Opinions of Social Studies Teachers on Distance Education

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the whole world, has caused serious problems in many areas. Undoubtedly, one of the most important of these areas is education. Education-teaching processes were continued remotely during the pandemic period, which caused the closure of schools almost all over the world. In this study, it is aimed to examine the views of social studies teachers, who have given lectures with the help of distance education during the pandemic period, about distance education. Phenomenology, which is one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the research. The study group of the research consists of 12 social studies teachers who work in a secondary school affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in the city of Bayburt and have given lessons with the help of distance education. A semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool to examine teachers' views on distance education. The collected data were analyzed with thematic analysis method. The data obtained were shown in themes and the findings were supported by direct quotations from the views received from the participants. As a result of the study, it was demonstrated that the negative thoughts of the social studies teachers about distance education were higher than the positive thoughts, and they also expressed problems such as slow connection, internet infrastructure, low participation in the course and insufficient devices for accessing distance education. In addition, it was concluded that all of the participants agreed that social studies teachers should take in-service training, seminars and courses in order to improve themselves in the distance education process and using technology effectively. In this context, it is recommended to give educational seminars on technology literacy to social studies teacher candidates and teachers.

Key words: Social Studies, Distance Education, Technology Literacy, Teacher Views

INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in the development of a society. It is possible to say that the concept of education is as old as the history of humanity (Yanik, 2020). Throughout history, different definitions have been made about education, which is a universal concept. For example, Plato accepts that people's innate characteristics can be changed by education, and therefore defines education as an intervention to human nature (Burkaz, 2014). J.J. Rousseau stated that in his book name of Emile which written (1817), education is the art of raising children and making people (Ayas, 2013), while J. Dewey (1902) stated that education is not a preparation for life, it is life itself (Talebi, 2015). One of the most widely accepted definitions of education is "The process of deliberately creating desired changes in an individual's behavior through his/her own life" (Ertürk, 1979). Although the content of the definitions has changed in the historical process, the only thing that does not change in this context is the importance that societies give to education. As Jackson (2012) stated, education is one of the strongest pillars for societies to lead a civilized, prosperous and quality life. Looking from the past to the present, it is seen that all societies that have a say in the world have been successful in directing education systems and raising qualified people (Al & Madran, 2004). Education undergoes changes according to the characteristics of the period in this process, and this change shows its effect in many areas including education systems, tools, methods and techniques. Especially in the last two decades, the increasing use of the internet, the surprising development of information and communication technologies, and the integration of these technologies into education have brought many conveniences (Lin et al., 2018).

The COVID-19 epidemic, which started in Wuhan, China in the last month of 2019 and spread around the world, caused many casualties and caused serious damage to many areas from health to economy. Another of these areas is education (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has directly affected the lives of more than 1.5 billion students and their families, causing an unprecedented disruption to education systems globally (United Nations, 2020). Shortly after the outbreak of the pandemic, almost all countries temporarily closed their schools, many exams

were postponed and education activities were suspended. In Turkey, the Ministry of National Education has decided to temporarily close schools on March 16, 2020. Due to the long duration of the pandemic process, the easy transmission of the virus and the lack of an available treatment, many countries have switched to distance education in order not to disrupt the education process (Mulenga & Marban, 2020). Information and communication technologies have provided significant facilities in overcoming the problems experienced in the field of education.

The term distance education, which was started to be used by William Lighty in 1906 (Ağır, 2007; Yamamoto & Altun, 2020), gained a different dimension with the use of various technological tools in the process. When distance education is mentioned, an education model that enables the teacher and student to continue their education activities thanks to the existing communication and digital technology infrastructure comes to mind even though they are in different places or environments (Altıparmak et al., 2011). In another statement made on the subject, it is stated that, unlike this definition, it is an innovative, modern and rational education system model, where lessons can be taught in virtual environments through computer technologies, and participants can watch these lessons again at any time they want (Albayrak, 2017).

