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Problems Encountered and Suggested Solutions in Distance Education

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic, which emerged in early 2020, necessitated an abrupt and large-scale transition from traditional face-to-face education to distance learning modalities across the globe. This sudden shift led to a series of systemic and pedagogical challenges for all stakeholders involved in the education process, including teachers, school administrators, parents, and students. The disruption not only affected instructional delivery but also revealed critical deficiencies in digital infrastructure, pedagogical preparedness, and socio-emotional support mechanisms. The present qualitative study aimed to identify the problems encountered during the distance education process and explore stakeholder-driven solution proposals within the specific context of Sakarya province, Türkiye. The study group consisted of 40 individuals (10 teachers, 10 administrators, 10 parents, and 10 students) representing various educational levels ranging from preschool to high school. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using content analysis techniques to derive themes and categories that reflect common experiences and challenges. Key findings indicate that stakeholders faced a wide range of issues, including limited access to technological tools and stable internet connections, especially among students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Participants emphasized a significant lack of interaction between students and teachers, as well as among peers, leading to increased social isolation and reduced academic motivation. Furthermore, difficulties in monitoring student participation and learning progress, challenges in using the EBA (Education Informatics Network) system, the need for guidance and counseling support, and inconsistencies in lesson planning and knowledge transmission were among the most frequently reported concerns. The study highlights the importance of developing more equitable and resilient digital education infrastructures, teacher training programs, and inclusive policies to ensure the continuity and quality of education in crisis contexts

Keywords:
Distance education, administrator, parent, student, pandemic

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the necessity of developing alternative methods to ensure the continuity of educational activities when face-to-face instruction is interrupted. In this context, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Turkey launched distance education initiatives, primarily through platforms such as the Education Information Network (EBA) and TRT EBA TV, not only to maintain the teaching process under compulsory circumstances but also to support it beyond the emergency phase (MoNE, 2020).

However, alongside its conveniences, distance education has revealed numerous challenges. These challenges are not limited to technical issues but have also had significant pedagogical, psychological, and social implications. All stakeholders in the education system—including teachers, students, parents, and administrators—have encountered various difficulties in adapting to the process. In particular, limited access to equipment and internet, teachers' insufficient skills in producing digital content, and students' loss of attention and motivation have negatively impacted the process (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

It is undeniable that the enforced transition to distance education has accelerated the digital transformation in education. Nevertheless, managing this process effectively requires not only technological competence but also pedagogical proficiency (Karakaya, 2021). Indeed, studies conducted in Turkey indicate that distance education has been insufficient for many students, and that teachers were largely unprepared for this transition (Yıldız & Arslan, 2021).

Recent studies conducted in 2024 and 2025 have examined in more detail the educational impacts of the pandemic and various dimensions of distance learning. For instance, Karaman and Konyalılar (2024) analyzed university students' attitudes toward distance education and found that these attitudes were directly related to satisfaction levels. Similarly, Süvari and Sezgin (2025) investigated middle school teachers' metaphorical

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perceptions of distance education, highlighting the various concerns teachers held about the process. In this regard, a significant relationship was found between teachers' levels of technological literacy and their adaptation to distance education.

Research has also revealed substantial differences in online class participation between primary and secondary school students. Particularly among younger learners, factors such as short attention spans, limited teacher interaction, and weakened social bonds have led to decreased academic performance (Köse & Gündüz, 2021; Çiftçi & Baykal, 2024). Studies involving high school students have pointed to increased exam anxiety, discipline problems in virtual classrooms, and a significant drop in motivation (Ergün & Yalçın, 2022). Additionally, differences in students' digital literacy levels have been shown to directly affect both their adaptation to online education and their learning outcomes (Demir & Yıldız, 2023).

Furthermore, the distance education process has been evaluated from multiple perspectives by parents. Especially those with children in primary school have reported greater difficulties, as they needed to play a more direct role in their children's learning. These challenges included a lack of technological equipment, difficulties in time management, and inadequate academic guidance (Yıldız & Kara, 2021). Parents generally viewed distance education as a temporary solution that negatively affected their children's academic and social development (Kaya & Polat, 2023). Nevertheless, some parents expressed that the process led them to become more involved in their children's education, which in turn had positive effects on intra-family communication (Türkmen & Uğraş, 2021).

In addition, a study conducted by Çetin and Çakır (2024) highlighted teachers' experiences during the sudden transition to emergency remote teaching. The study emphasized issues such as professional development, challenges in using digital tools, and limited interaction with students. These and similar studies shed light on various aspects of distance education and provide valuable insights for evaluating current practices.

