

## Preschool Parenting during Pandemic: What are the Needs of Preschool Parents and Children?

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### Abstract

In the study, preschool children's interactions with their parents and their developmental and educational needs during the pandemic were examined through parental views. Using the convenience sampling method, parents (N=275) whose children's pre-school education was interrupted during the pandemic period were reached. The questionnaire form prepared by the researchers was used to determine the opinions of the parents. The answers of the parents were analyzed by descriptive analysis. The study revealed that parents stated that children missed the activities in which they were in social interaction, they often chatted and played games with their children during the confinement period. Parents defined that they could evaluate different alternatives for their children's education, such as homeschooling. It has been determined that although the quality and amount of time spent by parents with their children has increased, they feel inadequate to support their children's social-emotional development. The results show that parents are concerned about their children's educational needs and expect more support.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, pre-school parenting, preschool education

## Pandemi Sürecinde Okul Öncesi Ebeveynliği: Okul Öncesi Ebeveynlerinin ve Çocuklarının İhtiyaçları Nelerdir?

### Öz

Çalışmada pandemi sürecinde okul öncesi çocuklarının ebeveynleri ile etkileşimleri, gelişimsel ve eğitsel ihtiyaçları ebeveyn görüşleri aracılığıyla incelenmiştir. Uygun örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak pandemi dönemi ile birlikte çocuklarının okul öncesi eğitimi yarıda kesilen ebeveynlere (N=275) ulaşılmıştır. Araştırmanın amacı kapsamında ebeveynlerin görüşlerini belirlemek için araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan anket formu kullanılmıştır. Ebeveynlerin cevapları betimsel analiz ile çözümlenmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda ebeveynler, çocukların sosyal etkileşim içinde olduğu etkinlikleri özlediklerini, eve kapanma döneminde çocuklarıyla sık sık sohbet ettiklerini ve oyun oynadıklarını belirtmiştir. Ebeveynler çocuklarının eğitimine ilişkin evde eğitim gibi farklı alternatifleri değerlendirebileceklerini ifade etmiştir. Ebeveynlerin çocuklarıyla geçirdikleri zamanın niteliği ve miktarı artmasına rağmen, çocuklarının sosyal-duygusal gelişimini destekleme konusunda kendilerini yetersiz hissettikleri saptanmıştır. Sonuçlar, ebeveynlerin çocuklarının eğitim ihtiyaçları konusunda endişe duyduklarını ve daha fazla destek beklediklerini göstermektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Pandemi, okul öncesi ebeveynliği, okul öncesi eğitim,

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## INTRODUCTION

With the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic, the rules (such as social isolation, curfew) integrated into our lives have changed both standards of living and routines of families (Gassman-Pines et al., 2020). These changes affected parents and children socially, emotionally, physically, mentally, and economically (Cluver et al., 2020). With the measures taken to protect against the possible adversities of the epidemic, parents started to worry about their children's educational needs and interactions with their peers. In addition, new responsibilities such as providing economic and physical support, preparing a safe and healthy environment for children, and supporting children's education at home also caused parents to experience stress and anxiety more (Fontanesi et al., 2020). The pandemic not only affected children indirectly through parental anxiety and stress but also directly negatively affected their physical, mental, and psychological well-being. With the closure of schools and long-term isolation measures, the screen time children are exposed to increased, while interaction with peers and outdoor physical activities decreased (Wang et al., 2020). As a result of these measures, behaviors such as distraction, anger, and fear of asking questions about the epidemic emerged in children (Jiao et al., 2020). It is known that the risks of neglect and abuse increase for some children who are away from the follow-up of external observers such as teachers, health, and social workers. In fact, these risks that deeply affect children are described as secondary pandemics (Green, 2020).