Taking these explanations into consideration, it can be said that the most fundamental difference between face-to-face education and distance education is the freedom and ease of time-space provided by distance education (Mulenga & Marban, 2020). This situation reveals the importance of distance education, especially in disasters such as pandemics, wars and earthquakes, and in eliminating the grievances of students who have difficulties in reaching education and training activities (Ağır, 2007). In addition to these stated benefits, the lack of internet access in many places, the need for technological tools and equipment in accessing distance education (Rapid-response World bank, 2021), the problems encountered in gaining the communication, motivation, attitudes and skills between the student and the teacher (Büyükkaragöz et al., 1994) are expressed as the limitations of distance education.

From this point of view, it is an important issue for teachers and students to be sufficient in technology literacy. Acquiring sufficient skills in technology literacy will help to remove the limitations experienced in distance education. In addition, in the case of integrating constantly developing technological tools and equipment into education, it will contribute to the easy adaptation of teachers and students to these changes (Bacanak et al., 2003). With the most familiar definition of technology literacy; it is the ability to understand, evaluate and manage technology (ITEA, 2007). In the definition made by Odabaşı (2000), technology literacy is; the existing relationship between the individual and society is to have the necessary intellectual processes, competence and order thanks to technology. Considering this definition, we can say that the concept of technology literacy means much more than simply using a computer or having internet knowledge (Skophammer & Reed, 2014). For this reason, it has been seen that the technology used in many fields is

also used significantly in the field of education and its importance has increased even more during the pandemic period. Therefore, the necessity for teachers and students to have the necessary skills in technological literacy (Aydın & Silik, 2018) has emerged.

Undoubtedly, the most important task falls to the teachers in the healthy conduct of the education-teaching process, whether face-to-face or distant education. In distance education, as in face-to-face education, the most important task falls to the teachers in planning the teaching process, choosing the appropriate methods and techniques (Altunay, 2018), preparing the course content and preparing the resources related to the courses (Altıparmak et al., 2011). When the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that many studies have been carried out in the field of education during the pandemic process (Kurnaz, Kaynar, Şentürk-Barışık & Doğrukök, 2020). In some of their studies, it is aimed to determine the opinions of teachers on the distance education process during the pandemic period (Aydemir, 2021; Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020; Balaman & Hanbay Tiryaki, 2021; Bayburtlu, 2020; Canpolat & Yıldırım, 2021; Demir & Özdaş, 2020; Demir & Kale, 2020; Kurnaz et al., 2020; Kocayiğit & Uşun, 2020; Metin et al., 2021; Özgül et al., 2020; Özkul et al., 2020; Sönmez et al., 2020; Tekin, 2020; Türker & Dündar, 2020, Türküresin, 2020; Yurtbakan & Ayyıldız, 2020).

The views of social studies teachers on the distance education process are the main problem statement of the research. The main reason why this study is conducted on social studies teachers is that the primary goal of the social studies course is to focus on raising effective citizens who are responsible for the society and the country, have high decision-making skills and awareness, are sensitive to social events, and have adopted social values. These are the missions that social studies teachers undertake at the stage of achieving these goals. In addition, in the light of the findings to be obtained from this study, it is aimed to reach first-hand data about the positive and negative aspects, necessity, deficiencies and what needs to be done of the distance education processes during the pandemic period. This study, in this way, policy makers, teachers and school administrators can decide on the steps to be taken in distance education and help them to complete the existing deficiencies of distance education. On the other hand, this study may provide an opportunity for researchers who want to do research on this subject to evaluate this subject from different perspectives, or it may inspire researchers to approach this subject from different perspectives.

METHOD

Model of the Research

In this study, phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. Phenomenology allows people to express their feelings, perspectives, perceptions and understandings towards a certain concept or phenomenon by focusing on their lived experiences (Jasper, 1994; Rose, Beeby & Parker, 1995). When evaluated within the scope of this study, this design was preferred because it is aimed to

determine the experiences of the teachers who are the trainers of students during the COVID-19 pandemic process.

Study Group

The study group of the research consists of 12 social studies teachers who gave lessons through distance education in the 2020-2021 academic year in public schools affiliated to the Bayburt Provincial Directorate of National Education. Teachers participated in the research on a voluntary basis. Purposive sampling method was preferred while determining the study group. Because the purposeful sampling method aims to conduct in-depth research and to collect richer information about the subject from the participants. In addition, the purposive sampling method aims to reach people who have experience on the subject to be examined (Malhotra, 2004). In this study, coding was done as P1, P2, P3…P12 in order to keep the personal information of the participants confidential. Table 1 shows the background information of the participants.