The success of distance education depends not only on the performance of teachers and students but also on the leadership skills of administrators and the supportive roles of parents. Literature indicates that school administrators' ability to manage the process plays a critical role in teacher motivation and student academic achievement (Gülbahar & Kalelioğlu, 2021). Moreover, the involvement of parents in the educational process is crucial for sustaining learning, especially for younger students (Özer et al., 2020).

Another important aspect of distance education is the provision of guidance and psychological counseling services. Students' experiences of social isolation, loss of academic motivation, and uncertainty about the future during this period have increased the need for such services. However, providing these services in an online setting poses several limitations in terms of both accessibility and effectiveness (Şahin & Gültekin, 2021). The inability to meet students' emotional needs has negatively affected not only their academic performance but also their overall well-being (Aydın & Taş, 2022).

Within this context, the current study aims to reveal, in a multidimensional manner, the experiences of teachers, school administrators, parents, and students with regard to distance education in the Hendek district of Sakarya province. While existing literature often focuses on a single stakeholder group, this study comparatively examines the experiences of four key stakeholder groups, aiming to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the current situation. In this respect, the study seeks to contribute empirical data to support policies and practices aimed at improving the quality of distance education.

Problem Statement

What are the problems experienced in distance education?

Sub-Problems

- What are the challenges faced by teachers during the distance education process, and what are their proposed solutions?

- What are the challenges faced by school administrators during the distance education process, and what are their proposed solutions?
- What are the challenges faced by students during the distance education process, and what are their proposed solutions?
- What are the challenges faced by parents during the distance education process, and what are their proposed solutions?

METHOD

This study is descriptive in nature and is designed using a survey model. The data of this research was analyzed with the qualitative descriptive method. Due to the large number of participants in the study and the fact that the data were collected using a semi-structured interview form, the data of the study was analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method. The study population consists of individuals in various roles who either work or study in Sakarya. The sample includes a total of 40 participants, comprising 10 school administrators, 10 teachers, 10 students, and 10 parents. The participants were selected among volunteers who had direct experience with the distance education process and were capable of reflecting on their experiences. The criterian sampling method, a type of purposive sampling commonly used in qualitative research, was employed in determining the participants (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In compliance with ethical principles, participants' identities were kept confidential, and coding was used during interviews. Students were coded as "STU", teachers as "TCH", parents as "PAR", and administrators as "ADM". Among the 10 students participating in the study, their ages ranged from 10 to 15 years. Three students were in the 10–11 age group, and seven were between 13–15 years. Six students resided in rural areas (villages), while four lived in the district center. As for the parents, four were between the ages of 30–40, three between 40–50, and three were over 50. The vast majority of parents (90%) lived in the district center, while only one resided in a village. The teachers included in the study had professional experience ranging from 1 to 16 years. Three teachers had 1–5 years of experience, five had 8–10 years, and two had 14 or more years. Eight of the teachers were married, and two were single. In terms of subject areas, three were classroom teachers, two taught Turkish, and the remaining five specialized in science, social studies, guidance and psychological counseling (GPC), mathematics, and English. Nine teachers lived in the district center, and one resided in a rural area. Regarding administrators, their professional experience ranged from 6 to 39 years. Two had 5–10 years of experience, four had 15–20 years, and another four had 20 or more years. Nine of the administrators were married, and one was single. Their professional backgrounds included five classroom teachers, two physical education teachers, one early childhood education teacher, one information technologies teacher, and one science teacher. Nine administrators lived in the district center, while one resided in a rural area.

Data Collection Tools and Process

The data of this study were collected through semi-structured interview forms developed specifically for four different participant groups. In addition to the interview forms tailored for teachers, administrators, students, and parents, a "Personal Information Form" was also used to gather basic demographic information from the participants. During the data collection process, face-to-face interviews were conducted based on the semi-structured interview protocol. Prior to the interviews, participants were informed in detail about the purpose and process of the research, principles of confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Necessary ethical approvals were obtained. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, and the recordings were later transcribed verbatim by the researcher. In analyzing the data, content analysis, which is frequently employed in qualitative research, was preferred. The participants' views, direct quotations were included, frequencies of these quotations were calculated, and the data were interpreted within a cause-effect framework to draw meaningful conclusions.