Changing living conditions at home during the epidemic also changed the priorities and needs of parents. Parents began to take a more active role in their children's educational needs such as health and nutrition needs, as well as follow-up of their lessons and homework. While trying to continue their own business, parents had to deal more with their children's needs that were otherwise met by others. This situation put extra responsibilities on parents (Spinelli et al., 2020). In the process of staying at home, parents both became playmates and educators of their children. Thus, parents' need for expert support increased in tasks such as interacting closely and sensitively with their children, being the right role model for their children's behaviors, recognizing and intervening in physical and psychological problems, monitoring their children's development and educational activities, determining and evaluating their needs, and reducing their children's anxiety and worries (Wang et al., 2020). Recognizing this need, organizations (UNICEF, 2021; UNESCO, 2020; NAEYC, 2020) published various guidelines for parents. Due to restrictions such as school closures and social isolation, children experienced various physical and mental difficulties. Especially while they are staying home, obesity, stress, depression and social-emotional problems increased in children, and children's motor and social skills, sleep patterns, and educational activities were negatively affected (López-Bueno et al., 2020).

After the World Health Organization announced that the disease was a pandemic, Turkey, like many countries, took a series of measures to protect people. As of April 2020, distance education started and children (under the age of 20) were prohibited from going out. In this process, content was prepared in EBA (Educational Information System), and broadcast on one of the state channels, TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation) to support the educational activities of children aged 7-18. When the number of cases started to decrease, a gradual return to face-to-face education took place with measures such as disinfecting the classrooms and reducing the class size. Children received face-to-face education two days a week and distance education on the remaining days. About 7 months later, in December 2020, content was created on TRT EBA TV for children and presented to children and their families. The increase in the number of cases led to the transition to distance education again. As of September 2021, in case of positive cases in preschool classes, the whole class was considered close contact and all children in the class were considered close contacts and sent home. These children were followed for 14 days (MEB, 2021). During the distance education, many preschool teachers tried to support the educational needs of children with video calling applications such as Zoom or Google Teams. Except for 30-40 minute meetings held by the teachers, developmental and educational needs of the children were left to the parents' responsibility. Due to the long-term measures (periodic closure of schools) affecting children in Turkey and the late access of children to educational content, children and their parents experienced some developmental and educational problems during the pandemic. For this reason, it is important to determine the needs of parents and children, especially during the periods when schools are closed. In this direction, the current research aims to reveal the practices and needs of parents and children in social relations and educational terms. In line with this purpose, the research questions are as follows:

1. What are the developmental and educational needs of children during the pandemic?
2. What are the needs of parents while supporting children educationally and developmentally during the pandemic?
3. What are parents' future plans for their children's education during the pandemic?

## METHOD

The study, which was designed as screening research, aimed to describe the needs of families and their children during the pandemic process. In screening studies, the event or individual is explained in their own conditions (Karasar, 2015).

### Data collection

Research data were collected through an online questionnaire prepared by the researchers. The questionnaire was delivered to parents via Google Forms. To determine the experiences and needs of families more clearly, questionnaires were applied six months after the decision of closure (16.03.2020) was taken. Parents (N=275) residing in different provinces of Turkey filled in the questionnaire. Parents were included in the study with convenience sampling method. The study group consisted of parents with children between the ages of 3-6, who attended pre-school education before the closure. The demographic information of the parents participating in the study is given in Table 1. The study employed a questionnaire to assess the requirements of families and children, with the objective of investigating the social relation, educational practices, and necessities of parents and children during the pandemic. The questionnaire questions formed by the researchers were sent to five experts. Necessary corrections were made in line with the suggestions of the experts. Later, for the pilot study, the questionnaire was sent to 10 parents who were not included in the study and their opinions on the questionnaire were taken. The feedback from the parents was also evaluated and corrections were made, and the questionnaire was finalized. In the questionnaire, there are 8 questions about the demographics of parents, 2 questions about the needs of children, 6 questions about the interaction of families with their children, 3 questions about the cooperation of families with the school and 1 question about the future plans of parents regarding the education of their children. The question about the future plans of the parents for the education of their children was open-ended, while the other questions were prepared in the form of multiple choice. In the research analysis, descriptive statistics such as percentage and frequency were used for multiple choice questions.