Data Collection

In this study, a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used. The most preferred data collection tool in qualitative research is interview (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). One of the most important advantages of the semi-structured interview model, which is included in the interview technique, is that it prevents any confusion that may occur between the participant and the researcher (Galletta, 2012). Before creating the questions used in the semi-structured interview form, the relevant literature was examined. In order to measure the clarity of the questions, the interview form was sent to the language experts and the language compatibility of the questions in the interview form was ensured. Then, it was sent to 5 faculty members working in the department of social studies education and their expert opinion was taken. Necessary corrections were made according to the feedback from the experts and the interview form was finalized. Also, the decision of the ethics committee of this study was made by Atatürk University on 26.11.2020 with

Table 1. Participants' demographic information

Participants	Gender	Seniority
P1	Man	6-10 Years
P2	Man	6-10 Years
P3	Man	1-5 Years
P4	Woman	11-15 Years
P5	Woman	1-5 Years
P6	Boy	1-5 Years
P7	Woman	6-10 Years
P8	Woman	1-5 Years
P9	Boy	16 Years and Over
P10	Woman	1-5 Years
P11	Woman	6-10 Years
P12	Man	16 Years and Over

the 14th meeting number and the decision number 10. At the same time, necessary permissions were obtained from the Ministry of National Education to interview teachers working in public schools in Bayburt province.

Data Analysis

Before analyzing the data, the collected data were reviewed and spelling and spelling errors were corrected in a way that would not change the expressions of the participants and the meaning of the sentences. Then the data were analyzed by thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method used to identify, analyze and report patterns (themes) in data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Thematic analysis allows you to organize your dataset to the smallest dimensions and describe it in depth (rich) (Boyatzis, 1998). As a result of the data analysis, 3 main themes were determined in line with the views of social studies teachers on distance education. The themes were interpreted in relation to each other and supported with direct quotations where necessary.

Information on the Consistency, Confirmability, Credibility and Transferability of the Research

The titles of "Believability, Transferability, Consistency, Confirmability" in the validity and reliability studies revealed in qualitative studies (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013) were also used in this study.

Before preparing the interview form, it was tried to increase the credibility (internal reliability) of the research by examining the relevant literature. In addition, in order to ensure the integrity and consistency between the findings, the relationship between the direct quotations, coding and themes obtained from the thematic analysis was checked. The data collected from the participants were reread to the participants and the accuracy of the statements they gave in the interview form was confirmed.

Since the interviews with the teachers participating in the research were made during the COVID-19 period, they were made and recorded via the Zoom program, not face-to-face. Interviews were held with each teacher on designated days and then transcribed by the researcher. All interviews were conducted by the researcher himself.

The stages of the research process were explained to the readers in detail and the transferability (external validity) of the research was tried to be increased. Another reason for elaborating the process is to enable the readers to understand the research process more clearly and to make sense of the content of the study. It is very essential that the findings obtained as a result of the research are understood in a similar way among the readership. For this reason, the research process has been tried to be given in a simple way and direct quotations have been included.

It is aimed to increase the internal consistency of the study by giving the findings obtained within the scope of the research directly. For the same purpose, care was taken to be objective throughout the research process. The findings obtained in the study were examined by a two researcher and a consensus was reached on the findings. In order to determine

the internal consistency (internal reliability) of the different encodings made by the two researchers in the process of achieving consensus, the formula [Reliability=Consensus/(Consensus + Disagreement)] developed by Miles & Huberman (1994) was used. In the calculation made, the reliability rates were determined as 88% to 95%.

In order to ensure the external reliability of the study, the data obtained within the scope of the research are preserved for the readers to review later.

