

e-ISSN: 2822-6577

# J A Q M E R

Journal of Action Qualitative  
& Mixed Methods Research

Year: 2023  
Volume: 2  
Issue: 2



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**Printing Date:** 01.10.2023

**Broadcast Type:** Local Broadcast

**Cover Design:** JAQMER

**Composition:** Savas Varlik

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Journal of Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research (JAQMER) (2822-6577) is a bi-annual (April and October) international peer-reviewed journal.

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## Message from the Editor

Greetings to our colleagues from all parts of the world. As the editor of Journal of Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research (JAQMER), I would like to welcome you to Volume 2, Issue 2.

This edition contains of an editorial article and four articles on qualitative research that we believe will assist you, the reader, in conceptualizing and solving problems related to developing research or a manuscript with a qualitative design.

The current issue includes an editorial article and four articles: the editorial article, which is called 'Data analysis in qualitative research' is a methodological article. In this editorial on data analysis in qualitative research, the author tried to explain qualitative data analysis based on his own studies, by defining it based on the literature and his own research experiences with examples.

The first article, which is called 'Examining primary school teachers' views on critical thinking: A case study' is a qualitative study with an embedded single case design. The aim of this study was to examine the views of primary school teachers towards critical thinking.

The second article, which is called 'Problems faced by teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economic disadvantaged regions and suggestions for solutions: A case study', is a qualitative study with a single case design. The aim of this study was to reveal the problems experienced by teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economic disadvantaged regions, the main reasons of the problems and the solutions they found, and to present a case analysis with findings and suggestions.

The third article, which is called 'Comparison of school readiness level of 66 months and 72 months old students just started primary school: A phenomenology study', is a qualitative study with a descriptive phenomenology design. The aim of this study was to understand and interpret the readiness level of students in different age categories (66 months and 72 months old) studying in the first year and the adjustment problems experienced in schools as children 66 months and 72 months old had to study in the same class with the 4+4+4 arrangement.

The fourth article, which is called 'A qualitative study on equal opportunity in education', is a qualitative study with a descriptive phenomenology design. The aim of this study was to understand and interpret how teachers working in primary schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in the provinces of Antalya and Bursa during the 2022-2023 academic year evaluated equal opportunities in education based on their opinions.

These articles are designed to offer thoughts, insight, suggestions, samples and ideas on qualitative research. According to the guidance and the results of articles in this issue, researchers could shape their future qualitative research.

We hope you enjoy the articles in this volume 2 issue 2 of the journal and find them informative and useful for designing and developing qualitative research. Please remember that articles published in JAQMER do not reflect the position of the journal's editorial staff, reviewers.

Dr. İlhan Gunbayi  
*JAQMER Editor*



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## Editorial

# Data analysis in qualitative research

Ilhan Gunbayi\*

**To cite this article:**

Gunbayi, I. (2023).  
Data Analysis in  
Qualitative Research.  
*Journal of Action  
Qualitative & Mixed  
Methods Research*,  
Volume 2 (Issue 2),1-11  
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7763207  
[www.jaqmeronline.com](http://www.jaqmeronline.com)

Numerous studies have been published on qualitative data analysis. In these publications, there are common concepts, definitions and approaches, as well as different concepts, definitions and approaches. In this editorial on data analysis in qualitative research, the author tried to explain qualitative data analysis based on his own studies, by defining it reviewing the literature and linked to his own research experiences with examples.

In qualitative research, unlike quantitative research, measurement, evidence and generalization to the population are not essential in the analysis of data. The key is understanding the context, interpreting the content, and analytical generalization.

Therefore, qualitative data can be analyzed in four stages:

1. Thematic analysis
2. Descriptive analysis
3. Content analysis
4. Analytical generalization (Gunbayi, 2019)

The first three analyzes are used in writing the findings section of the research, and each upper stage contains the previous stage. For example, content analysis includes thematic analysis and descriptive analysis.

### Thematic analysis

In the thematic analysis, the transcripts of individual and focus group interviews, documents and observation notes are analyzed by dividing them into categories and sub-themes under the main themes in context. In a way, the mentioned theme, category and sub-themes related to the researched phenomenon are revealed in interview transcripts, documents and observation notes. If desired, a matrix table can be created based on this analysis, and which participant expressed an opinion under which main theme, category and sub-theme, or the documents and observation notes can be given thematically under which main theme, category and sub-theme are related to. In addition, frequencies and percentages can be given for this created matrix table. However, due to the nature of qualitative research, especially in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, since the quantitative content analysis of qualitative data is not favored and it is essential to first understand and then interpret the qualitative data, it is more appropriate not to give frequencies and percentages (George, 1959) and only to give a matrix table if necessary. However, if desired, frequencies and percentages can also be given, provided that further statistical analysis such as chi-square is not performed.

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For example, in the study titled "Vocational high school principals and teachers' opinions on the Leonardo da Vinci project: A case study" (Günbayı & Yassıkaya, 2011), the thematic analysis of the reasons for the participation of the principals and teachers working in the vocational high schools in the Leonardo Da Vinci project, which is the first sub-problem of the research. reasons for joining the main theme, seeing the countries in the European Union, approaching the proposal to take part in the project with tolerance, being involved in such projects before, observing vocational training in a European Union member country, examining the education system of a different country, adapting good examples of European Union member countries to Turkey, knowledge of historical and touristic places, broadening one's horizons as sub-themes were analyzed as follows:

*"1. Reasons for participating in the Leonardo Da Vinci Project*

*In order to find an answer to this sub-problem, the thematic data obtained regarding the reasons for school principals and teachers to participate in the Leonardo Da Vinci project are shown in the Table 1."*

**Table 1.**

*Thematic analysis on the reasons for participating in the Leonardo Da Vinci project*

<b>The reasons for participating</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
Seeing countries in the European Union	√	√						√
Approaching the proposal to take part in the project with tolerance							√	√
Being involved in such projects before			√			√		
Observing vocational training in a European Union member country	√			√				
Examining the education system of a different country		√	√					
Adapting good examples of European Union member countries to Turkey	√							
Knowledge of historical and touristic places						√		
Broadening one's horizons	√							

Adapted from Gunbayı and Yassıkaya (2011:19); Gunbayı (2019:134-135)

As it can be understood from the thematic analysis in Table 1, a matrix table is given regarding the views of the participants on the main theme of the reasons for participating in the Leonardo Da Vinci project according to which participants expressed their views on which sub-themes of seeing the countries in the European Union, approaching the proposal to take part in the project with tolerance, being involved in such projects before, observing vocational training in a European Union member country, examining the education system of a different country, adapting good examples of European Union member countries to Turkey, knowledge of historical and touristic places and broadening one's horizons.