**Table 1.** Demographic Information About Parents

|                           | n   | %    |
|---------------------------|-----|------|
| Parents                   |     |      |
| Mother                    | 261 | 94,9 |
| Father                    | 14  | 5,1  |
| Age of parents            |     |      |
| 31-35                     | 107 | 39,0 |
| 36-40                     | 79  | 28,8 |
| 26-30                     | 57  | 20,8 |
| 41-45                     | 20  | 7,3  |
| 20-25                     | 7   | 2,6  |
| 46-51                     | 4   | 1,5  |
| Region                    |     |      |
| Central of Turkey         | 101 | 36,7 |
| West of Turkey            | 83  | 30,2 |
| East of Turkey            | 40  | 14,5 |
| South of Turkey           | 36  | 13,1 |
| North of Turkey           | 15  | 5,5  |
| Educational Degree        |     |      |
| Undergraduate             | 142 | 51,6 |
| Graduate                  | 43  | 16,4 |
| Associate                 | 38  | 13,8 |
| High School               | 34  | 12,4 |
| Middle School             | 8   | 2,9  |
| Elementary School         | 8   | 2,9  |
| Current employment status |     |      |
| Working every day         | 56  | 20,4 |

|                                      |     |      |
|--------------------------------------|-----|------|
| Working from home                    | 47  | 17,1 |
| Working for two or three days a week | 24  | 8,7  |
| Rotational work (on alternate days)  | 12  | 4,4  |
| Quitting the job after the pandemic  | 10  | 3,6  |
| Part-time (2-4 hours in a day)       | 9   | 3,3  |
| Monthly Income                       |     |      |
| >8001 TL                             | 92  | 33,5 |
| 4001-6000 TL                         | 60  | 21,8 |
| 6001-8000 TL                         | 51  | 18,5 |
| 2301-4000 TL                         | 45  | 16,4 |
| 0-2300 TL                            | 27  | 9,8  |
| Spouse's current employment status   |     |      |
| Working every day                    | 163 | 59,3 |
| Working from home                    | 33  | 12,0 |
| Working for two or three days a week | 25  | 9,1  |
| Not working                          | 23  | 8,4  |
| Rotational work (on alternate days)  | 17  | 6,2  |
| Part-time (2-4 hours in a day)       | 9   | 3,3  |
| Quitting the job after the pandemic  | 5   | 1,8  |
| Number of Children                   |     |      |
| 2                                    | 131 | 48,0 |
| 1                                    | 114 | 41,8 |
| 3                                    | 21  | 7,7  |
| 4                                    | 4   | 1,5  |
| >5                                   | 3   | 1,1  |

As seen in Table 1 the participants were mostly mothers (94,9%). Most of the participants were between the ages of 31-35 (39,0%), were from the central (36,7%) or west (30,2%) regions of Turkey, had high education levels (81,8%) (College, Postgraduate, Associate). The monthly incomes of most families (66,5%) were below the poverty line (7.973 TL). 42.5% of participants were unemployed and 20.4% reported going to work every day; 59.3% of participants' spouses worked every day. Most of the participants had two children (48,0%).

### Research Ethics

Prior to the study, permissions were obtained from the Hacettepe University Ethics Committee. Clear and understandable explanations were given to the participants about the study. If the participants did not want to continue the study for any reason after signing the informed consent, they were assured that their data would not be used in the study if they reported this to the researcher. No personal information was collected from the participants.

## FINDINGS

This section includes information on the relationship between parents and their children in the process of staying home, the duration and quality of interaction (see Table 2, Table 6), the activities children miss (see Table 3), the activities that parents do with their children at home (see Table 4), the parental competencies the needs of the children (see Table 5), parental needs (see Table 7), teacher support (see Table 8) and parents' future plans (see Table 9).

**Table 2.** Children's Interaction with Others

|  |  |                           | n   | %    |
|--|--|---------------------------|-----|------|
| Going outdoors                             |  | Two or three days a week  | 115 | 42,0 |
|  |  | Everyday                  | 101 | 37,0 |
|  |  | Once a week               | 41  | 15,0 |
|  |  | Never                     | 18  | 6,0  |
| Children's interaction with their peers    |  | Once a week               | 81  | 29,0 |
|  |  | Three or four days a week | 77  | 28,0 |
|  |  | Everyday                  | 68  | 25,0 |
|  |  | Never                     | 49  | 18,0 |
| Children's interactions with family elders |  | Once a week               | 93  | 34,0 |
|  |  | Three or four days a week | 69  | 25,0 |

|  |   |     |      |
|--|---|-----|------|
|  | Never                                       | 57  | 21,0 |
|  | Everyday                                    | 56  | 20,0 |
| The way children interact with their peers         | Face to face meeting with physical distance | 142 | 51,6 |
|  | Face to face meeting at a close distance    | 74  | 26,9 |
|  | Video calling                               | 45  | 16,4 |
|  | Phone calling                               | 14  | 5,1  |
| The way children interact with their family elders | Video calls                                 | 90  | 33,0 |
|  | Face to face meeting with physical distance | 83  | 30,0 |
|  | Face to face meeting at a close distance    | 81  | 29,0 |
|  | Phone calls                                 | 21  | 8,0  |