FINDINGS

The opinions of the social studies teachers participating in the research on distance education are grouped under the following 3 themes:

- Conducting Social Studies Lessons with Distance Education
- The Situation of Students in Conducting Social Studies Lessons with Distance Education
- The Situation of Teachers in Conducting Social Studies Lessons with Distance Education

Conducting Social Studies Lessons with Distance Education

Within the framework of this theme, the views of the participants on the conduct of social studies courses with distance education and the evaluation made based on these views are included. In this context, the opinions of the participants who have a positive attitude towards the conduct of social studies courses in distance education are given below.

P1 said that "Social Studies course is understandable and it is not a very difficult course to teach through distance education because of its connection with daily life", and P8 *said that it is appropriate to teach the social studies course via distance education*, and P8 says *"I cannot show visual activities in schools that do not have internet support points in village schools. I was able to do it thanks to distance education.*

I had the chance to use the educational videos about the achievements more effectively." In his statement, he stated that distance education provides an advantage in social studies courses. *P4 "I think that tools such as globe, map, atlas, relief maps as the most frequently used material in the school environment can be used by enriching with visual elements in distance education to facilitate the work of the teacher, and are suitable for explaining the subjects in the social studies course."* In his statement, he expressed his opinion on the conduct of social studies courses with distance education. P5 says that he does not have any problems because the content of the course is enriched with materials such as videos, documents and slides for distance education in his social studies courses. Some of the participants (P7) *stated that they got used to the distance education course in the process and started to have a positive opinion on the subject.*

Contrary to these views, it is seen that there are three participants who have negative thoughts about conducting the social studies course with distance education. The opinions of these participants are given below.

P3 *stated that it is difficult to carry out the social studies course with distance education because it contains content*

related to life and practice such as life science and citizenship knowledge. *P10* *stated that distance education does not replace face-to-face education, and that it is carried out under these conditions so that education is not interrupted. P11 also stated that distance education is very difficult to adapt to social studies lessons.*

Within the scope of the research, the question of whether there would be benefits from conducting social studies courses with distance education was asked to the participants. Most of the participants (N=9) stated that there are benefits of conducting social studies courses with distance education, while others (N=3) stated that there is no benefit. The answers given by the participants to the question are given below.

P4 said, *"We used the smart boards available in our classrooms to reach the maps. We can use all these more actively in distance education. By spreading the subject and unit evaluation throughout the week, we observe the student. With the EBA program, which we share officially, we can assign students to homework at certain times. Since every study is sent to the student as a notification, we also give responsibility"* and listed the benefits of distance education. P6 mentioned *"The more comfortable use of technology in our social studies course during the distance education process and the faster delivery of assignments to students are another benefit of the process."*. P8 stated that there are benefits of conducting social studies lessons with distance education, educational videos and games can be performed more efficiently in this process, and the lesson is taught with a more effective student profile with the participation of willing students who are interested in the lesson. The opinions of the participants can be summarized as the fact that the digital materials used attract the attention of the students and that these materials can be used more easily in distance education, and that the students follow the lessons from a distance in winter conditions because they are independent of time and place.

Participants who state that there are no benefits of conducting social studies courses with distance education are also participants who have negative thoughts about conducting social studies courses with distance education. For example; P11 expressed his opinion on this subject with the comment *"There is no benefit, only the course is taught".*

In order to further deepen the answers given under this theme, the question "Do you encounter any problems in the course of conducting social studies courses with distance education?" was asked to the participants. Participants generally answered this question as follows: Students do not attend classes, many students do not have technological tools such as tablets and computers and the internet due to financial difficulties, families are not interested enough, internet connection problems are experienced during the lesson, classroom control is difficult with distance education, and some achievements are not possible. Some units require a concrete experience and teachers are not able to make eye contact with students. These are important problems. For example, P1, *"Children who cannot attend distance education due to the economic situation of their families miss most of the subjects."* expressed his opinion and then stated that

EBA TV is an important tool in overcoming this problem. Similarly, P3 *"The biggest problem is that students' participation in the course is very low and it is not possible to give some course gains through distance education."* listed the problems experienced with his view. P4 said that "*especially in families where the number of siblings is high, those who are in the exam year are considered as priority and other siblings follow their lessons according to urgency*". With this statement, he stated that the poor socio-economic status of the families was the biggest factor in the inability of the students to attend the classes. However, he stated that there are fewer problems with distance education in social studies courses compared to other branches. P7 stated that *students do not have academic problems with distance education, but their psychomotor development is a problem.* P9 said that the fact that attendance is not compulsory reduces the rate of participation in the classes, and that the short duration of the lessons prevents the subjects from being consolidated. He proposed a solution to this problem and stated that the social studies curriculum in distance education should be simplified. P12, on the other hand, stated that *the lack of face-to-face interaction with the student was one of the problems experienced in this process.*

Situation of Students in Conducting Social Studies Lessons with Distance Education

Under this theme, there are teachers' opinions on the situation of students in the conduct of distance education and social studies course and evaluations based on these views.

