

Psycho-social and educational dimension of the COVID-19 lockdown for elementary school students

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Keywords:</p> <p>Child anxiety Psycho-social well-being Online education COVID-19 lockdown SCARED</p> <p>Research Article</p>	<p>The aim of this study is to investigate psycho-social status and online education experiences of elementary school students during COVID-19 lockdown process. Constructed as a mixed methods research, this study follows a sequential explanatory design. Quantitative data was gathered through snowball sampling technique by using The Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED) Scale, and qualitative data was gathered through one-to-one interviews with volunteer participants. Descriptive statistics of the SCARED revealed the presence of an Anxiety Disorder in general. Separation Anxiety Disorder factor stood out among others with the highest score. Content analysis revealed that students were dissatisfied with the online education applications conducted during the lockdown. Based on the findings, implications related to the social and educational dimensions of the lockdown period for young learners were discussed. Suggestions for designing online educational applications that aim to meet target learners' age-specific needs and characteristics were made.</p>

1. Introduction

Besides in the field of health, the countries around the world have also had to fight against financial, sociological and psychological effects of COVID-19 pandemic, which was first reported on 31 December, 2019 by Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, China. Since the novel coronavirus was identified, in many countries around the world certain precautions, one of which is the application of lockdown, have been taken. "Different countries worldwide have introduced various solutions during the pandemic to continue the education process. Although children appear resistant to this type of infectious disease, they play an important role in the spread of the outbreak, which was the main reason to close the schools worldwide (Abdulmir & Hafidh, 2020). According to an announcement by UNESCO (2020), 290.5 million primary and secondary school young learners were affected by the nationwide shutdowns in March, 2020. The number soared up to over 1.6 billion students worldwide in December (UNESCO, 2020), which means that education was disrupted for 90% of the world's student population due to the pandemic (UNICEF, 2020b). Following the school closures, face-to-face education was replaced by online education applications at all levels around the world. During the transition to online teaching, measures in a way to support school life academically at all levels have been taken. However, in particular, the education life of primary school students is not only about teaching and comprehending lessons. Not only academic development but also

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social and psychological development of children through interaction with peers during formal education at schools should be considered seriously. January report of UNESCO (2021) emphasizes that long-term school closures rise psycho-social toll on students and disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable. Furthermore, among other formal lessons at the primary school level, guidance activities organized and followed by counselors focusing on psychological counseling were also interrupted.

Children's psychological health is shaped within the social environment they live as Bandura (1989) highlights the significance of social environment as contributing factor in shaping an individual's behavior in Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). For children, social and psychological development is maintained by social interactions with peers; therefore, long-term isolation and casting away from school environment might affect psycho-social well-being of children and adolescents negatively (Giford-Smith & Brownell, 2013). Erikson's (1963) school age stage (6-12 years) is associated with psycho-social development referred to industry versus inferiority, and it takes place in school and neighborhood through significant relations with others. During this stage the children are exposed to challenges from their parents or peers, and they try to gain competence by putting efforts to achieve certain skills to meet those challenges. If they are not able to gain those skills, they might experience sense of failure and disappointment (Erikson, 1963). In the time of pandemic, the children generally cannot receive input regarding the above-mentioned challenges from their parents. Moreover, due to the home confinement during the lockdowns, they cannot interact with their peers. The cultural and educational development of the children is shaped depending on the quality of their personal, social and emotional development at early ages. Therefore, isolation process of the primary school children should be monitored closely.

2. Literature

COVID-19 lockdown and isolation, which led to casting away from peers and school environment due to strict social distancing measures, should be considered seriously in terms of well-being of young learners. Because of the lockdown and school closures, children have become devoid of essential social-emotional learning, missed out formative relationships with peers, and more importantly, missed out the opportunities for play (Levinson et al., 2020). In addition, uncertainties regarding school closure periods, execution of online exams, novel distance performance evaluations and family-induced stress might also be counted as factors affecting young learners' psycho-social well-being negatively.