FINDINGS

Teachers' Opinions Regarding the Challenges Faced During Distance Education

Table 1. Problems Encountered by Teachers During the Distance Education Process and Their Suggestions

Main Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Descriptions
Problems Encountered by Teachers	Originating from the teacher	Lack of preparatory training	T4, T8
		Presentation and technology usage difficulties	T2, T3, T7, T8
		Lack of communication	T3, T4
		Lack of participation and unwillingness	T2, T3, T4, T5, T9
	Originating from the student	Inability to comprehend/Inadaptability and physical problems	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10
		Inadaptability and physical problems	T4
		Need for guidance support	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9
	Other problems	Lack of technology and internet infrastructure	T4, T5, T6, T7, T8
		Difficulties in lesson delivery	T1, T5
		Inequality of opportunity	T3, T4, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10
		Indifferent or controlling parents	T4, T7
		Inefficiency and lack of assessment	T8, T9, T10
		Ensuring equality of opportunity	T5, T6, T9
		Training and implementations via EBA	T1, T3, T4, T6, T7, T8
	Suggestions	Strengthening technology infrastructure	T5, T6, T8
		Encouraging participation	T9, T10
		Assessment, classroom control, and interaction	T2, T9

According to Table 1, teachers' views are categorized under three sub-themes: teacher-related problems, student-related problems, and other problems. Within the sub-theme of teacher-related problems, the most frequently emphasized issue is the difficulty in delivering lessons and using technology effectively. The most commonly highlighted codes pertain to students' inability to comprehend the presented information and the need for guidance and counseling support. Under the sub-theme of other problems, the most frequently mentioned issues are deficiencies in technological and internet infrastructure, as well as inequalities in educational opportunities. In this context, the most emphasized suggestions offered by teachers regarding the challenges faced during the distance education process are the implementation of various educational practices and the organization of training programs.

Other Problems

In response to the question posed to teachers, *"What are your positive and negative thoughts about the distance education process?"*, the participants generally stated that while technology provided certain benefits, it also caused difficulties in lesson delivery. They emphasized that distance education was not suitable for some subjects, negatively affected students, and caused interruptions in education due to problems with internet infrastructure. Teachers also noted that parents created a pressuring environment for students, that having lessons every day was problematic, and although distance education could not replace face-to-face instruction, it was implemented out of necessity.

School Administrators' Views on the Problems Encountered in Distance Education

The main categories, sub-themes, codes, and suggestions related to the problems experienced by school administrators during the distance education process are summarized in the table below.

Table 2. Problems Encountered by School Administrators During the Distance Education Process and Their Suggestions

Main Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Descriptions
Problems Encountered by Administrators	Originating from the Administrator	Inappropriate home environment	A9
		Lack of training, knowledge and equipment	A3, A8, A9, A10
		Difficulties in presentation and technology use	A2, A3, A4, A5, A7, A8, A9
		Lack of communication	A3, A4, A8, A9
		Lack of participation, unwillingness, screen-off behavior	A2, A3, A5, A9
		Lack of student-teacher interaction, peer communication and socialization	A1, A3, A6, A10
	Originating from the student	Inadaptability and physical problems	A2, A6
		Need for guidance support	A2, A3, A4, A6, A8, A9
		Lack of technology and internet infrastructure	A3, A5, A8, A9, A10
		Difficulties in lesson delivery and information transfer	A1, A2, A5, A8, A9, A10
		Inequality of opportunity	A5, A10
		Inefficiency, lack of eye contact, no feedback	A6, A7, A8, A10
	Other Problems	Inability to conduct sports activities, academic decline	A4
		Overly controlling parents	A8
		Ensuring equality of opportunity	A3, A9, A10
		Receiving digital training, availability of lesson materials	A2, A4, A7, A8
	Suggestions	Strengthening technology and internet infrastructure, using new web tools	A3, A7, A9, A10
		Encouraging and monitoring participation	A6
		Splitting overcrowded classes	A8

According to Table 2, the views of school administrators regarding the challenges encountered during the distance education process are grouped under three sub-themes: administrator-related issues, student-related issues, and other issues. Within this framework, the most frequently emphasized problems include difficulties in delivering lessons and using technology, the lack of teacher-student interaction, communication deficiencies among students, lack of socialization, and the need for guidance services.

Under the sub-theme of other issues, the most frequently mentioned problems are deficiencies in technology and internet infrastructure, as well as difficulties in lesson delivery and information transmission.

In this context, the proposed solutions by administrators concerning the problems they encountered during distance education include strengthening the technological and internet infrastructure, using new web tools, receiving digital pedagogy training, providing access to instructional materials, and offering professional development opportunities.