Note: n reflects the number of individuals who responded to the question. 275 people answered this question.

As Table 2 shows, 42,0% of parents reported that their children went out two or three days a week, while 37,0% of them went out every day. 29,0% of parents reported that their children interacted with their friends once a week. 34,0% of parents reported that their children met with family elders once a week, while 33,0% of them reported that their children saw family elders via video conferencing. Most of them (51,6%) reported that their children had face to face meetings with their friends by maintaining social distance .

**Table 3.** Missed Activities by Children

|   | n   | %    |
|---|-----|------|
| Spending time with peers  | 221 | 80,4 |
| Spending time in outdoor spaces   | 220 | 80,0 |
| Going to school   | 190 | 69,1 |
| Doing activities with teachers  | 146 | 53,1 |
| Spending time at indoor spaces like a shopping center, museum, and cinema | 122 | 44,4 |
| Others  | 8   | 2,9  |

Table 3 shows the activities children missed during coronavirus pandemic days. Most parents (80,4%) stated that children missed spending time with their peers. Parents (80,0%) also reported that spending time in outdoor spaces was another missed activity by children. The other activities children missed included going to school (69,1%), doing activities with teachers (53,1%), and spending time at indoor spaces like shopping centers, museums, and cinema (44,4%).

**Table 4.** Activities with Children

|                                    | n   | %    |  | n   | %    |
|------------------------------------|-----|------|--|-----|------|
| Having a chat                      | 252 | 91,6 | Dancing                                | 140 | 50,9 |
| Recommending play with toys        | 251 | 91,3 | Singing                                | 135 | 49,1 |
| Doing activities (art, math, etc.) | 188 | 68,4 | Playing with other individuals at home | 93  | 33,8 |
| Cooking (meal, cake, etc.)         | 186 | 67,6 | Doing a science experiment             | 60  | 21,8 |
| Painting                           | 184 | 66,9 | Allowing to watch videos online        | 53  | 19,8 |
| Reading books, magazines, etc.     | 173 | 62,9 | Playing games (chess, hide, seek etc.) | 3   | 1,2  |
| Watching cartoons                  | 160 | 58,2 | Doing outdoor activities               | 3   | 1,2  |
| Listening to music                 | 146 | 53,1 | Helping to housework                   | 1   | 0,4  |

Table 4 shows the activities that parents did with their children during the coronavirus pandemic days at home. Most of the parents (91,6%) stated that they had a chat with their children. Besides, parents (91,3%) recommended playing with toys to their children. Parents (68,4%) stated that they did some activities about art, math, and so on. The other most preferred activities were cooking with children (67,6%), painting (66,9%), reading books and magazines (62,9%), watching cartoons (58,2%), listening to music (53,1%), dancing (50,9%) and singing (49,1%).