Long-term closure of schools and being kept at home in different conditions that are not natural might have physiological and psychological negative effects on children (Brazendale et al., 2017; Brooks et al., 2020). As Wang et al. (2020) point out, it is observed that children are physically less active, have more irregular sleep and are cardiovascularly weak at the end of long-term separation from school and when they are closed at home. With the decrease of time spent outside in the case of home closure during the period of epidemic diseases, physiological and psychological problems caused directly or indirectly by distancing from activities and not being able to interact with their peers become more serious (Wang et al., 2020). Pandemics are known to have undesired psychological effects on children such as fear, boredom, long-term stress, frustration, loneliness due to lack of face-to-face contact with classmates, and teachers, and researchers point out that these effects might be long-lasting (Brooks et al., 2020). Miranda et al. (2020) caution that during the outbreaks, a special care should be provided for children and adolescents more than others in order to help preserve mental health because they are at the critical stage of the development. Limited social contact with peers during the pandemic in Japan has led to anxiety and distress for children and their families (Isumi et al., 2020). Similarly, in another study by Zhou et al. adolescents showed depression and anxiety symptoms due to COVID-19 pandemic in China. During times of outbreaks of disasters not only adults but also children are exposed to radical changes in their daily routine and social lives (Danese et al., 2019). The researchers asserted that alternative solutions, such as web-based platforms, were developed for delivering the lectures; however, uncertainty regarding the duration of the

closures and challenges regarding online education might have negative effects on students' psychological health (Zhou et al., 2020).

World-wide pandemics might occur at any time. Therefore, the solutions for the adverse effects of such inconveniences on children's psychological well-being and academic development should be considered for all possible disaster scenarios, not just specific occurrences. As can be seen, the psychological effects of epidemics should be taken seriously, as well as the negative physiological effects. Considering the epidemic diseases that have occurred in the world in recent years, many countries as well as Turkey have had to take the large-scale measures against COVID-19 outbreak. While the spread of the epidemic is tried to be slowed down through social isolation and lockdown measures that are applied throughout the country, the public is informed through public spots published in the national media. According to the Address Based Population Registration System (ABPRS) results, the child population rate was 27.5% across the country as of the end of 2019 (TÜİK, 2019). From this point of view, child population seems to be considerably high in Turkey. It should be considered that children as well as adults can be affected by the practices that are reflected in daily life within the scope of lockdown measures and education interruption throughout the country. This study intends to investigate well-being of elementary school students in terms of psycho-social status and online education during COVID-19 lockdown process. It aims to elaborate how children are feeling in terms of their social and educational life during the curfew. The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. Do elementary school students experience any anxiety disorder during COVID-19 lockdown?
2. How do elementary school students feel about their social lives during the lockdown?
3. How do elementary school students evaluate online education experiences during the lockdown?

The findings of this study might shed light on the social, educational and emotional needs and expectations of this age group. The findings could also help authorities become more aware of this social issue and help them figure out possible solutions for this phenomenon for the target age group. To be able to get the bigger picture of the issue, the quantitative data was gathered through snowball sampling technique, which does not limit the source of data to a specific location but lets the spread of the instrument to many different participants in various cities of the country. Upon receiving the quantitative data through a valid and reliable scale specifically designed for children, one-to-one interviews with the volunteer participants were conducted in order to complement and elaborate the quantitative findings.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were elementary school children from various cities in Turkey. The data was collected during COVID-19 lockdown in May, 2020. The sample was selected through snowball sampling technique. This is a useful technique in exploratory, qualitative and descriptive research, especially in those studies that focus on vulnerable population (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). Digital form of SCARED was first sent to the parents who are known by the researcher, and the parents of the initial group were asked to spread the scale to as many parents they know as possible. In two-week time the number reached to 154 participants. Demographic information of the participants can be found in Table 1.

Table 1.

Demographic information of the participants

City	Number of Participants
Ankara	45
Eskişehir	37
Bursa	27

İstanbul	19
OTHER	26

The ages of the participants ranged from 7 to 14. They were all primary school students. The distribution of participants by age can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2.

Age range of the participants

Age	Frequency
7	20
8	28
9	14
10	20
11	11
12	18
13	20
14	23
Total	154

3.2. Instruments

In the quantitative data collection phase of the study The Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders-SCARED (Birmaher et al., 1999) scale, which was developed to scan childhood anxiety disorders, was used. The Turkish validity and reliability study of SCARED was performed by Çakmakçı (2003). The scale consists of 41 items. Each item receives zero, one or two points according to the severity of the symptom. Total score and five separate factor points are obtained. The total score is suggested as a cut-off point of 25 and is thought to indicate the presence of an Anxiety Disorder. Each factor points to a separate Anxiety Disorder. The five factor points, each calculated separately, have their own cut-off points and are calculated as follows:

- Panic Disorder and Somatic Symptom: when items 1, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 19, 22, 24, 27, 30, 34 and 38 have a total score of 7 and above,
- Common Anxiety Disorder: when total score of items 5, 7, 14, 21, 23, 28, 33, 35 and 37 is 9 and above,
- Separation Anxiety Disorder: when total score of items 4, 8, 13, 16, 20, 25, 29 and 31 is 5 and above,
- Social Anxiety Disorder: when total score of items 3, 10, 26, 32, 39, 40 and 41 is 8 and above,
- School Phobia: when total score of items 2, 11, 17 and 36 is 3 and above.

