and stated *"In my own observations, when the children took a break, even on Saturday and Sunday for two days, they could come back with a change of behaviour. There could be an alienation to the school. So, in my opinion, one day is not enough for the child to love and adapt to school. Unfortunately, this was implemented because the situation required it. Let's say it is better than nothing, but I do not think it is good and efficient"*.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

This study aimed to determine preschool teachers' opinions regarding preschool adaptation during the Covid-19 pandemic process. As such interviews were carried out with teachers employed at private and public preschools from seven different regions in Turkey. After conclusion of the research, it was determined that teachers evaluated the factors affecting school adaptation in terms of family, teacher, and the child's personal traits and generally experienced problems in these areas before the pandemic. In parallel with this conclusion, teachers believed that adaptation to school was affected by factors such as the gender of the child, temperament, the number of siblings, peer relationships, the socio-economic status of the family, the educational status of the parents, and the relationship between the child's parents, teachers and peers, and parent-teacher interactions (Ato, Fernández-Vilar, & Galián, 2020; Bağçeli Kahraman, 2018; Chi, Kim, & Kim, 2018; Durmuşoğlu Saltalı & Erbay, 2020; Erbay,



2019; Jarrett, Coba- Rodriguez, 2018; Lifshin, Kleinerman, Shaver, & Mikulincer 2019; Nur, Aktaş Arnas, Abbak, & Kale, 2018; Ratelle, Duchense, Litalien, & Plamodon, 2021; Roorda, Zee, & Koomen, 2020; Topçu & Nazlı, 2018). O'Farrelly, Booth, Tatlow-Golden, and Barker (2020) stated that children's priorities for their school adaptation are family and school relationships, supportive environments, successful peer relations, and willingness to attend school.

It was found that children's adaptation to school was easier in terms of longing for school, dividing them into groups, not letting parents into school, and family sensitivity to pandemic rules; however, rules and differences arising from children made adaptation difficult after the pandemic process. In a study examining the pandemic process in preschool education institutions in Sweden, Norway, and the United States, it was determined that mask, distance, and hygiene rules as well as reducing the number of students in classes and keeping parents away from schools were applied (Samuelsson, Wagner, & Ødegaard, 2020). In a study conducted by Ogelman, Gungor and Goktaş (2021), teachers stated that they would organise cleaning, personal care activities, and meet parents alone after schools re-opened. Similarly, in this study, teachers stated that they attached importance to mask, distance and hygiene rules, they carried out activities in accordance with these rules, and the number of students in the classroom was reduced. With the closures of schools in Turkey, the Ministry of National Education and many private education institutions started remote education practices. However, these implementations mostly covered primary school and higher levels. However, in this study it was determined some private preschool institutions switched to online education. The teachers in institutions that did not implement online education carried out activities such as sending activities via social media, having video calls with students and parents, and organising activities that could be done with family participation. There were also some teachers who stated that they could not carry out any practices at all due to lack of educational and technical infrastructure. In this case, technological facilities at home have gained importance and those who do not have these opportunities have become removed from education. In addition, this study showed that teachers who provided online education or tried to support their students through online activities felt the families were bored and tired of the activities. Similarly, in a study conducted with primary and secondary school teachers; it was determined that teachers did supportive activities during the pandemic process and attempted to make students feel as though school continued, but parents did not show much support (Çakın & Akyavuz, 2020). Göl, Güven, Şeker, Erbil, Ozgünlü, Alvan, and Uzunkök (2020) determined in their study with parents of 4 to 12-year-old children that teachers offered suggestions for education to be continued at home. Hapsari, Sugito, and Fauziah (2020) also found that families play an important role in education for their children during the pandemic process. UNICEF (2020) stated that students living in disadvantaged areas are in riskier positions during the pandemic process, and are likely not to adapt to school or return to school. As well, there are children who do not have the opportunity to access remote education all over the world and therefore inequality in education has increased (Horowitz, 2020; Moreno & Gortazar, 2020). When assessing implementations in Turkey, it can be said that families provide an important contribution to the education of their children, and that there are important differences between institutions and even teacher practices. Garbe, Ogurlu, Logan, and Cook (2020) investigated the experiences of parents with children of all levels during the pandemic process and determined that parents were trying to do their best for their children, but that they needed support. Similarly, Drane, Vernon, and O'Shea (2020) stated in their study that expecting families to become educators at home during this process made the current difficult situation even more difficult. As is seen, in this study, teachers stated that families were tired. It is thought that the reason for this situation arises from the fact that preschool children need more support.