**Table 5.** Ableness of Parents to Meet the Basic Needs of Their Children During the Pandemic

|  |                    | %    |
|--|--------------------|------|
| Ability to meet your child's play needs during the pandemic  | Feel so enough     | 17,1 |
|  | Feel enough        | 45,8 |
|  | Irresolute         | 19,6 |
|  | Feel inadequate    | 12,7 |
|  | Feel so inadequate | 4,7  |
| Ability to meet your child's value needs (success, appreciation, adaption) during the pandemic               | Feel so enough     | 37,1 |
|  | Feel enough        | 51,3 |
|  | Irresolute         | 4,0  |
|  | Feel inadequate    | 5,8  |
|  | Feel so inadequate | 1,8  |
| Ability to meet your child's safety needs (the child and their family feel safe) during the pandemic         | Feel so enough     | 36,4 |
|  | Feel enough        | 49,8 |
|  | Irresolute         | 4,7  |
|  | Feel inadequate    | 7,3  |
|  | Feel so inadequate | 1,8  |
| Ability to meet your child's love and confidence needs (safe relationship and belonging) during the pandemic | Feel so enough     | 42,9 |
|  | Feel enough        | 46,9 |
|  | Irresolute         | 2,5  |
|  | Feel inadequate    | 5,5  |
|  | Feel so inadequate | 2,2  |
| Ability to meet your child's physiological needs (eating, drinking, sleeping etc.) during the pandemic       | Feel so enough     | 39,6 |
|  | Feel enough        | 49,5 |
|  | Irresolute         | 2,2  |
|  | Feel inadequate    | 6,2  |
|  | Feel so inadequate | 2,5  |
| Ability to answer your child's question about COVID-19   | Feel so enough     | 15,6 |
|  | Feel enough        | 64,7 |
|  | Irresolute         | 12,7 |
|  | Feel inadequate    | 5,5  |
|  | Feel so inadequate | 1,5  |

Table 5 shows most parents (45,8%) felt enough to meet their children's needs for play during the pandemic. Most parents also said that they felt enough to meet their children's needs for value (51,3%), for safety (49,8%), for love and confidence (46,9%), for physiological needs (49,5%), and to answer children's questions about the pandemic (64,7%).

**Table 6.** Interaction with Child

|                                 |                   | %    |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|------|
| Time spent with child           | 6 hours and above | 43,3 |
|                                 | 2-3 hours         | 14,2 |
|                                 | 1-2 hours         | 12,7 |
|                                 | 4-5 hours         | 10,5 |
|                                 | 3-4 hours         | 9,5  |
|                                 | 5-6 hours         | 7,6  |
| Amount of time spent with child | Increased         | 67,6 |
|                                 | Decreased         | 27,3 |
|                                 | Not changed       | 5,1  |
| Change for the quality of time  | Increased         | 45,1 |
|                                 | Not changed       | 34,5 |
|                                 | Decreased         | 20,4 |

Table 6 presents information on the duration, quantity and quality of interaction with children of families. Most parents (43,3%) spent 6 hours and more with their children. Most parents (67,6%) stated that their time spent

with their kids increased when comparing it before and during pandemic. In addition, parents (45,1%) reported an increase in the quality of time spent with the child during the time they stayed at home.

**Table 7.** The Needs of Parents to Support their Children’s Developmental Areas During the Pandemic

|   | n   | %    |
|---|-----|------|
| Social-emotional development            | 128 | 46,5 |
| Cognitive development                   | 127 | 46,2 |
| Management disruptive behavior          | 127 | 46,2 |
| Guiding positive behavior               | 114 | 41,5 |
| Language development                    | 69  | 25,1 |
| Motor development                       | 67  | 24,4 |
| No idea about child’s development needs | 36  | 13,1 |

Table 7 shows the most stated developmental area in which parents need support is children’s social-emotional development (46,5%). Cognitive development (46,2%) and handling children’s disruptive behaviors (46,2%) are the other most needed areas. Parents also stated that they needed support to guide children’s positive behaviors (41,5%), language development (25,1%), and motor development (24,4%).

**Table 8.** Teachers’ Supports

|   | n  | %   |      |
|---|--|-----|------|
| Whether teachers communicate with family or not | Yes  | 189 | 68,7 |
|   | No   | 86  | 31,3 |
| Supports of teachers                            | Advising families about books and games                      | 96  | 35,0 |
|   | Supporting the child emotionally                             | 70  | 25,5 |
|   | Informing the families about child development and education | 51  | 18,5 |
|   | Informing the child about COVID-19                           | 40  | 14,5 |
|   | Others   | 18  | 6,5  |
| Teacher’s supports according to the parents     | Medium-level   | 79  | 28,7 |
|   | Sufficient   | 65  | 23,7 |
|   | So sufficient  | 46  | 16,7 |
|   | Inadequate   | 44  | 16,0 |
|   | So inadequate  | 41  | 14,9 |

Table 8 shows teachers’ support for children during the pandemic. According to parents (68,7%) teachers communicated with children during the pandemic. They are in which teachers provided the highest amount of support was advising families about children’s books and games (35,0%). The other areas were supporting the child emotionally (25,5%), informing them about pandemic (14,5%) and informing families about child development and education (18,5%). More than half of the parents (69,1%) reported that teacher support was moderate and above.