Similarly, in the study titled "The effect of informal learning on teachers' professional development: A case study"(Vezne & Gunbayı, 2016) the thematic analysis for informal learning activities at school environment which is the second sub-problem of the research, informal learning activities as the main theme, talking and chatting, searching on the internet, article, magazine, documentary, observation, observing colleagues and television and radio as sub-themes were analysed as follows:

*"2. Informal learning activities at school*

*Teachers were asked about which informal learning activities took place at school environment. The data can be seen in Table 2."*

**Table 2.**

*Informal learning activities*

<b>Informal learning activities</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
Talking and chatting	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
Searching on the internet	√	√	√	√		√		√
Article, magazine, documentary	√					√		
Observation			√	√				
Observing colleagues	√							√
Television and radio	√						√	

Adapted from (Vezne & Gunbayi, 2016)

As it can be understood from the thematic analysis in Table 2, a matrix table is given regarding the views of the participants on the main theme of informal learning activities at school according to which participants expressed their views on which sub-themes of talking and chatting, searching on the internet, article, magazine, documentary, observation, observing colleagues and television and radio.

In the study titled “Principals' perceptions on school management: A case study with metaphorical analysis” (Gunbayi, 2011), thematic analysis of the metaphors produced by school principals regarding the main theme of school management and management activities. Thematic analysis of 14 metaphors (sub-themes) was carried out under six categories as seen in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

The metaphors produced by school principals on school management

<b>School Management Metaphors</b>		<b>Participants</b>													
<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>N</b>
Animal	Octopus	√													
	Horse			√											
	Bee		√												
Article	Book				√										
	Seesaw					√									
Job	Boxer						√								
	Football team							√							
Machine	Steam engine								√						
	Clock									√					
	Rocket									√					
Cybernetic Mechanism	Robot											√			
	Computer												√		
Nature	Sun														√
	A garden of trees													√	

Adapted from Gunbayi (2011: 549)

As it can be understood from the thematic analysis regarding the metaphors produced by school principals of the main theme of school management and management activities above, a matrix table is given to show which participant expressed an opinion on which sub-themes (Octopus, Horse, Bee, Book, Seesaw, Boxer, Football team, Steam engine, Clock, Rocket, Robot, Computer, Sun, A garden of trees) under which category (Animal, Object, Occupation, Machine, Cybernetic Mechanism, Nature).

As seen in the examples from three articles related to thematic analysis, the main aim in the thematic analysis is to reveal what the sub-themes related to the main theme are and which participants expressed their views on which sub-theme.

## Descriptive analysis

Descriptive analysis is a continuation of thematic analysis and a more detailed analysis of data. In descriptive analysis, it is essential to understand and present the data related to the problem under the theme, category and sub-theme, with direct quotations from interview transcripts, document texts and observation notes. In a way, it is essential to give who said what on which theme in the interview transcripts without interpreting with direct quotations, and at the same time, it is essential to analyze the participants' views on the relevant theme with direct quotations related to that theme, in a way that will increase the credibility of the research by associating them with the collected documents and observation notes. In short, it is essential to present the data to the reader in a descriptive manner by making direct quotations from the data collected in the research (interview, observation and document). In addition, the data is presented with a descriptive approach, and in addition to this, some formed themes and relationships between themes can be revealed.

For example, in the study titled "Vocational high school principals and teachers' opinions about the Leonardo Da Vinci project: A case study", the descriptive analysis of the reasons for participating in the Leonardo Da Vinci project, which is the first sub-problem of the research, of the principals and teachers working in the vocational high school was carried out as follows.

“As seen in the matrix Table 1, when we look at the reasons for the participation of the principals and teachers working in vocational high schools in the Leonardo Da Vinci Project, it is seen that the desire to see the countries in the European Union is the sub-theme the most stated. The opinions of the participants on this sub-theme are given below:

*Within the scope of this project, I, as a principal of this school, desired some of my colleagues to visit and see European countries. (A1, 1)*

*I participated in the project because I first wanted to know about German education system and then visit and see Germany. (B1, 1)*

*The reason to participate in this project is that we usually carry out those projects as we believe that it would be beneficial to visit and see European countries. An invitation for bilateral agreement reached us and we accepted the invitation and so participated in the project. (H1, 1)” Günbaya & Yassıkaya (2011: 20-21); Gunbaya (2019:135)*

In another study titled " Compulsory school principals' opinions on job stress and stressors: A case study" (Günbaya & Akcan, 2003), the descriptive analysis based on interviews and observations on the theme of work stress originated from the relationships of principals with the parents was carried out as follows:

### “Work stress originated from principals' relationships with parents

*The second source of stress is parent-originated stress. 11 principals state that the tension caused by the parents is not being able to meet their expectations from the school and the teacher, or the tensions they have experienced in their own lives, and the reflection of the problems to the school principal is effective in the stress of the principals.”*

*“Parents generally have an approach that I am always right, I am the parent of the student, everything should be as I want. However, they are not aware that this is an institution and that it is governed by regulations. (A, MY6).” (Günbaya & Akcan, 2013: 204)*

Günbayı & Akcan (2003) supported the interview findings with the observation notes and carried a descriptive analysis of the theme of work stress originated from the relationships of the principals with the parents as follows:

*“As a result of the observation, it was observed that an event caused by the parents and that could cause a stress to the principals of school. The event of the observation took place in the room of FY6 in School A on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010 between the times of 13:00 and 13:30. The event took place as follows:*

*“A parent and a student came. The student's parents said they wanted to transfer their child to this school. MY6 asked the parent where they lived. The parent showed the residence document. FY6 looked at the residence document and said that this address was outside its borders and made the necessary explanations about which school the student should be enrolled to. However, the parents said that they wanted to enroll their child in this school and did not want to enrol to the other school. The parent was very insistent. The atmosphere was a little tense. Finally, MY6 said that he couldn't be more helpful in this regard. Parent and his child left (A,MY6).” (Günbayı & Akcan, 2013: 212)*