Parents' Views on the Challenges Faced During Distance Education

Table 3. Challenges Faced by Parents During the Distance Education Process and Their Suggestions

Main Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Descriptions
Problems Encountered by Parents	Originating from the Parent	Inappropriate home environment	P1
		Technological equipment and internet deficiency	P1
		Inability to support the student	P3, P4, P5, P9, P10
	Originating from the Student	Lack of participation, unwillingness, screen-off behavior	P3
		Lack of interaction with teacher and peers, communication problems, lack of socialization, detachment from school	P2, P8
		Inadaptability	P7
		Need for guidance	P8
	Other Problems	Technology and internet infrastructure problems, EBA connection issues	P1, P2, P5, P7, P9
		Inequality of opportunity	P1
		Inefficiency, lack of student monitoring, problems with crowded and noisy classrooms, inability of students to express themselves	P4, P5
		Long lesson duration, irregular schedule, unplanned lessons	P6, P7
		Ensuring equality of opportunity	P1, P5, P8
		Providing training, new web tools, software, projects, and applications	P8, P9
	Suggestions	Technology support and free internet, strengthening internet infrastructure	P1, P5, P8, P9
		Encouraging participation and student monitoring	P3
		Splitting overcrowded classes, reducing lesson duration, conducting planned lessons	P4, P6
		Creating environments to enhance students' adaptation and socialization	P2, P7, P8

According to Table 3, the problems encountered by parents during the distance education process are grouped under three sub-themes: *parent-related issues, student-related issues, and other problems*. These issues are primarily identified as the inability to support the student adequately, the lack of interaction between student-teacher and peers, lack of communication, social isolation, and students' disengagement from school. Other problems include shortcomings in technological equipment and internet infrastructure, issues with EBA connectivity, inefficiency, difficulties in monitoring students, challenges in managing large and noisy virtual classrooms, students' inability to express themselves in such environments, long lesson durations, irregular schedules, and the unplanned start of lessons. The solutions suggested by parents in response to these problems are: ensuring equal opportunities, strengthening technology and internet infrastructure, providing technological equipment support and free internet access, and creating environments that foster student adaptation and socialization.

Students' views on the challenges they faced during distance education

Table 4. Problems encountered by students during the distance education process and their proposed solutions

MainTheme	Sub theme	Codes	Descriptions
Problems Encountered by Students	Originating from the Administrator	Technological equipment and internet deficiency	S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S10
	Originating from the Student	Irregular participation	S6, S10
		Infrastructure problems and EBA connection issues	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S9, S10
		Inequality of opportunity	S1, S10
	Other Problems	Lack of collaborative activities, absence of PE classes	S3, S4
		Inability to support the student	S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9
		Ensuring equality of opportunity	S5, S6
		Providing tech improvements distributing materials	S1, S3, S4, S7
		Tech equipment support and free internet, improved infrastructure	S5, S6
	Suggestions	Lesson repetition and inclusion of PE classes	S3, S10
		Structured scheduling of lessons	S1, S2, S3

According to Table 4, students' problems are categorized under two sub-themes: student-related and other problems. These issues include a lack of technological equipment, problems and/or deficiencies in internet connection, EBA access issues, and the lack of support provided to students. Suggested solutions include ensuring equal opportunities, implementing technological improvements (such as enhancing audio and video quality, internet speed, EBA access), distributing lesson materials, and organizing lesson schedules in a more structured way that suits students' needs.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, and SUGGESTIONS

Teachers' limited competencies in using technology during the distance education process, along with internet infrastructure problems, lack of necessary equipment, and unmet guidance needs, have significantly reduced the efficiency of the process. As noted by researchers such as Avcı and Akdeniz (2021) and Balaman and Hanbay Tiryaki (2021), Işık and Yalın Uçar (2021) teachers may have experienced significant adaptation challenges during the sudden transition to distance education. The limited duration of live lessons, insufficient assessment practices, and lack of healthy interaction with students have further complicated this process (Çakın & Akyavuz, 2020; Erkoca, 2021; Yalın Uçar & Tuğyan, 2021). Indeed, teachers' low levels of competence in educational technologies may have hindered the effective use of these tools (Asmara, 2020). Kavuk and Demirtaş (2021) pointed out that the biggest problems faced by teachers were related to students' lack of technical infrastructure, the inadequacy of the EBA system, and parents being overly involved. Aydın and Yalçın (2024) found that teachers struggled to produce digital materials, which negatively affected the quality of the instructional process. Similarly, Kılıç and Tuncer (2025) stated that teachers could not sufficiently benefit from guidance services during distance education, and this shortcoming may have had a negative impact on student motivation. Studies conducted in 2022 (Özdemir & Sezer, 2022) identified that teachers faced fundamental challenges such as being unable to carry out assessments, difficulty tracking students, and increased student distraction during lessons. Additionally, a 2023 study by Karataş and Altınay revealed that deficiencies in teachers' technical competencies adversely affected both the teaching process and student engagement.