Another conclusion of this research is that the adaptation of children who receive online education during the pandemic process has contributed to the academic, motor, and social domains of the child, especially with prior knowledge; however, it was determined that it created problems in terms of communication with child and educational perspective. While some of the participants in this study emphasised that online education is especially academic-oriented, others stated that children see each other and themselves and socialise in this environment. As a matter of fact, Korkmaz and Toraman



(2020) found that during the online education process, teachers experienced problems such as the student internet connectivity issues, inability to support skills education, difficulty in providing feedback to students, inability to educate according to individual interests, and inability to motivate students. Therefore, it can be said that there are problems in communication with the child and in educational perspective. Kim (2020) stated that the effective use of technology by preschool teachers is an important issue in the effectiveness of remote education and in ensuring children's motivation and learning. Although the effective use of technology by teachers is not evaluated within the scope of this research, it is thought that teachers may be incapable of improving themselves as the pandemic is a developing process. Kruszewska, Nazaruk, and Szewczyk (2020) stated that during the pandemic process in Poland, all preschool education institutions started remote education, but during this process, preschool children experienced loss in effective learning, spent less time in remote learning compared to school learning, and that most children had stress, anxiety, and concentration problems during the learning process. They concluded that the closure of schools caused a lack of communication with their peers and that their teachers had difficulties in motivating children to participate in activities. Research has also shown that, due to Covid-19, children stay away from social environments such as school, and experience negative psychological situations such as anxiety, depression, fear, crying for no reason, irritability, tantrums, and sudden changes in mood (Alisinoğlu, Karabulut, & Türksöy, 2020; Ozer, 2020; Orgilés, Morales, Delvecchio, Mazzeschi, & Espada, P, 2020; Xia Wu, Zhou, Zang, Pu, & Li, 2020). Howes (2020) also stated that peer relationships are important in keeping children away from such negative situations. In addition, Erbay and Durmuşoğlu Saltalı (2020) emphasised the relationship between the teacher and the child in the process of adaptation to the school, and found that children with positive relationships with their teachers had higher participation in the school adaptation process and activities. For this reason, it is also important that children do not stay away from school and their friends for their psychological health. However, when schools cannot remain open in an epidemic situation, it is important to ensure that children do not stay away from their friends and teachers through the use of online applications, even if they do not replace school activities. At the end of this process, when schools re-open, it is thought that children will have a better psychological state and they will not have any problems in adapting to the school. In the present study, teachers stated that children may be exposed to too much technology at home. Teachers also stated that using technology negatively affected children's social development and mentioned that peer relationships are important as they aid in facilitating school adaptation. Studies have indicated that unmonitored television time and over-use of tablets and phones harm children's cognitive, behavioural, and emotional development (Drouin, McDaniel, Pater & Toscos, 2020; Hosokawa & Katsura, 2018). King, Delfabbro, Billieux, and Potenza (2020) also state that online gaming and technology-based activities increased during Covid 19 pandemic as many families could not adequately monitor or control technology use in their children. Families have played a great role in the increase of the use of these technologies during the pandemic process. In addition, directing children to technology has long been a method of keeping children quiet and occupied, especially for working parents. Teacher participants within the present study stated that children affected by the pandemic were mostly children of strict families, children with negligent parents, anxious children, and children who were exposed to coronavirus news, especially in the home. They also stated that families' attitudes and behaviours were more insensitive, cautious, and overprotective during this period. Studies have shown that positive parenting behaviours facilitate children's adaptation to school, while negative attitudes make it difficult (Bağçeli-Kahraman et al., 2018; Becerra, Sánchez, & Méndez, 2020; Ogelman, Onder, Seçer, & Erten, 2013; Özen, Altinkaynak, & Akman, 2019). Teachers in this present study also emphasised the importance of the environment in which the child lives and stated that the child's exposure to excessive coronavirus conversation increased anxiety. These situations are affected by family members and family relationships during the Covid-19 process as well as the adaptation process to school (Prime, Wade, & Browne, 2020; Romero, López-Romero, Domínguez-Álvarez, Villar, & Gómez-Fraguela, 2020).



Adaptation activities for the pandemic during the school adaptation process were determined as mask, distance, and hygiene rule activities, activities suitable for social distance, activities provided by the Ministry, musical games, online acquaintance, and familiarisation letters. Culinary activities, stage productions, and activities involving family participation that are frequently carried out in preschool education were among the activities affected by the pandemic. Teachers stated that they had to intervene more in activity processes and tended to prefer academic activities, especially considering social distance during this process. At the same time, they stated that they had difficulties in transmitting their facial expressions and emotions, especially in Turkish-language activities, due to mask use. The activity most affected by the pandemic was games. Play is an important factor for children to develop positive relationships with their peers and to have healthy school adaptation processes. In this respect, the teacher should create learning environments that will improve social interaction (Gülay Ogelman & Güngör, 2020). According to the results obtained from this study, while the pandemic mostly affected game activities, it also affected when the day started, activities with large groups, and various game-based preschool educational activities. The contribution of games to the cognitive, motor, and social emotional development domains of a child is great (Gözüm & Kandır, 2020), which is supported by the fact that the 2013 MEB Preschool Education Programme is also game based (MoNE, 2013). Moreover, children spend most of their time playing games and can learn more permanently through games. The pandemic has affected game activities mostly due to mask, distancing, and hygiene rules and has resulted in the reduction of game activities or the adaptation of games in different ways to be more 'pandemic-friendly'. Considering that games take have a significant role in the education of children at school, the effect of this change on children will also be great. Furthermore, due to the measures taken in schools and due to the pandemic rules, common materials such as tools and toys have become individualised. Teachers have stated that "sharing", one of the most important values gained in preschool education, was highly affected by the social distance that entered our lives with the pandemic process. As a matter of fact, teachers stated that during this process, children question situations such as not being able to play, not being able to access toys and not sharing their toys, and that they are not satisfied with this situation. As Kozikoğlu (2018) stated, learning values such as responsibility, cooperation, and sharing during the preschool period is of great importance for the personality development of children. During this period when the foundations of personality are laid, the healthy acquisition of values affects the coming years.