**Table 9.** Parents’ Future Plans

|  | n  | %    |
|--|----|------|
| Face to face education at school           | 59 | 21,5 |
| Home-school supported by parents           | 37 | 13,5 |
| Online education                           | 34 | 12,4 |
| Undecided                                  | 22 | 8,0  |
| Home-school supported by an expert         | 11 | 4,0  |
| Not sending to school                      | 7  | 2,5  |
| Deciding according to schools’ preventions | 7  | 2,5  |

Table 9 shows parents’ statements about their future plan about their children’s educational life if the pandemic continues. Some parents (27,6%) did not answer this question while some parents (8,0%) stated that they did not/could not make any decisions. Parents (21,5%) stated that they would send their children to school to provide face to face education. Besides, some parents (13,5%) thought they would support their children’s education themselves at home while some of parents (12,4%) stated that they would continue online education.

## Discussion & Conclusion

The study aimed to reveal the changing lives and needs of families and their children during the pandemic according to the parental reports. Parents who participated in the study stated that their work routines changed during the pandemic. The study conducted by the Bipartisan Policy Center and Morning Consult (2020) revealed that with the pandemic, the working routines of the parents of children under the age of five were affected, 56,0% of them started working from home. The measures (such as closing home, restricting social interaction, social distance) taken to reduce infection during the pandemic affected the habits and durations of children to interact with both their families and their peers. Most of the families participating in the study stated that their children had less communication with their peers and family elders during the pandemic. It was stated that the communications established were carried out in accordance with the social distance rules. Children can obtain information about their relatives and friends' well-being and safety by making video calls using devices such as phones, tablets, and computers (Brooks et al., 2020). Such practices of families can be considered as measures taken to protect the health of both their children and the community (McNeil et al., 2020). Families stated that their children missed many things (missed playing with their friends, spending time outside, and going to school during the lockdown period) that were restricted during the pandemic. Other studies have found that children miss similar practices (Arslan et al., 2021; Egan et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2021; Pascal et al., 2020; Popyk, 2021; Save the Children, 2020). Children naturally need play. The environments where children's play needs can best be met are school and non-school environments where they come together with their friends. Therefore, it can be said that the activities that children miss are actually environments that meet their play needs. The fact that children are away from playgrounds and open areas has caused them to be physically inactive. This situation has negative effects on the health and well-being of children. Therefore, service providers support programs that promote participation in physical activities to reduce the negative impacts on children (Ostermeier et al., 2022).

During the pandemic, families carry out activities such as reading books, telling stories, painting, and singing at home to minimize their children's learning losses (Barnett & Jung, 2021; Duran ve Ömeroğlu, 2022; Yıldırım, 2021). Studies have revealed that families mostly play physical activities and games with their children (Kurt Demirbaş & Sevgili Koçak, 2020; Lee et al., 2021). Parents can turn their long-term relationship with their children into opportunities with various activities. Many organizations have provided a variety of content (article, video, podcast, smartphone apps) for parents to support their children's development and meet their needs (Harvard University, UNICEF, UNESCO, Triple P, NAEYC). Similarly, the parents who participated in the study had to meet the needs of their children, who were away from their peers, such as playing games and chatting. Anxiety and fear about children's changing lives may have led parents to activities such as chat and games (Özçevik & Ocakçı, 2020). This has led to an increase in the time that parents take care of their children. Half of the parents participating in the study stated that they allocated more than five hours to their children and this time increased compared to the pre-pandemic. Although the time spent by parents with their children has increased, the quality of their interactions seems to have decreased. The pandemic affects the mental health of parents as well as their physical health. Particularly, parents who try to cope with their children's responsibilities most of the day can sometimes have difficulties in overcoming the problems. For example, in one study, parents reported that they felt exhausted and tired because they spent too much time with their children (Duran & Ömeroğlu, 2021). Similarly, the parents in the present study may have experienced the same feelings, and this may have affected the quality of the time they spent with their children. Parents need to make an effort and plan to meet the needs of their children during the pandemic. Parents should provide appropriate environments at home to support children's physical, social, and emotional well-being. For this, parents should talk to children about the pandemic in an appropriate language and make children feel safe (Johnson, 2020). Parents who participated in the study stated that they felt competent in answering their children's questions about safety, nutrition, emotional support needs and the pandemic. This can help children be more resilient to the negative consequences of the pandemic (Johnson, 2020).