For the qualitative data, open-ended questions were prepared by the researcher. The questions aimed to gather in-dept information related to participants' feelings, daily routines, and online education practices during the lockdown.

3.3. Research Design and Procedure

Constructed as a mixed methods research, this study follows a sequential explanatory design. Sequential explanatory design has two stages. Following the quantitative phase, qualitative phase is conducted in order to elaborate or improve the quantitative results (Creswell, 2003). In this study quantitative data was gathered through snowball sampling technique by using The Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional

Disorders (SCARED) Scale and qualitative data was gathered through one-to-one interviews with volunteer participants.

SCARED was transferred to a Google Form by adding a section containing information about the content of the research, the confidentiality of the data, what purpose the data will be used for and the consent of the parents. Parents of the participating children were asked to provide guidance for those who are younger than 10 years old. The form was shared with the participating parents in the third week of May, 2020 when the lockdown for those who are under 20 years old had been going on for about a couple of months.

For the qualitative phase of the study five children whose parents accepted the invitation took part in one-to-one interviews. The interviews lasted for about 10-15 minutes. All interviews were conducted on the phone and the conversations were recorded. The demographic information about interview participants can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3.

Demographic information about the interview participants

Participant	Age	City
Deren	9	Bursa
Ela	10	Eskisehir
Gokhan	10	Eskisehir
Pinar	9	Ankara
Ada	8	İstanbul

3.4. Data Analysis

For the quantitative data, the statistical package SPSS was used to carry out the exploratory factor analyses of the scale. For the qualitative data, the researcher transcribed the recorded conversations, and two independent researchers carried out the content analysis. The researchers revised the data until they reach consensus on the codes and themes. Different methods are used for content analysis in the literature. One of these methods involves coding the data related to the theoretical and conceptual structure of the study according to some pre-determined codes or themes in the literature. This method can be categorized as deductive (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Another widely used method in literature is the traditional content analysis method. In this method, researchers avoid using preset themes in the literature (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). Instead of using predefined themes, researchers allow the names of categories and themes to flow from the data (Kondracki et al., 2002). This method is defined as inductive category development (Mayring, 2004). In this study, traditional content analysis method was used since the purpose of the study was to describe a relatively new phenomenon and the existing contextual research literature on the phenomenon was limited. The inductive approach used in this study includes simultaneous comparison of all semantic units obtained by inductive category coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). First, important expressions were highlighted, then codes were created from these expressions, and then more general themes were reached by bringing these codes together.

3.5. Findings and Discussions

Descriptive statistics on each factor of SCARED revealed different mean scores that can be seen in Table 4. For each factor, scores of relevant items were added up and the total score for each participant was found. Next, by using the total score, the mean score for each factor for all participants was calculated. The mean score for Panic Disorder and Somatic Symptom factor was found to be 5.85, which is lower than the cut-off-point 7. For Common Anxiety Disorder factor, the mean score for all participants was found to be 5.51, which is lower than the cut-off-point 9. For Separation Anxiety Disorder factor, the mean score was 6.34, which is higher than the cut-off point 5. For Social Anxiety Disorder, the mean score was 6.34, which is lower than the cut-off point 8. Finally, for School Phobia factor, the mean score was 1.75, which is lower than the cut-off-point 3. Based on the findings, Separation Anxiety Disorder factor was the only factor that

exceeded the threshold value among others. Scores of the rest of the factors showed no serious anxiety problems. However, total score of five separate factor points is suggested to have a cut-off-point of 25, and when the total score is higher, it is thought to indicate the presence of an Anxiety Disorder. In this study total score of five factors was found to be 25.93, which is higher than the cut-off-point.

Table 4.