In another study titled " School principals, teachers, students and their parents' views on e-school implementation in the ministry of national education information management system: A case study " (Günbayı & Turan, 2013), descriptive analysis based on interviews and documents was carried out as follows:

*“It comes to me comfort. There were paper class lists that we used to call sheets. If we made a mistake, we were re-writing again in the new list, since there was no correction with correction fluid. Now, we can click on the e-School and do it more easily whenever we want. (Teacher, 10, F)”*

*“When I think of the e-School Parent Information System, I think of my parents having information about my exam results at school. (Student, 5, F)”*

*“Today, as in every field, all kinds of information in the field of education have been transferred to the electronic environment. e-School is a system where I can see all of my child's school-related information more quickly via the internet. (Parent, F)”*

*“I perceive the e-School Parent Information System as a service where we can learn about our child's absenteeism, course grades, and participation in the classroom when we are not at school. (Parent, 4, M)” (Günbayı & Turan, 2013: 8-9)*

Günbayı & Turan (2013) conducted a descriptive analysis of the e-school implementation theme of the documents based on student drawings, which contradicted the interview findings, as follows:

*“The drawing in the figure showing some teachers making students do the data entry was drawn by the sixth grade girl student numbered two. The painting includes a school and three human figures. The three human figures here actually represent two people, one a teacher and the other a student. In this picture, the teacher gives the course grades on a paper to the student to transfer to the e-School Management Information System. The student also takes these grades and enter them into the system...” (Günbayı & Turan, 2013:13)*



**Figure 1.** Some teachers make students do data entry (Günbayı & Turan, 2013:13)

Günbayı & Turan (2013) also conducted a descriptive analysis of the e-school implementation theme of the documents based on student drawings, which supported the interview findings, as follows:

*“The drawing describing the effect of the e-School parent information system in the figure on student-parent communication was drawn by the sixth grade male student. In the picture, there is a computer on the table, a sofa and two human figures. The two human figures here actually represent two people, one being the student and the other being the parent (father) of the student. The picture is of a home setting. The e-School parent information system is displayed on the computer screen in the picture. The student and his parents smile and hug each other ...”* (Günbayı & Turan, 2013:12)



**Figure 2.** The effect of the e-School parent information system on student-parent communication (Günbayı & Turan, 2013:12)

As can be understood from the descriptive analysis of the three studies above, direct quotations are given without interpreting from the observation notes and documents regarding the opinions of the participants in the first study on the theme of reasons for participating in the Leonardo Da Vinci project, on the theme of work stress originated from the relations of the principals with the parents in the second study, and on the e-school application theme in the third study.. The main thing in descriptive analysis is to reveal which participant said what about any theme as it is, without interpreting. In a way, the interpretation is left to the reader at this stage. Some qualitative studies may give and leave research data at the descriptive analysis level when writing. For example, in the study given above, the researcher can leave the interpretation of *“Some of our teachers at school do not enter data into the system themselves, but make their students do it”* related to Figure 1 and *“Based on all these drawings, we can interpret this picture as follows: When the parent here sees that his child's grades are good on the computer at home, he is happy and hugs his child. The e-School Parent Information System affects a communication positively between parents and students as seen in drawing.”* related to Figure 2 at the descriptive analysis level to the reader without mentioning about it.

### **Content Analysis**

Content analysis is the last step of qualitative data analysis in findings section. Content analysis actually involves thematic and descriptive analysis. In other words, thematic and descriptive analysis are needed to conduct content analysis; because we can say that content analysis is a deeper, comprehensive and complex state of thematic and descriptive analysis. The main purpose in content analysis is the researcher to interpret the data that he or she coded in themes in the first stage and make sense of it in the second stage, by including the researcher's own interpretations in the last stage. In a way, it is the analysis of the research problems and sub-problems by considering them as dependent variables and the other variables affecting these problems as independent variables and by including the researcher's own interpretations in a comparative and in-depth manner. In other words, at this stage, the researcher shows the “invisible underwater part of the iceberg” to the reader by relating what he or she revealed in the thematic and descriptive analysis and adding his or her own interpretation.

In terms of providing a basis for content analysis, the researcher can use themes developed in previous studies or developed based on research data at the coding stage. After selecting the content, the researcher must design a coding or classification system to analyze the content, using appropriate sampling techniques. Sometimes it is desirable to use a coding system developed in previous research. This option saves time and can be used. The use of dictionaries or standard coding categories in content analysis allows the researcher to compare with other studies using the same system. The researcher will have to develop one if he or she is going to contribute theory and knowledge in the field being researched by the research project and he or she cannot find a content analysis dictionary or classification system that fits his or her research to contribute theory and knowledge in the researched field, because it is necessary to define content categories that make sense of the variables specified by the research objectives (Marshall, Rossman, 1989). In addition, it is necessary for content analysis not only to describe qualitative data, but also to draw conclusions from the data about their origin and conditions of influence (Pool, 1959). As it can be understood from these quotations, content analysis is the next stage and supplement of thematic and descriptive analysis.

For example, in the study titled “Vocational high school principals and teachers' opinions on the Leonardo da Vinci project: A case study”, the content analysis regarding the reasons for the participation of principals and teachers, which is the first sub-problem of the research, to the Leonardo Da Vinci project. the reasons for participating in the Leonardo Da Vinci project are taken into account as the dependent variable, the duty of the participants as the independent variable considering A and B as principals and C, D, E, F, G, H as teachers, the interpretation of whether there is a difference in the reasons for participation according to the types of the duty is carried out as follows:

*“When we interpret the views of the principals and teachers on the reasons for participating in the Leonardo Da Vinci project in general, school principals want teachers in their schools to see European countries in terms of organizational effectiveness and sufficiency, to examine the education systems there, to bring good examples to their own schools and to develop their horizons; It is understood from the opinions of the teachers that they have participated in the Leonardo Da Vinci project to get to know a different country, to examine the education system of a different country, and to help the project work.” Gunbayi and Yassıkaya (2011:22)*