Sudden changes in children's lives worry parents the most. Families think that the social development of their children who are away from their peers and school is deeply affected (Bhamani et al., 2020). In addition, parents are concerned about their socio-emotional development (Egan et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2021; Pascal et al., 2020; Popyk, 2021; Save the Children, 2020). Children's socio-emotional skills develop by interacting positively with others, and if they do not have sufficient social competence, they exhibit challenging behaviors (Domitrovich et al., 2017; Ho & Funk, 2018). Therefore, social-emotional well-being of children is adversely affected by the COVID-19 crises and that children need more social support in this process. Families need balanced programs and materials with activities that support the social-emotional and physical well-being of their children. To reduce the negative impact of the pandemic on children, it is necessary to choose materials (such as picture story books) that

allow children to feel that they are not alone and to express their feelings comfortably (Loades et al., 2020; UNICEF, 2021). In the OECD (2020), it was found that children whose parents read books have higher social-emotional skills. Although parents try to support their children within their own means and abilities, they need teachers more than ever (Jones, 2020). Parents who contacted teachers received recommendations for books and games, learned about the pandemic and child development. Despite this, most of the families stated that teacher support was not sufficient. In other studies, emphasized that families do not communicate with teachers or school much, and their existing communication is insufficient and incomplete (Garbe et al., 2020; Lau & Lee, 2021; Pavlenko & Pavlenko, 2020). Similarly, Stites et al. (2021) also found that teachers often focus on mathematics and literacy activities, and they are insufficient to ensure the participation of children in the social-emotional sense. In distance education, teachers and school counselors should frequently contact families and inform families about their children. In this way, families both reduce their worries and feel that their children are safe (Daniel, 2020). As the course of the disease varies, the measures taken for education also differ. In Turkey, with the thought that the rate of infection may increase, early childhood education is sometimes carried out remotely and sometimes face to face. However, available evidence in countries where pre-school education is open shows that the rate of transmission of the disease to children is quite low (Lee & Raszka, 2020). Uncertainty in education also affects the prospective opinions of families. Some of the parents stated that they would send their children back to school. Distance education may not be easy for both preschool children and their parents. This situation may negatively affect the views of parents on distance education (Stites et al., 2021). Significant part of parents stated that they would prefer alternative practices such as home education or online education. Families can support their children's education at home, but it is known that the mental and physical health of children who stay away from school and their friends are at risk (Brooks et al., 2020). Homeschooling families prefer social media and online resources (Lee et al., 2021). It is necessary to pay attention to the quality and reliability of these resources for children. Because when children use online resources, they may be exposed to risks such as aggression, violence, and inappropriate advertisements (Livingstone et al., 2017). Yıldırım (2017) revealed in his study that during the pandemic, parents have expectations such as creating a TV channel with educational content for children, developing activities for parents, creating web-based contents and parent guides, and improving teacher-child interaction for a sustainable preschool education. It is considered important that families' homeschooling practices and online resources they use are monitored by authorized institutions. Overall, the present study gives an idea about the difficulties and needs of children and their parents as a result of the measures taken due to the pandemic. The study shows that parents are worried about their children's educational needs and they expect more support in this regard. In order to minimize the concerns of parents, especially about face-to-face education, misinformation should be prevented, and they should be informed with evidence-based practices.

### Statements of Publication Ethics

We declare that we comply with the principles of publication ethics in our study. Necessary permissions were obtained from the ethics committee of Hacettepe University (Date: 09.06.2020, Document number: 35853172-600).

### Researchers' Contribution Rate

| Authors         | Literature review                   | Method                              | Data Collection                     | Data Analysis                       | Results                             | Conclusion                          | (Other)                  |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Author 1's name | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Author 2's name | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Author 3's name | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Author 4's name | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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