Descriptive statistics of factors in SCARED

	N	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Cut-off Points	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
Panic Disorder	154	25	0	25	5.85	7	.398	4.936	24.363
Common Anxiety	154	18	0	18	5.51	9	.338	4.195	17.598
Separation Anxiety	154	15	0	15	*6.34	5	.258	3.200	10.238
Social Anxiety	154	14	0	14	6.48	8	.249	3.087	9.532
School Phobia	154	8	0	8	1.75	3	.140	1.736	3.014
Total					*25.93	25			

**Higher values boldfaced*

Table 4 also shows the range of each factor. It can be seen that the range for each factor is quite high. That is, while some of the participants were experiencing high degree of anxiety for any factor, some others did not have any symptom of anxiety for any factor. Therefore, rather than averaging the scores of all participants, it is more reasonable to examine the scores for each participant individually. Figure 1 shows frequency of high level anxiety for each factor according to their cut-off points. Among 154 participants 109 of them had high level of Separation Anxiety Disorder, which nearly equals to two third of the total participants. It was followed by Social Anxiety Disorder with 55 participants, that means almost one third of all participants. Both Panic Disorder and School Phobia had the same frequency with 46 participants each. The least frequent factor was found to be Common Anxiety Disorder with only 31 participants, the frequency which corresponds to one fifth of the participants.

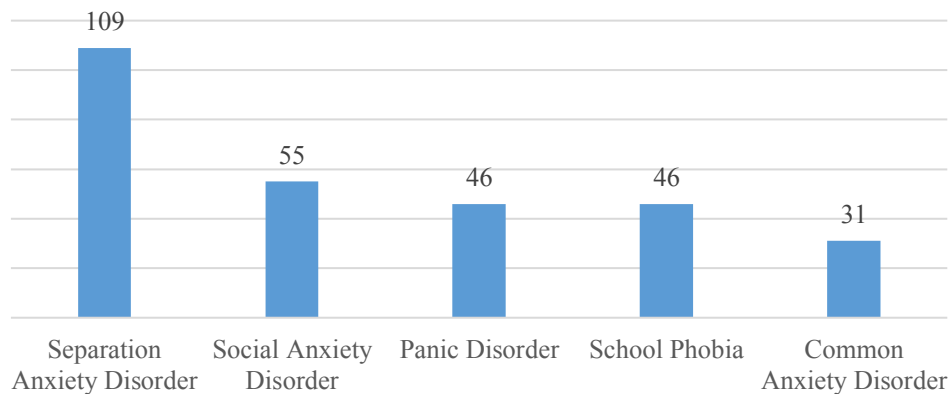


Fig. 1. Cut-off point frequency for each factor

The data of each factor was also analyzed in terms of age groups. Table 5 shows how mean scores for each factor differ according to age groups. Panic Disorder factor was found to be higher than the cut-off point among participants in the age group of 14. None of the age groups scored higher than the cut-off point in Common Anxiety Disorder factor, which means 31 participants with higher scores than the cut-off point were scattered across all age groups. Except for age group of 12, all age groups scored higher in Separation Anxiety Disorder factor. There was no higher score than the cut-off point in the age groups for Social

Anxiety Disorder factor, which means 55 participants who scored higher than the cut-off point were scattered across all age groups. Finally, there was no higher score than the cut-off point in any age group for School Phobia factor, which means 46 participants with high scores were scattered across all age groups.

Table 5.

Distribution of factors by age group

Age		Panic Disorder	Common Anxiety	Separation Anxiety	Social Anxiety	School Phobia
7	Mean	4.95	3.05	8.10	7.30	1.20
	N	20	20	20	20	20
	Std. Dev.	3.546	2.328	3.110	3.063	1.881
8	Mean	4.68	5.18	7.25	7.43	1.36
	N	28	28	28	28	28
	Std. Dev.	3.300	3.897	2.888	2.574	1.283
9	Mean	6.64	5.21	5.86	6.14	1.29
	N	14	14	14	14	14
	Std. Dev.	4.088	3.191	3.255	2.797	1.490
10	Mean	6.20	5.10	6.05	5.70	2.05
	N	20	20	20	20	20
	Std. Dev.	5.782	4.553	3.410	3.420	2.038
11	Mean	5.09	6.55	7.27	7.82	1.64
	N	11	11	11	11	11
	Std. Dev.	4.300	4.180	3.101	3.219	1.286
12	Mean	5.83	4.78	4.89	6.44	1.39
	N	18	18	18	18	18
	Std. Dev.	4.643	3.574	2.349	3.091	1.145
13	Mean	6.30	6.80	5.95	5.55	2.25
	N	20	20	20	20	20
	Std. Dev.	6.634	4.884	3.576	3.395	1.743
14	Mean	*7.26	7.57	5.26	5.70	2.61
	N	23	23	23	23	23
	Std. Dev.	6.151	4.897	3.003	2.930	2.190

The interviews were conducted with five children from different cities. The findings revealed six different themes with various corresponding codes based on the important statements of the participants. The themes, codes and the important statements of the participants can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6.