In another example in the same study titled “Vocational high school principals and teachers' opinions on the Leonardo da Vinci project: A case study”, the content analysis of the opinions of principals and teachers regarding the preparations made prior to the Leonardo Da Vinci project, which is the second sub-problem of the research, the preparations made before the Leonardo Da Vinci project are taken into account as the dependent variable, the duty of the participants as the independent variable considering A and B as principals and C, D, E, F, G, H as teachers, the interpretation of whether there is a difference in the preparations made prior to the Leonardo Da Vinci project according to the types of the duty is carried out as follows:

*“When we generally interpret the opinions of principals and teachers regarding the preparations made prior to the Leonardo Da Vinci project, school principals and teachers expressed a common opinion about searching the cultural characteristics of the European Union member country on the internet, introducing the Turkish education system by preparing CDs and brochures, and learning the daily spoken language of the European Union member country. School principals expressed their views differently from the teachers stating that in accordance with the responsibility of being a manager and in order for the project to start and continue on time in accordance with its purpose, they made extra preliminary preparations in investigating the education system in the destination country in advance and following the website of the national agency on the internet, where information about the accepted project and the procedures to be carried out were published.” Gunbayi and Yassıkaya (2011:25)*

As it can be understood from the examples of the content analyses above, the opinions of the principals and teachers about the reasons for participating in the Leonardo Da Vinci project and the preparations made prior to the project were considered as the independent variable, the reasons for participation and the preparations made prior to the project as the dependent variables, and the opinions of the principals and teachers were compared and the differences or similarities were interpreted. In the content analysis, it was interpreted by the researcher that while the principals in accordance with the responsibility of being an administrator were concerned about organizational effectiveness, which could be defined as the degree to which the organization achieve its goals by thinking in the institutional level, the teachers participated in the Leonardo Da Vinci project by thinking more in the individual level and having sufficiency anxiety, which could be defined as meeting the needs of the employees. Thus, the views of the participants were interpreted in more detail, revealing the real intentions of the participants that was not understood at first glance.

### **Analytical Generalization**

Analytical generalization is used in the discussion section, which is the section where the research results reached are discussed based on the literature. While the researcher makes an evaluation based on analytical generalization, he or she discusses analytically, taking into account the priority of the findings by focusing on what kind of contribution the researcher's own research has reached in the researches done so far or in the scientific books written on that subject really contributes to the researched phenomenon and what kind of similarities and differences there are between the researches done so far or the scientific books written on that subject and the research done by the researcher.

For example, in the article called “Academic staff’s perceptions on stressors originating from interpersonal relations at work setting: A case study” (Gunbayı, 2009), an analytical generalization about the contribution of the findings to the relevant literature is given in the quotation below.

*“Work stress can have both positive and negative effects. In researches on work stress done so far its negative effects have been tended to focus on (Allen, 1990; Hellriegel et al., 1995). However, PG was against the assumption that work stress is necessarily a bad thing: “If stress is everything that upsets your normal balance, there must be some stress. With your questions, I’m making the assumption that stress is negative. I do not agree with this assumption. You need some stress to teach well. You cannot teach well if you are completely relaxed, and it is also necessary for good performance.” As P3 said, some forms of stress can energize people, stress is not necessarily bad for people, and people need an optimum level of eustress. In addition, if people are completely relaxed, they cannot do their job well, and so stress is essential for a good performance.” (Gunbayı, 2009: 58)*

As can be understood from the above analytical generalization, there are studies in the literature on job stress that mainly reveal the negative effects of job stress on performance (Allen, 1990; Hellriegel et al., 1995). However, in the study conducted by Gunbayı (2009), contrary to the literature, analytical generalization was made to contribute to the stress theory that job stress also has a positive effect on performance. There is a principle that exceptions do not prove the rule in quantitative research. In other words, exceptions are not taken into account in quantitative research, findings based on data are predicted, controlled, measured and proven by considering average scores. However, since there is no generalization to the population in qualitative research, quality cannot be sacrificed to quantity. Even one person's opinion is valuable and taken into account. The person's view is first understood, then interpreted and finally generalized to the theory; that is, it is subjected to analytical generalization.

Additionally, in the same article called “Academic staff’s perceptions on stressors originating from interpersonal relations at work setting: A case study” (Gunbayı, 2009) an analytic generalization based on similarities between the researches done so far on occupational stressors and the research done by the researcher is given in the quotation below.

*“The other finding related to informal relations is those room visits by students and colleagues. Except participant 3 and participant 4, all other informants complained about those visits. For example P1 complained about those visits: ‘Yes, it is if you are supposed to do work, try to concentrate and at that moment getting interrupted by your colleagues, yes, that’s stressful.’ Besides, Participant 6: ‘I have no personal problem with the colleague with whom I share the room. However, when my or his students call in the room to ask something or for group study, we are interrupted and do not study effectively.’ This finding is also consistent with Sutton & Rafaeli’s finding (1987) in their study called ‘A characteristics of work stations as potential occupational stressors’ that at work setting intrusions by others such as interruption by noisy co-workers, ringing telephones and other people walking into and around their work stations can be principal sources of stress. The solution to this problem can be interview rooms where colleagues can welcome their students and other colleagues who want to visit them.” (Gunbayı, 2009: 58)*

In another study by Gunbayı (2014) called “Job stressors and their effects on academic staff: A case study” an analytic generalization based on the similarities between the researches done so far on the effect of stressors and the research done by the researcher is given in the quotation below.

*“The findings related to the effects of stressors showed that the stressors had psychological, social, mental and physiological effect on academic staff. Among the effects of stressors participants mentioned about having ache in a part of body and being calm or no communication with others were in the first rank, need for more social relations, heart beating, not being able to sleep, less time for family, social relations and talks, being angry and arguing with people, complaining and questioning and being indifferent to others second. Those findings*



are supported by Barkhuizen & Rothmann (2008) with the findings in their study showing that stressors were important contributing factors to ill health of academics in higher education institutions. Besides, ill health could result in sickness, absenteeism and early retirements in higher education institutions. Besides, a study by Allen, Herst, Bruck, and Sutton (2000) also showed that stress related to outcomes were those negative symptoms such as poor appetite, nervous tension, blood pressure, depression, cigarette use, heavy drinking and negative feelings at work." (Gunbayi, 2014: 70)

As seen in the articles by Gunbayi (2009) and Gunbayi (2014) analytic generalizations were made based on focusing on the similarities between the researches done so far on occupational stressors of Sutton & Rafaeli's (1987) and the effects of stressors of Barkhuizen & Rothmann (2008), Allen, Herst, Bruck, and Sutton (2000) and the researches done by the researcher.