First, the participants were asked a question about whether the current student profile studying in secondary schools is suitable for distance education. Most of the participants stated that students with financial difficulties and living in rural areas are not ready for distance education. For example, P2 said, *"The segment that has the opportunity to connect to technology and general network from the current student profile has adapted. I observed that especially 5th grade students are more enthusiastic about this subject. On the other hand, those who do not have the opportunity naturally cannot find the opportunity to adapt."* P8, on the other hand, stated that *there is a difference even among students studying in the same class, that some students adapt quickly to distance education and some cannot.* P11 stated that *5th grade students have difficulties in adapting to distance education due to their age.* P12, on the other hand, stated that *at the beginning of distance education, students were not ready for distance education, and as time passed, they got used to this situation and adapted.* Similarly, P7 said "*When I first started the distance education process, I did not think that the students were suitable, but as the process continued, I observed that the existing students started to adapt to this process and there were no confusions as in the first time."* in the statement.

Another question asked to the participants is how distance education has an effect on students' motivation, perception and achievement level compared to face-to-face education in the context of social studies courses. The striking point here is that all of the participants stated that distance education

has a negative effect on students' motivation. For example, P3 said *"I think it is much more ineffective. The relationship between teacher and student in face-to-face education has disappeared in the distance education process, and this has significantly reduced the motivation, perception and success level of the student."* In his opinion, he stated the effect of distance education on students. P4 stated that it is very difficult to keep student motivation alive in distance education compared to face-to-face education. While many methods can be used to increase student motivation in face-to-face education, he stated that this situation is very limited in distance education and that most of the students cannot reach them through distance education. P9 *"Since we are not physically in the same environment with our students, it prevents us from establishing emotional bonds, and only establishing an auditory connection with students during the lesson is not as effective as face-to-face education in ensuring the motivation of students."* In his statement, he supported the view that the limited interaction with students through distance education had a negative effect on their motivation. P6 stated that distance education generally reduces students' motivation, perception levels and achievements and said *"Using technological opportunities, which are a part of our lives, has connected some students to the lessons more".*

The Situation of Teachers in Conducting Social Studies Lessons with Distance Education

Within the framework of this theme, the opinions of the participants about the situation of the teachers in the conduct of the social studies lessons with distance education and the evaluation made based on these opinions are included.

First of all, the question of whether social studies teachers have sufficient equipment in the distance education process was asked to the participants. The opinions of the participating social studies teachers regarding this question are given below.

Almost all of the participants stated that social studies teachers have sufficient equipment in distance education. For example, P3 said, *"Yes, I think so. Since the materials used in the distance education process have already been used in the classroom on the smart board environment for a long time, the teachers were already prepared for this situation."* With his answer, he stated that social studies teachers are technologically ready. Similarly, P6 said, *"In this process, many of our groups are more than adequately equipped with their technological knowledge and the training they have received."* P9 stated that *the teachers are well-equipped and that the teachers who had difficulties at the beginning overcame the problems in the process.* When the answers given by the participants are examined, it is understood that young teachers think that they have more proficiency in using the technological tools necessary for distance education. For example, P2 said, *"I think I am self-sufficient, but I know that those who are approaching their last years in the profession have problems."* With his answer, he stated that the senior teachers with a lot of professional experience have some problems in distance education in terms of using technology. P4, on the other hand, underlined that the teachers

are partially equipped and the age factor is important in this case, and said, *"I think it will be enough because my young teacher friends are busy with technology. With the acceptance of the reality of distance education from last year to this year, we see that teachers have enriched themselves and the sharing of information and documents on the internet has increased more. In other words, if this situation continues, I think a more hopeful picture awaits us."* P8 made a self-criticism and said, *"No, I don't think I am fully qualified.*

There are a lot of technological tools that I can use in my course, unfortunately I do not know most of them". Considering that P8's professional seniority is between 1-5 years, this answer differs from the answers given by other participants.