Themes, Codes and important statements

Themes	Codes	Important Statements
Feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Hopeful Good to be with mom Good to be with family	<i>Deren.</i> I am bored because of this curfew. I am longing for my friends and I miss school. I miss going out on the street and playing games. I miss the forest, the trees. I am worried a little bit. Sometimes I am hopeful. I miss hugging each other tightly. I am happy because everyone is at home.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative Bored Miss school Long for friends Miss hugging Miss nature Miss playing games Scared Afraid being outside	<i>Ela.</i> When Corona first came out I was scared. I was worried. I was anxious. I miss school very much. I long for being with my friends. It is hard to communicate with friends in online lessons. <i>Gökhan.</i> Not being allowed to go outside is boring. I cannot go out and I miss my cousin very much. I want to go out and play but I cannot. I miss the streets. I am bored because I am home all the time. I am not too worried thanks to my mom. My mom is with me and this is good. She is on leave.

	Difficult communication Anxious Worried	<i>Pınar.</i> Being with mom is good. We have a lot of time to spend together. I miss school very much. I miss my class very much. I cannot see my friends. This is really bad. I sometimes want to go to a park but I am not allowed to. I am home all the time. <i>Ada.</i> I am bored. I am also a little scared. I am afraid of going outside.
Gains	Awareness for cleanliness Awareness for hygiene Awareness for neatness Understanding value of school Understanding value of friends Great to be with mom Start loving home Learning how to protect oneself	<i>Deren.</i> I have understood the reason for cleanliness and hygiene. <i>Ela.</i> I have learned to pay more attention to cleanliness. I have understood the value of school. I have understood the value of my friends. <i>Gökhan.</i> Being with mom is good. When you pay attention to hygiene, there is no problem. <i>Pınar.</i> Being with mom at home and playing games together is great. I have learned to love my home. I have learned to tidy up my room. I wash my hands fifty times a day. Cleanliness is a must. <i>Ada.</i> I try to be cleaner and neater. I try to stay away from others. I have learned how to protect myself.
Coping Strategies	Trying to be happy Keeping busy with activities Drawing Playing games alone Helping housework Playing computer games Reading Singing Organizing room Watching tv Coloring	<i>Deren.</i> I try to be happy. I spend my free time doing activities. I do many activities from morning to night. <i>Ela.</i> I find something to do at home. I draw pictures sometimes. I play games on my own. <i>Gökhan.</i> Sometimes I help mom setting up the table . Sometimes I do my homework or play computer games. <i>Pınar.</i> I sometimes organize my bookcase. I read a lot many books. I sing songs and spend time drawing. <i>Ada.</i> I watch tv. I spend time coloring. I play games on my own. Sometimes I help my mom do housework.
School Lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Home is like school Online teachers better <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative Cannot see teachers alive More difficult online lessons Internet connection problems Cannot understand lessons Monotonous Boring Not real break times Low motivation to participate	<i>Derin.</i> In real life school, I could see my teachers alive. <i>Ela.</i> Online lessons are harder than real school lessons. Lessons on the internet are more difficult than usual lessons so sometimes I do not understand. <i>Gökhan.</i> Even if we do not go to school, our home is like a school. We often have serious internet connection problems during online lessons. Sometimes there is no sound and sometimes video freezes. Sometimes we are logged out completely. Nonstop homework, online lessons, homework, online lessons! My brain burns. <i>Pınar.</i> We have online lessons on the Internet. Some teachers on the internet are giving lectures a lot better than school teachers. But I am bored. <i>Ada.</i> It is both like school and not like school. There are lessons but break times are not like the ones in the school. Sometimes I do not want to listen to online lessons. Sometimes I do not understand.
Preferences	Real life school Seeing people face to face Playing games face to face Staying home staying safe Playing in nature Going to school Playing outside	<i>Deren.</i> I prefer real life school. <i>Ela.</i> I'd rather see my grandparents face to face. Talking on the phone is not the same <i>Gökhan.</i> We videoconference with my cousin but I want to play games with him <i>Pınar.</i> Playing in the grass near the trees is better than home. <i>Ada.</i> I always want to be outside and go to school. Lessons at home are not like at school.
Wishes	Getting rid of the virus Visiting grandparents, relatives Playing outside Going to the stores Being in open air Going to courses No virus in the world Schools start again	<i>Deren.</i> I wish this coronavirus will definitely expire as soon as possible. I want to see my grandparents and my aunt. I want to run outside and play games right away. <i>Ela.</i> I want to go to my grandma's house, I want to go to the store, I want to go out into the garden in the open air. I also miss going to courses. I want the corona to go away and want it to be erased from all over the world. I want to get well soon.