## Conclusion

As can be understood from the types and stages of qualitative data analysis tried to be explained above, in theme and descriptive analysis, understanding the findings based on context, point of view and opinion of participants, interpretation in content analysis and the first three analyzes are used while writing the findings section of a research, while analytical generalization is used in the discussion section, which is the section where the research results reached are discussed based on the literature in terms of similarities and differences to contribute the related theory in the literature by reviewing the researches done and the scientific books written on that phenomena so far.

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## Examining primary school teachers' views on critical thinking: a case study<sup>1</sup>

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### To cite this article:

Aybek, B. & Varlık, F. (2023). Examining primary school teachers' views on critical thinking: A case study. *Journal of Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research [JAQMER]*, Volume 2(Issue 2), 12 - 22 [Online] [www.jaqmeronline.com](http://www.jaqmeronline.com) DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8318200

**Article Info:** Received: August, 04<sup>th</sup>, 2023      Revised: August, 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023      Accepted: August, 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Abstract.** This research, which aimed to examine the views of primary school teachers towards critical thinking, was carried out in an embedded single case pattern of the case study based on qualitative data. In the study, “criterion sampling” technique, one of the purposeful sampling techniques in qualitative research, was used. In the study, fifteen primary school class teachers were included in the research on a voluntary basis. In the study, a semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool. In the analysis of the data of the study, theme, descriptive analysis and analytical generalization were used. Across the research, participants defined critical thinking as thinking in multiple directions, reasoning, and mental process. They stated that teaching critical thinking was important in terms of thinking differently, cognitive learning, and practice. They categorized critical thinking individuals as those with cognitive characteristics, mental skills, and those who can practice. Participants often use critical thinking as thinking skills and animation in the classroom. They stated that there were obstructive elements of critical thinking in terms of students, external factors and the program, that critical thinking did not currently exist in the program, and that philosophy and its paradigm should be determined and included in the program as an interdisciplinary course.

**Keywords:** Critical thinking, teacher, elementary school, program

### Introduction

Many researches have been done and thoughts produced about the structure of 21st century skills. In those researches carried out worldwide in which 60 institutes and 250 researchers took part, 21st century skills were gathered under four categories (Çalışkan & Sulak, 2016). Within those categories, critical thinking is one of the ways of thinking. According to Conley (1997), employers today need not only individuals who are experts in their field and know their job well, but also individuals who can express themselves in writing and verbally, speak fluently and clearly, follow instructions appropriately, perform basic mathematical skills flawlessly regardless of their field, think creatively and critically, solve problems and take responsibility for learning (Yüksel, 2010). Matthew Lipman refers to critical thinking as a skillful and responsible way of thinking that leads to good judgment. Because it is sensitive to the context it is in, it is based on criteria and has a self-correcting structure (Aybek, 2018). Haladyna defined the goals of education; Critical thinking: It consists of the sub-dimensions of evaluation, procedure, induction/deduction. Keywords are classified as analyze, analyze, classify, compare, critical meat, distinguish, decide, evaluate, estimate, relate, hypothesize, etc. (Yıldırım & Kartal, 2021).

The combination of critical thinking skills and a tendency to think critically focuses on and guides inductive, deductive and abductive inference with the aim of solving problems. This is an approach of questioning. Critical thinking involves questioning, which encourages broader thinking about problems, and a variety of ways to solve or answer those problems as well. Some questions include both individual and aggregated levels (Oral & Yazar, 2017). Critical thinking is a pattern of thinking (Çalışkan & Sulak, 2016). In addition, Wen (1999), who evaluates the definitions of critical thinking, states that some

<sup>1</sup>This study was accepted as a paper to be presented at EDU Congress, 20-23 September 2023, Ankara University.

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researchers express critical thinking as the ability to make sense and others as the ability to solve problems. Wen (1999) defined critical thinking as the mental skills of a free individual who contributes to a rational life by mechanically cascading it, such as mental inquiry activity, detailed analysis and reorganization (Güzel, 2022).

What do critical thinkers do? Central process (SBDS). They identify a question or problem (S). They think about it using components of logic (B). When appropriate, they consider all aspects of the subject through the lens of the discipline (D). In doing so, they check their logic using critical thinking standards (S).

This is the central process of critical thinking, in other words, its heart (Aybek, 2018). When the critical thinking characteristics are analyzed, it is seen that critical thinking features such as "active and productive", "independent but can be shaped according to the subject", "open to different thoughts and can be triggered by them", "being emotional and biased while considering the evidence and reasons", "should organize thoughts and focus on the organization process rather than the result" (Güzel, 2022).

According to Kökdemir (2012), individuals who can think critically can comprehend the differences between proven facts and claims, evaluate whether the sources from which the existing information is accessed are reliable, distinguish between the data that are evidence for the formation of information and those that are not, recognize biases and cognitive errors and inconsistent statements, and have effective questioning features. These individuals should also be able to use the cognitive beyond cognition effectively as well as being competent in oral and written language, that is, they should be aware of the functioning of their own thoughts (Kurtuluş, 2021). Although critical thinking and creative thinking may seem different, they complement each other and work together. Critical thinking involves the evaluation of quality, and creative thinking involves the production of innovations. In the educational process, individuals should use these thinking tendencies for a thorough understanding of the content (Çetin, 2008).