All of the participants agreed that in-service training, seminars and courses should be given to teachers on this issue. P3 stated *"Teachers can be provided with more advanced course materials to use in distance education and in-service training can be given to prepare their own materials on this subject".* Similarly, P4 stated that training programs including face-to-face or online courses and seminars can be made for teachers to improve themselves in distance education. P8, on the other hand, stated that teachers should be given various trainings about Web 2.0 tools, so that teachers can prepare digital materials.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the opinions of social studies teachers about distance education carried out due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is effective around the world, were sought and the results obtained in line with these views were discussed with the support of the relevant literature.

It was concluded that most of the participants (N=9) had positive thoughts about conducting social studies courses with distance education.

Participants who expressed a positive opinion based the social studies course on being suitable for distance education on the following reasons: Effective use of educational videos during the structuring of course acquisitions in distance education, easier use of visual elements, easy access to educational documents and materials, and the fact that the subjects in the social studies course content are directly related to daily life. It can be said that the positive thoughts of the teachers about the social studies lessons conducted with distance education are due to the fact that the education and training activities can continue thanks to technology infrastructures. Therefore, this prevents the heavy education losses that may occur with the schools being completely closed during the pandemic process. Most of the participants also stated that the content of the social studies course is suitable for distance education. However, it was concluded that some participants had negative thoughts about conducting the social studies course with distance education. It has been determined that the main reason for them to have negative thoughts is that the social studies course includes applications for daily life. There is no finding in the relevant literature regarding the fact that social studies teachers have direct positive or negative thoughts about the conduct of courses through distance education.

According to the results of the research, it has been determined that most of the participants think that there are various benefits of conducting social studies courses with distance education. These participants generally stated that digital materials that are easily used in distance education attract the attention of students. They described the provision of time and place-independent learning through distance education as the benefits of distance education. Sustaining the education-training process regardless of time and place is shown among the benefits of distance education in many studies (Demirli, 2002; Wilhelm, 2003; Ağır, 2007; Altıparmak et al., 2011; Yenilmez et al., 2017; Kocayiğit & Uşun, 2020). These results obtained from different studies also support the opinions of the participants. It was concluded that some of the participants stated that the social studies courses conducted with distance education were only for teaching the course and that there was no benefit. It has been determined that the participants who have this idea are the ones who have unfavorable attitudes about the conduct of social studies courses with distance education.

Most of the participants stated that they encountered various problems during the distance education process. It has been concluded that the students' non-participation in the lessons is a problem frequently encountered by the participants. In the related literature, it is seen that the inability of students to attend classes is among the problems experienced by teachers during the distance education process (Arık, 2020; Karadağ & Yücel, 2020; Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Gür Erdoğan & Ayanoğlu, 2021). The problems experienced in the distance education process are expressed as the students' lack of technological tools and internet connection due to financial impossibility, and the inadequacy of technological tools at home due to the high number of siblings. In the study conducted by Bennett, Uink & Cross (2020), it was concluded that students' financial difficulties cause inequality of opportunity in the distance education process. Another problem expressed by the participants was the connection problems arising from the technological infrastructure during distance education. With the epidemic that started in Wuhan, China, evolving into a pandemic, many countries have started to conduct their education activities remotely. With the countries caught unprepared for the pandemic, inadequacies of the technological infrastructure have been experienced in the distance education process. This situation is shown as the main problem in the distance education process both in our country and in other countries (Asmara, 2020; Dias et al., 2020; Mohan et al., 2020; Petretto et al., 2020; Akgül & Oran, 2020; Abuhammad, 2020; Bayburtlu, 2020; Demir & Özdaş, 2020; Doğan & Koçak, 2020; Karatepe et al., 2020; Yılmaz et al., 2020; Canpolat & Yıldırım, 2021; Gür Erdoğan & Ayanoğlu, 2021; Kolcu & Balcı, 2021; Kavuk & Demirtaş, 2021; Sağır & Dal, 2021). As a result of the research, the participants stated that situations such as the inability to make direct eye contact with the students and the difficulty of classroom dominance in distance education are the problems experienced in the process. It is thought that this situation causes communication problems. In the studies in the literature, communication problems experienced in the distance education process are seen as the disadvantages of

distance education (Altaş, 2016; Durak, 2017; Yamamoto & Altun, 2020; Kurnaz et al., 2020).