Playing with friends Being in the nature Hugging friends tightly Turning back to normal	<i>Gökhan.</i> I want to go out and relax, I want to play with my friends, but I'm stuck with my mom here! <i>Pınar.</i> I want my school to be opened immediately. I want to go to the park, near the trees. I want to play games with my friends. <i>Ada.</i> I want to hug my friends tightly. I wish everywhere was as before.
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In terms of positive feelings, the participants repeatedly expressed how nice it was to be with their mothers or families, which can be concluded that they would never wish to be apart from them. Some of their statements are as follows:

Gökhan: "It's boring not going out. But my mother is with me. Because she is a teacher and on leave, she is at home. That's why, it's fine. It's not too boring for me because my mom is with me."

Deren: "I spend my free time doing activities. So I try to be happy. I can also see my mother more. I am happy that everyone is at home."

Interviews revealed some negative feelings related to home confinements. Participants repeated that they long for meeting their peers and socializing at school. Some of their statements are as follows:

Ela: "When the minister of health first announced the curfew, I was very upset. I became nervous. I want the corona to pass immediately, I want this virus to extinguish from the world."

Deren: "I am bored because of this curfew. I am longing for my friends and I miss school. I miss going out on the street and playing games. I miss the forest, the trees. My friends and I were playing games in the school yard, I miss that, and I also miss hugging each other tightly. I am worried a little bit."

Ada: "I used to spend time outside every day. I miss being out. I miss being free. Everywhere is dangerous now and I am tired of this."

Participants also mentioned about some personal gains that they have experienced during the curfew. They highlighted that curfew created some awareness about health, hygiene and value of school and social relations. Some of their statements are as follows:

Ela: "I learned to pay more attention to cleanliness, and I understood the value of the school. I understood the value of my friends"

Pınar: "There might be viruses everywhere. Even if we can't see them, they are there. So, we should protect ourselves every time. I learned the importance of washing my hands. Now I wash my hands every minute."

Deren: "I am bored with this lockdown, but on the one hand, I understood the reason for cleanliness, that is, hygiene."

As coping strategies during the curfew, participants mentioned various activities that they enjoyed doing at home. Some of these activities involved doing art activities, helping mom, playing computer games, reading and watching tv. Some of their statements are as follows:

Deren: "I do a lot of things to try to entertain myself. For example, I get up early in the morning and deal with many activities until the evening. I spend my free time doing activities, so I try to be happy."

Ada: "I sometimes draw pictures, listen to music or watch cartoons on TV. I often play online games on my mom's phone."

Ela: "Now I am not allowed to go out, but I can find something to do at home. I occasionally paint, I play games myself. Although I cannot go out on the streets, I can find things to do at home."

Related to school life at home, the interviews with the participants revealed few positive and some negative opinions. One participant mentioned that he was happy with homeschooling and one other participant claimed that online teachers were better than school teachers. In general, participants emphasized that they were bored with homeschooling. Some of their statements are as follows:

Gökhan: *“Do homework, do homework in online lesson, then do normal homework, then play computer games, then sleep, so my routine is like that, and I'm bored now. I want to go out and play, but coronavirus is out there and I don't want to be infected. I want to go out and relax but I am trapped with my mother here”*

Deren: *“I miss attending lessons, I miss break times. I miss being at school with my friends. If I were with my friends, I would do activities, I would do lessons. When I had a breakfast break, I would eat my breakfast with my friends. I miss my school.”*