In the globalizing world, the expectations from education have become more complex and the type of people to be raised has become different. The aim of education is to educate the creative teacher type who can use technology, who can easily access information, who processes information, who produces information, who spreads, who can solve the problems he encounters, who learns how to learn, who learns how to think, who has a versatile and critical thinking, instead of the type of teacher who load students with information by memorizing everything. For this reason, the constructivist learning approach, which is one of the new understandings that give weight to learning rather than teaching, has started to be applied in our education system (Sarpkaya, 2019). The changes and developments in the world today are also reflected in the training programs. Changing programs have also included high-level skills in the targeted achievements. High-level skills are tried to be applied in activities in different disciplines. (Güzel, 2022). The process of developing critical thinking, which is an obligatory condition for a good life, a good society and a correct communication, was discussed within the scope of the research and the critical thinking skills of the students were tried to be developed by preparing a curriculum to develop this skill. In the entire curriculum applied in our country, there are common skills that are desired to be gained in different disciplines in all courses. These high-level skills are at the core of the achievements. It is important not only to give the information directly, but also to use this learned information through activities or Practices. Teachers guide the program to develop skills.

Teaching is a dynamic profession. It is unthinkable to be satisfied with the achievements of the institutions that train teachers throughout their professional life. A teacher who values the profession needs to remember from time to time the knowledge of the profession that he or she has. In addition, it is important to follow new developments on the same subject (Gürsel, 2004).

Many challenges can be encountered in teaching critical thinking. For this, attention should be paid to issues such as providing a democratic classroom environment, giving sufficient time, visualizing information, and giving importance to cooperation among students. (Özensoy, 2019). The current literature supports the inclusion of critical thinking in curricula, but it assigns the most important role to

teachers in providing students with critical thinking skills (İpek & Erişen, 2010). It is necessary to underline the responsibility of teachers here. It is important that teachers design their lessons in a way that puts students at the center of learning and in accordance with the content that will develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Özdemir, Turan & Çoban, 2020). Innovations made in an education system can only be implemented with a teacher. It is very important that the teachers who will be the implementers of primary education programs have gained the common basic skills specified in terms of raising students with the same characteristics (Karademir, 2013). Since the day the new primary education program started to be implemented, there have been problems in the implementation of the program due to various reasons. Determining the situation in the implementation process, revealing the problems and taking measures to eliminate these problems are important for the training effort. It is necessary to make continuous evaluation in the process in order not to encounter undesirable situations in the educational activity (Rençber, 2009).

## **Method**

### ***Model of the Research***

This research, which aimed to examine the views of primary school teachers towards critical thinking, was carried out in an embedded single case study design of case study based on qualitative data. Although the case study offers the opportunity to make in-depth analyses, it is a preferred method when the questions "How?" and "Why?" are sought, the control of the researcher is limited and the focus of the study is a real-life phenomenon. Therefore, case study research requires the investigation of a situation within the real-life, current context or environment (Yin, 2016). Thus, qualitative research designs provide a flexible approach to the researcher and contribute to the consistency of the various stages of the research within a specific focus. This research was carried out on the axis of the interpretive paradigm (Gunbayi & Sorm, 2020).

### ***Sampling***

Purposeful sampling methods are useful in many cases in discovering and explaining facts and phenomena (Palys, 2008). In the study, "criterion sampling" technique, one of the purposeful sampling techniques used in qualitative research, was used. This sampling technique is the inclusion of individuals who meet certain criteria in accordance with the purpose of the research (Given, 2008; Varlik, 2023). In the study, fifteen primary school class teachers were included in the research on a voluntary basis.

### ***Ethical Procedures***

For the research, the permission of the ethics committee was obtained with the decision of Çukurova University, Scientific Research and Publication Ethics in the Field of Social Sciences and Humanities dated 30.01.2023 and numbered 6. In addition, due to ethical concerns in the study, the participants were coded with the letters A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N and O.

### ***Data Collection Tool***

In the study, semi-structured interview form was used from qualitative data collection tools. The interview technique can also be called the traditional questionnaire, which is created by asking questions in turn, recording or marking the answers (Merriam, 2009). With the interview technique, it is possible to carry out research in accordance with different rapidly changing conditions. Interviewing illiterate people in these ways is also the strongest aspect of qualitative research (Karasar, 2000). The semi-structured interview form questions used in the research are given below.

1. How would you define critical thinking? Why?
2. In what ways is it important to teach critical thinking to elementary school students? Why?

3. What are the characteristics of the critical thinking individual? Can you explain?
4. Do you use critical thinking in your classes in class? If so, can you give an example of how you use it?
5. Are there any factors that prevent you from using critical thinking? If so, can you explain what they are?
6. Are critical thinking skills present in your curriculum? If so, can you explain what they are? Or should it be put in, How?
7. If there is anything else you would like to mention about critical thinking, please do so.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

In the study, NVIVO 10 package program was used for the analysis of the data. In qualitative research, unlike quantitative research in the analysis of data, measurement, proof and generalization to the population are not essential, the main thing is to understand the context, interpret the content and analytical generalization. Data analysis in qualitative research means diversity, creativity and flexibility. (Kelle, 1995). Gunbayi (2019) divided qualitative data analysis into four groups as "theme analysis, descriptive analysis, content analysis and analytical generalization". In this research, after theme and descriptive analyzes, deeper and more comprehensive analysis was made with content analysis.

### **Validity and reliability of the research**

In terms of validity, a detailed review of the data was carried out by examining and analyzing the observation notes taken during the collection of the data. In order to ensure the validity of the analysis process, the audit of the themes and subcategories identified in the analyses was carried out with the support of field experts. In this context, the validity of the research process and analysis was ensured by detailed sample statements from interview records related to the identified themes and subcategories, as well as an in-depth examination of the research findings in the context of sample statements (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Kappa analysis was performed to calculate the reliability of coding processes of qualitative data. Inter-encoder reliability coefficient was found [ $\kappa=.745$ ,  $t=6.456$ ,  $p=.001$ ]. This coefficient shows that the reliability between encoders is significantly very high (Landis & Koach, 1977).

### **Findings**

In this section, the findings of the analysis of the data collected by the semi-structured interview form are presented.