The situation of students in the distance education process was discussed. In this context, it has been tried to determine whether the students studying in secondary schools are suitable for distance education according to the opinions of the participants. In the study, it was concluded that the participants stated that students living in rural areas were not ready for distance education due to financial difficulties and lack of technological infrastructure. Alpago and Woodcutter-Alpago (2020) explained that students living in rural areas have problems in the distance education process due to technical infrastructure and economic reasons. This result is similar to the opinions of the participants. In the study, the participants stated that the suitability of students for distance education varies according to their readiness level and age. This can be explained by the fact that not every student has the same developmental characteristics.

The effect of distance education on students compared to face-to-face education was examined according to participant views. All of the participants stated that distance education has a negative effect on students' motivation. The reason for this situation can be shown as the inability of students to interact face-to-face with their friends and teachers, being away from the classroom environment, and not having the same opportunities to access distance education (Wheeler, 2002; Uçar, 2016; Akgül & Oran, 2020; Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020; Karakuş et al., 2020; Demir & Özdaş, 2020; Sintema, 2020; Yılmaz et al., 2020).

In this study, it was concluded that almost all of the participants considered themselves and their colleagues sufficient to conduct the social studies course with distance education. Some of the participants generally think that teachers who are new to the profession and younger in age are better equipped to use technology. In addition, it is thought that teachers' compulsory use of technology in the distance education process contributes positively to their self-efficacy over time (Mulenga & Marban, 2020). It is of great importance in the distance education process that teachers can use technology effectively, have the necessary equipment and solve the problems to be encountered (Can, 2020). This situation also affects teachers' positive attitudes towards using technology in the distance education process (Ersoy & Kavaklı, 2020). Although almost all of the participants stated that they considered their colleagues to be sufficient in conducting the social studies course with distance education, it was also determined that some participants considered their colleagues insufficient in using technological equipment and distance education platforms. Participants who have this idea stated that especially teachers who have been practicing their profession for a long time and who are older in age have more problems in the distance education process. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are studies supporting this finding (Burke & Dempsey, 2020; Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020; Güven et al., 2021; Sağır & Dal, 2021).

It was concluded that all of the participants agreed that in-service training, seminars and courses should be given in order for social studies teachers to improve themselves in the distance education process. Bozkurt (2020) and Kolcu and

Balcı (2021) also reached similar results in their studies. It is thought that it is essential for all teachers to acquire technological skills for the effective execution of the distance education process. Branekova (2020) emphasized that teachers should have the necessary skills to be able to use different technological platforms and to provide an effective learning environment.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

According to the results of this research, the use of distance education during pandemics or similar events that may occur on a global or national scale will be beneficial in order not to disrupt the education processes. Another result obtained from the teacher opinions is that distance education cannot be as effective as face-to-face education. In addition, the importance of technology literacy has emerged so that teachers can use distance education more efficiently and effectively.

According to the results obtained from the research, the knowledge and skills necessary for solving the problems encountered in the distance education process can be gained by teachers through in-service training. Additionally, It is thought that conducting various studies on the subject with different groups of examples will serve the purpose of understanding the problems encountered in the distance education process.

Since the directors of distance education, which is widely used around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are teachers, it is important for teacher training institutions to prepare teacher candidates for another possible scenario. Therefore, detailed content on the subject can be added to the courses in the undergraduate programs of prospective teachers who will be social studies teachers of the future.

Finally, one of the most important factors in the good execution of distance education processes is technology literacy. Teachers and teacher candidates need to be able to adapt more easily to technological developments and changes. For this reason, educational seminars on technology literacy should be given to teacher candidates and teachers.

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