Ela: *“Lessons on the Internet are a bit more difficult than school. Sometimes I do not understand. I miss going to school. I can't go to school right now, there are online lessons, but communicating in online lessons is more difficult than normal school.”*

Gökhan: *“There is a lot of trouble in internet connection during online classes. Sometimes the sound goes off, sometimes the video freezes. Sometimes the connection is completely disconnected and we are discarded. In online lessons my teacher does not give me the right to speak even though I lift a finger.”*

Ada: *“Online lessons are fine but sometimes I am bored because online classes is not like being at school. I cannot talk to my friends. Sometimes I hardly listen to my teacher on the screen.”*

Interviews revealed other themes related to preferences and wishes of the participants during the curfew. One of the common wishes of the participants was to end the pandemic as soon as possible and return to the old normal. Some of their statements are as follows:

Ela: *“I video chat with my grandparents, but then I can't hug them. I can't do activities with them. I prefer to see them. Video chat is not like that.”*

Gökhan: *“I mean, the worst thing is not being able to see my cousin, there is video chat but I want to play games with him, I want to have fun.”*

Deren: *“We are talking on WhatsApp now. But it is better to play games by hugging tightly I wish this coronavirus will definitely expire as soon as possible.”*

Gökhan: *“I want to go out and relax, I want to play with my friends, but I'm stuck with my mom here! I wish it weren't be like this.”*

Ada: *“I want to hug my friends tightly. I wish everywhere was as before.”*

Pınar: *“I want my school to be opened immediately. I want to go to the park, near the trees. I want to play games with my friends.”*

For such a sensitive study in which the participants were young children, it was considered that integrating not only quantitative but also qualitative data was important for obtaining more in-dept data from the participants. By utilizing mixed methods research, it was possible to gain in breath of understanding and identification of the phenomenon more accurately. For the first phase of the study, descriptive statistics of the SCARED revealed the presence of an Anxiety Disorder in general as the score was slightly higher than the cut-off point. This finding is parallel with the relevant research indicating that children who are isolated or quarantined during pandemic diseases are more likely to develop feelings such as acute stress disorder, adjustment disorder, anxiety, and grief (Sprang & Silman, 2013). A systematic review research performed by Chew et al. (2020) revealed the presence of anxiety with rates varying between 3.2% and 12.6% across eleven out of eighteen SARS-related studies, two H1N1-related studies, and two out of four Ebola-related studies.

When looked into closely, Separation Anxiety Disorder factor stands out among others with the highest score. Also, this factor's high score is seen in all age groups except for age group of 12. One reason for this may be that children feel the fear of losing one of their families due to the news on loss of lives on the media they are exposed to. As Brooks et al. (2020) point out, fear of family losses is one of the negative psychological impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on neglected children, which might remain permanent. Also, that the children had never left their families during the long quarantine process might have had such an impact on them.

For the Panic Disorder factor, only the age group of 14 scores higher than the cut-off-point and the scores get higher as the participants get older. It can be concluded that as the kids get older, they become more aware of what is going around them. That is, authorities should not be mistaken for older children to handle such processes more easily. It seems that they feel more panicked than the younger ones. Another factor that should be highlighted is Social Anxiety Disorder, which was scored high by one third of the participants and which had a score closest to the cut-off point among the other factors. This finding seems quite expected as those children are bombarded with the warnings and alerts from their parents and the media about not being close to the other people and keeping their social distance. As McCloskey et al. (2020) pointed out that soon after the outbreak, the warnings about avoiding public gatherings, family occasions and group meetings came from governments, media, doctors, celebrities and many different sources in the societies in order to stop the spread of the pandemic. Similarly, in the study of Roy et al. (2020), most (98 %) of the participants thought social distancing was essential to stop the virus from spreading. Likewise, the participants in this study might have tended to feel uneasy when they were with people other than their family members.

In general School Phobia factor seems to be the one with the lowest score. The reason behind this might be the fact that government in Turkey has made a decision to stop face to face education for the spring term in 2020. Therefore, the children knew that they were not going to attend the classes in their schools.

The content analysis of the interviews revealed some themes. For the 'feelings' theme it can be concluded that the participants had more negative feelings than positive ones. Positive feelings were about being hopeful and content with being together with mother and the rest of the family. Negative feelings were about missing school, friends, relatives and the previous routine. Children seem to be scared of going out either due to the prohibitions or threat of coronavirus. The other theme was about "gains". The children mentioned about some lessons they learned thanks to this pandemic and lockdown process. The participants mentioned the importance of hygiene and value of being in good health.