Findings on how primary school teachers defined critical thinking are presented under this heading. The themes and sub-themes of critical thinking are given in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

*Themes and sub-themes of critical thinking*

Themes	Sub-Themes	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Lateral thinking	Seeing from a Different Points of View		✓							✓						✓
	Evaluating Possibilities	✓					✓									
Reasoning	Ability to Reason by Questioning			✓	✓				✓		✓					
	Reasoning			✓												✓
	Critical Interpretation of Information												✓			
Mental Process	Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation				✓	✓										

Carrying out Research and Study	✓	✓	
Making Inferences		✓	✓

When the findings of the themes and sub-themes related to critical thinking were examined in Table 1, the theme of "Lateral thinking " was reached from the sub-themes of "seeing from a different points of view, evaluating the possibilities", from the sub-themes of "Reasoning by questioning, reasoning, Critical Interpretation of Information " to the theme of "Reasoning", and from the sub-themes of "analysis, synthesis, evaluation, Carrying out Research and Study, making inferences" to the theme of "Mental Process".

When the themes of Lateral thinking, Reasoning and Mental Process were examined, the evaluations of primary school teachers were mainly in the form of seeing from different perspectives, evaluating possibilities, reasoning by questioning, reasoning, critical interpretation of information, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, researching and studying, and making inferences. The statements of primary school teachers on the subject are as follows:

- ... *Critical thinking is the ability to see at a topic or event from different points, to think in multiple ways and to evaluate possibilities (A-Female)*
- ... *I consider critical thinking to be mental processes such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation (D-Female)*
- ... *I define critical thinking as being able to reach conclusions by reasoning and making inferences on a problem or a situation (I-Female)*
- ... *critical thinking is to be able to reason, so it will be easier to reason about things (O-Man)*

Findings and interpretations on the importance of teaching critical thinking to primary school students are presented under this heading. The themes and sub-themes of critical thinking are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

*Themes and sub-themes of which angle is important to teach critical thinking to primary school students*

Themes	Sub- Themes	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Thinking Differently	Empathetic Thinking	✓											✓			
	Problem Solving	✓	✓		✓											✓
Cognitive Learning	Recognizing the Concept						✓	✓			✓					
	Ability to Use the Concept								✓	✓	✓					
Practice	Achieving Success		✓	✓	✓										✓	
	Ability to Question Events					✓					✓					✓

When the findings of the themes and sub-themes related to the importance of teaching critical thinking to primary school students were examined in Table 2, the theme of "Thinking Differently" was reached from the sub-themes of "Empathetic Thinking, Problem Solving", from the sub-themes of "recognizing the concept, Ability to Use the Concept " to the theme of "Cognitive Learning", from the sub-themes of "achieving success, Ability to Question Events " to the theme of "Practice".

When the themes of thinking differently, cognitive learning and Practice were examined, the evaluations of primary school teachers were mainly as thinking with empathy, solving problems, recognizing the concept, using the concept, achieving success and questioning events. The statements of primary school teachers on the subject are as follows:

- ... *Teaching elementary school students to think critically is to teach children to see things from a different perspective and to empathize, and also to teach children problem-solving behaviors through critical thinking (A-Female)*
- ... *Teaching critical thinking allows students to use it later in life (H-Male).*
- ... *Teaching critical thinking is important to improve our students' questioning and questioning*

*skills (K-Male)*

Findings and interpretations of the characteristics of critical thinking individuals are presented under this heading. The themes and sub-themes of critical thinking are given in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

*Themes and sub-themes related to the characteristics of critical thinking individuals*

Theme	Child Theme	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Cognitive characteristics	Empathetic	✓														✓
	Able to Think Positively						✓		✓							
	Respecting Human Rights			✓												
Mental Skill	Creative Minded	✓												✓		
	Forward-thinking					✓										✓
	Analytical Thinking		✓					✓		✓	✓					
Practice	Having a Different Perspective		✓				✓					✓				
	Able to Take Responsibility					✓							✓			
	Researcher				✓				✓			✓				
	Problem Solving	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓		✓				✓

When the findings of the themes and sub-themes created for the characteristics of critical thinking individuals were examined in Table 3, the theme of "Cognitive characteristics " was reached from the sub-themes of "empathetic, able to think positively, respecting human rights", the theme of "Mental Skill" from the sub-themes of "creative minded, forward-thinking, analytical thinking", and the theme of "Practice" from the sub-themes of "having a different perspective, able to take responsibility, researcher, problem solving".

When the themes of cognitive characteristics, mental skills and Practice were examined, the evaluations of primary school teachers were mainly as empathetic, positive thinking, respecting human rights, creative minded, forward-thinking, analytical thinking, having a different point of Perspective, taking responsibility, researcher, problem solving. The statements of primary school teachers on the subject are as follows:

- ... the critically thinking individual uses evidence skillfully and independently, is skilled at expressing himself, can think reasonably and rationally (G-Female)*
- ... Critical thinking individuals have characteristics such as investigative, inquisitive, striving to reach information, seeing from different points of view to solve problems (K-Male)*
- ... The critically thinking individual can take responsibility for the difficulties he experiences in his life, so we can call these individuals the critically thinking individual (L-Male)*
- ... The critically thinking individual has creative qualities, he manages to cope with the difficulties he experiences in life by using his critical characteristic, thanks to creativity (M-Female)*

Findings and comments on how primary school teachers used critical thinking in courses are presented under this heading. The themes and sub-themes of critical thinking are given in Table 4.

**Table 4.**

*Themes and sub-themes of how primary school teachers use critical thinking in courses*

Theme	Child Theme	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Thinking Skills	Expressing own ideas	✓		✓					✓		✓					
	Discussing		✓							✓		✓				
	Guessing				✓									✓		



Animation	Performing drama			✓						✓		✓
	Spontaneous Use	✓	✓									✓

When the findings of the themes and sub-themes created about how primary school teachers use critical thinking in the courses were examined in Table 4, the theme of "Thinking Skills" was reached from the sub-themes of "expressing own ideas, discussing, guessing", and the theme of "Animation" was reached from the sub-themes of "performing drama, spontaneous use".