Difficulties in establishing student-teacher interaction, lack of communication, insufficient guidance support, and challenges in lesson delivery are among the problems that school administrators have either experienced or observed. Researchers such as Özdoğan and Berkant (2020), Koç (2020), Attri (2012), and Gewin (2020), Yalın Uçar and Cömert Aydın (2021) have emphasized that during the distance education process,

administrators faced limitations in providing technical infrastructure, developing assessment systems, and supporting teachers. Sarı (2020) noted that due to a lack of strategic planning during crisis periods, school administrators struggled to respond effectively to the needs of both teachers and students. Demir and Şahin (2024) revealed that administrators lacked adequate digital leadership skills, which in turn reduced the effectiveness of distance education processes. Furthermore, the study by Güler and Taşçı (2022) highlighted that administrators experienced deficiencies in supporting teachers and maintaining effective communication.

The problems faced by students are categorized under two main headings: student-related and other issues. The most frequently mentioned problems include inadequate internet access, lack of technological equipment, difficulties accessing the EBA (Education Informatics Network) platform, and insufficient support during the learning process. Studies by Yılmaz-İnce et al. (2020), Özyürek et al. (2016), Andsoy (2012), and Barış (2015) have noted that students encountered technical barriers to accessing online education, which led to distractions, decreased motivation, and learning loss. Şimşek and Arslan (2024) reported that high school students had difficulty focusing on lessons during remote education. Yıldırım and Kaya (2025) emphasized that students experienced a decline in academic performance due to the lack of peer interaction in online classrooms. A study by Usta and Demirtaş (2022) revealed that students struggled to remain attentive in front of screens for extended periods, had difficulty following lesson content, and that the absence of interaction with teachers negatively impacted their learning. Bozkurt and Mutlu's (2023) research indicated that the disorganized home environment and presence of distractions significantly reduced students' academic performance.

In the context of the fourth sub-problem, data obtained from parents were grouped under three themes: parent-related, student-related, and other issues. The most frequently cited problems included difficulties in monitoring students' participation in classes, lack of interaction, inability to replicate the school environment, lack of technological resources, and lack of opportunities for socialization. Studies by Karakuş et al. (2021), Sezgin and Fırat (2020), İnci Kuzu (2020), Akyürek (2020), and Bayburtlu (2020) support these findings. Uçar and Eren (2025) found that children's participation in distance education varied significantly depending on their parents' socioeconomic status, which directly influenced students' academic achievement. Additionally, in a study conducted by Aydın and Kuru (2022), it was stated that the majority of parents lacked the necessary digital equipment to follow distance education, and that irregular lesson schedules and difficulties in tracking online classes disrupted the educational process. Similarly, the study by Kaya and Duman (2023) reported that parents experienced difficulties using online platforms and lacked the knowledge required to support their children's motivation.

In conclusion, the research findings indicate that the challenges encountered during the distance education process were shaped around similar themes across different stakeholder groups. At the core of these issues lie technological, pedagogical, and administrative inadequacies, and it is evident that the principle of equal opportunity in education has been compromised. To develop more effective solutions for potential future crises, comprehensive and systematic planning is essential.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations have been made for practitioners and researchers:

- In-service training programs aimed at improving teachers' digital pedagogical competencies should be expanded.
- The Ministry of National Education and local authorities should address school-based internet infrastructure and equipment deficiencies.
- Digital literacy and distance education support programs should be developed for parents.
- Equal opportunities should be ensured for students in terms of internet and device access.
- Assessment and evaluation approaches specific to distance education should be developed, and teachers should be trained in these methods.
- The accessibility of platforms like EBA should be improved, user-friendly interfaces should be developed, and a technical support hotline should be established.

- Digital guidance applications and virtual class meetings should be planned to enhance communication between students, teachers, and parents.
- Teaching materials and activity examples related to distance education should be collected in digital repositories to facilitate sharing among teachers.
- Teacher education programs in universities should equip pre-service teachers with skills in online classroom management and distance assessment and evaluation.

These recommendations aim not only to address existing shortcomings but also to strengthen the resilience of the education system in the face of possible future crises.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed by the author(s) with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Ethics Approval

The formal ethics approval was granted by the Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Sakarya University. We conducted the study in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration in 1975.

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Research and Publication Ethics Statement

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

The study was approved by the research team's university ethics committee of the Sakarya University (Approval Number/ID: 16.02.2021-E.11489. Hereby, we as the authors consciously assure that for the manuscript the following is fulfilled:

- This material is the authors' own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere.
- The paper reflects the authors' own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.
- The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.
- All sources used are properly disclosed.

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

The authors provide equal contribution to this work.

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