In conclusion, there are many factors that affect the adaptation of children to school due to the child's personal traits, family, and environment. This year, the pandemic process has isolated children, whose only jobs are to play and socialise, from the environments where they can best achieve these tasks and has forced them to stay in their homes for long periods of time. Although some children continued their online education during the pandemic, others could not take advantage of this opportunity due to lack of technological resources or other reasons. During this process, a great deal of responsibility fell on families in terms of meeting their children's needs for both education and play. It is not possible for a preschool child to participate in online education alone; they need the support of their families. Some families can fulfil this responsibility to the fullest, while others have difficulty after a while. Remembering that families are the first educators of children and that children have become more intertwined with their families due to the pandemic process, it is important that families are supported with education, information, and psychological support. It is thought that the inequalities of opportunity in education should be eliminated as much as possible, and orientation studies should be conducted for the families of children who continue online education. While it is important to support children online while they are at home, due to their young age and their need for movement and play, their interests as well as their needs should be considered during the education process, activities based on learning by doing and experiencing should not be burdened on them. Thus, different methods supported by the use of technology should be employed to bring teachers, families and children together, and to find solutions to the psychological and social difficulties that may arise.

Children returning to school at the end of the pandemic process have shown some differences in adaptation. Some children adapted more easily because they missed school and their friends, while



others had difficulty because they were overly attached to their home and family. Some were negatively affected by this process and showed various behaviours such as crying, irritability, and self-isolation during the adaptation process. In this case, the biggest job falls on families and teachers. Families should provide accurate information about the pandemic process in a way that is simple for their children to understand so that negative, adverse attitudes are prevented and cooperation with schools is achieved. Teachers, on the other hand, should protect children from the negative environment as much as possible and create a positive atmosphere at school, which is the best place children can express themselves, play games, and socialise. How the child is approached is particularly important in this respect. Appropriate language should be used to indicate that the process is temporary and that there is nothing to be afraid of when the rules are followed. In this context, although activities to aid with adaptation were implemented in line with pandemic rules, in particular social distancing requirements, it was observed that some children had difficulty from time to time while others quickly became accustomed to school. In preschool education, the comfort of the child is a critical factor, thus when situations arise in which the child feels uncomfortable, participation in activities and self-expression can become problematic. Game-based learning and socially distanced games are important here as too much desk work at the preschool age can also affect school adaptation.

Regarding the gradual transition applied during the adaptation process, some teachers found it negative on the grounds that it prolonged the adaptation process, while most stated that dividing children into groups and having them come for a certain period of time facilitated adaptation. Only one teacher working in a private school stated that they carried out an implementation similar to this process and it was effective. Therefore, considering that the adaptation process is affected by many independent factors, it is necessary to repeat the implementation and to receive feedback in order to evaluate whether it provides a positive or negative effect on the adaptation process.

With this research, the adaptation of children to school during the pandemic process was examined and conclusions and suggestions were presented. However, there are some limitations in this study. Firstly, the research was planned qualitatively. It is necessary to conduct both quantitative and qualitative studies on how this process is carried out to determine its effectiveness. The adaptation process of children to school can be evaluated through different methods such as observation. Therefore, new studies should be conducted to examine the adaptation process to school with the opening of schools using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Secondly, the data was obtained exclusively from teachers in this study. In future research, the school adaptation process may be evaluated from the child's perspective. Parent perspectives should also be included as parents have a great impact on the school adjustment process. Experimental studies can be carried out with family education programs to facilitate the adaptation of children to school, especially during epidemic periods. Despite the limitations of this study, it is believed that this research serves to guide both preschool teachers and families of preschool-aged children and can aid in supporting schools to manage this adaptation process.

Ethical Approval

An ethical approval was obtained from Bursa Uludag University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee (dated 02/10/2020 and numbered 2020/07).

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no potential conflict of interest.

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