The participants also mentioned about how they spent time during the curfew. Although adults seemed to be having hard time during conditions like these, children seemed to be more capable of finding their own way to cope with the curfew. The children in this study stated that they figured out their own techniques to cope with that boring process in their own ways. While some of them tended to be busy with art or music, others talked about leisure activities such as watching television or playing computer games.

The measures taken against this pandemic included online platforms and distance education applications to be employed for the educational needs of individuals at all levels, yet the interview participants in this study seem to be dissatisfied with the distance education applications. They complain about certain issues like online classes' not being like the real classes, online lessons' being too hard to understand or due to the internet connection problems, the lessons' being hard to follow. Similar worries mentioned in a study among the majority of the adult participants in Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pastor, 2020). The participants were mostly worried about quality of internet connection in the area. Also, the study revealed that the majority of the students are not yet ready in a synchronous mode of delivery. Moreover, some participants in this study complained that there was no school environment, breaks, friendships in distance classes. Some participants were not happy with the routine. In general, they felt bored and tired of online education.

The participants of this study all share common ideas when it comes to preferences and wishes. All of them prefer communicating with their relatives and friends face to face to talking to them online or on the phone. They all want to be in real school environment to be able to meet their friends and teachers face to face. Also, they all want this pandemic to be gone all around the world as soon as possible.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

This study aimed to explore the well-being of elementary school children in terms of psycho-social and educational aspects during the curfew process initiated due to the new coronavirus pandemic in Turkey. When the study was conducted, as one of the most vulnerable part of the society, elementary school children had been experiencing curfew for about a couple of months due to the pandemic. This world-wide pandemic has been a condition that many countries as well as Turkey has not been familiar with in this century. Like in many other countries, in Turkey, measures at all levels, from local to nation-wide administrations, had to be taken hastily. Measures in a way to support school life academically at all levels have been taken, yet academic support is not the only component of healthy school life. Therefore, this major change in elementary school children's daily life is worth examining more closely.

All in all, the pandemic has many negative social and economic effects on the countries all around the world. However, psycho-social effects may be more important than the others as they may have permanent effects. Especially for young children, the social and educational dimensions of the lockdown period become more important. It might be easier to cope with those negative effects as adults by means of certain regulations and coping strategies when compared to children. Children are the most vulnerable part of the society and they might not understand why such a thing is happening and how they should react best. Sociological and psychological needs and well-being of young children should be taken into consideration both on the basis of families and country administrations.

Age-specific learning needs and characteristics of the young learners should be considered while designing emergency online teaching applications. Adult learners, who are generally associated with distance education, have substantially different learning needs and learner profiles from children. That is why, online instructions should be designed keeping in mind young learners' age-specific needs and characteristics. These applications should not be merely on conveying contents of formal lessons to the students. They should also include online psychological counseling and guidance service activities during pandemics. Children should be provided with more opportunities for social interaction in online learning environments. Therefore, design of online courses should be more learner-centered and engaging. For this purpose, online in-service education programs consisting of elaborative guidance on interactive online course design principles, and educational technologies that enhance motivation and engagement should be offered for elementary school teachers.

Some principles can be considered to design online courses according to young learners. More interactive content and activities should be embedded in the online lessons. Authentic materials, which learners can associate with their lives, might contribute to higher interest among young learners. Educators should get rid of the prejudice that mostly individual learning can take place in online learning environments, and they should realize that collaborative work can also be done easily in online environments. It is suggested that there is a positive correlation between interaction and meaningful learning experience (Rich et al., 2009). "Students who are not engaged and who feel separated from the learning environment can become dissatisfied with online courses" (Redmond, 2010, p. 37). As young learners are not familiar with formal distance learning applications including synchronous lessons on computers, transactional distance they might experience may lead them to lose their motivation. In order to eliminate these negative feelings, interactive activities can be initiated. Activities that include asking questions to each other, information exchange with peers, working on a group project together can increase collaboration, engagement and eventually motivation. Moreover, considering that not all learners have high quality internet connections, learning materials that enhance individual learning can be designed without conducting synchronous

lessons. Asynchronous lessons that offer opportunities for engagement at home should be emphasized rather than synchronous lessons in areas with connection problems.

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