When the themes of thinking skills and animation were examined, the evaluations of primary school teachers were mainly in the form of expressing own ideas, discussing, guessing, performing drama and spontaneous use. The statements of primary school teachers on the subject are as follows:

*... Critical thinking can be used in every lesson, in problem solving in mathematics, in Turkish and Life Science lessons, in telling one's opinion, in learning the thoughts of friends, in producing the most accurate solution, activates mental activities in the best way. She also teaches to respect the opinions of others, she learns through criticism that not everyone thinks like herself, but through criticism in the realization that each individual is different, so she also learns to respect and love people (A-Female)*

*... I use critical thinking quite often in my classes. I try to put it into practice using the discussion method. I organize and have activities that enable students with different ideas about a topic to express each other (B-Female)*

*... I use critical thinking in our classes whenever I can. To increase creativity, I allow children to discern the concept of right and wrong when they go to solutions. For example, I'm looking for answers to questions like what would you do if you were an event that happened to the character in the book (C-Male)*

*... I use critical thinking in my classes. I have students do activities to develop their critical skills. I give scenarios to children and enable them to produce solutions to the problems given in these scenarios (G-Female)*

Findings and comments on the factors that prevented the use of critical thinking are presented under this heading. The themes and sub-themes of critical thinking are given in Table 5.

**Table 5.**

*Themes and sub-themes related to the factors that prevent the use of critical thinking*

Theme	Child Theme	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
For Students	Age-related factors	✓											✓			
	Prejudice		✓			✓										✓
	Listening and Attention	✓			✓											
Exogenous Factors	Cultural Factors and Belief		✓									✓	✓			
	CourseAttendance				✓	✓										
In terms of the program	Time	✓							✓							
	Lack of achievements			✓			✓							✓		✓
	Curriculum								✓	✓					✓	
	Teacher							✓	✓							✓

When the findings of the themes and sub-themes related to the factors preventing the use of critical thinking were examined in Table 5, the theme of "From the Perspective of Students" was reached from the sub-themes of "age-related factors, prejudice, listening and attention", from the sub-themes of "cultural factors and belief, course attendance" to the theme of "External Factors", and from the sub-themes of "time, lack of achievements, curriculum, teacher" to the theme of "In terms of Program".

When the themes of the students in terms of external factors and program were examined, the evaluations of primary school teachers were mainly in the form of age-related factors, prejudice, listening and

attention, cultural factors and belief, course attendance, time, lack of achievements, curriculum and teacher. The statements of primary school teachers on the subject are as follows:

- ... I find it difficult to use critical thinking in lessons due to the crowded classrooms and the fact that every child wants to talk (D-Female)*
- ... we have an education system that is not conducive to critical thinking, we are in a monotonous vicious circle that does not encompass different types of abilities and intelligences (I-Female)*
- ... I am unable to use critical thinking in my classes due to the intensity of the topics and the inhibition of the curriculum (H-Male)*

Findings and comments on the presence of critical thinking skills in curricula are presented under this heading. The themes and sub-themes of critical thinking are given in Table 6.

**Table 6.**

*Themes and sub-themes related to the availability of critical thinking skills in curricula*

Theme	Child Theme	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Program Availability	Not Available		✓							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Insufficient	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
What to be done	Interdisciplinary Use	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Critical Thinking as a Course		✓							✓				✓		✓
	As Philosophy and Paradigm			✓									✓			✓

When the findings of the themes and sub-themes related to the presence of critical thinking skills in the curriculum were examined in Table 6, the theme of "Program Availability" was reached from the sub-themes of "not available, insufficient" and the theme of "What to be done" was reached from the sub-themes of "Interdisciplinary use, critical thinking as a course, philosophy and paradigm".

When the themes of program availability and what to have are examined, the evaluations of primary school teachers are not available, insufficient, they should be in the form of interdisciplinary use, critical thinking as a course, philosophy and paradigm. The statements of primary school teachers on the subject are as follows:

- ... critical thinking skills are not present in the program, they should definitely be used, for this, first of all, the curriculum should be changed, with lean environmental conditions, a program conducive to multifaceted thinking should be introduced (I-Female)*
- ... Critical thinking is unfortunately not present in our curricula. This is extremely negative for our education system. Therefore, it should be put as a lesson, at least critical thinking activities should be included in every lesson (N-Male)*
- ... Critical thinking is not in our program. Its absence is a major shortcoming in terms of our teaching programs. First of all, it should be given to teachers as an educational philosophy and paradigm, and then it should be put into the program as an interdisciplinary course (O-Female)*

### Conclusion and Recommendations

As a result of the theme analysis related to critical thinking, the themes of latent thinking, reasoning and mental process were reached. Participants defined critical thinking as seeing from a different points of view, evaluating possibilities, ability to reason by questioning, critical interpretation of information, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, carrying out research and study and making inferences. In the theme analysis of the importance of teaching critical thinking to primary school students, different themes of thinking differently, cognitive learning and practice were reached. Participants emphasized that it was important to teach critical thinking in terms of empathetic thinking, problem solving, recognizing the concept, ability to use the concept, achieving success and ability to question events. As a result of the

theme analysis of the characteristics of critical thinking individuals, the themes of cognitive characteristics, mental skills and Practice were reached. Participants defined individuals who can think critically as empathetic, positive thinking, respecting human rights, creative minded, forward-thinking, analytical thinking, having a different point of Perspective, taking responsibility, researcher, problem solving.

In the theme analysis of how primary school teachers use critical thinking in courses, thinking skills and animation themes were reached. Participants stated that they used methods such as expressing own ideas, discussing, guessing, performing drama and spontaneous use. In the theme analysis of the factors that prevent the use of critical thinking, the themes of extrinsic factors for students and the program were reached. Participants considered age-related factors, prejudice, listening and attention, cultural factors and belief, course attendance, time, lack of achievements, curriculum and teacher as factors that prevented critical thinking. In the theme analysis of the presence of critical thinking skills in the curriculum, the theme of program availability, what to be done were reached. Participants said that critical thinking skills were not present in the program or were insufficient in the program and that they should be included in the program in the way of interdisciplinary use, critical thinking as a course, philosophy and paradigm. They avoided answering the question, "If there is anything else you would like to indicate about critical thinking, please indicate it." Recommendations can be made based on these results.

In the study, teachers who think that it is important to provide critical thinking skills to primary school students think that time and class crowdedness are the most important obstacles in this process.

For this, steps should be taken to solve these problems or appropriate methods should be chosen to gain these skills despite these problems. Steps should be taken to improve the critical thinking skills of the implementing teachers of the program, and in-service training should be provided to enable them to gain skills in practice.

In the teaching process, teachers should be given more space to support their ability to generate ideas, question and make decisions in their activities.

In order to develop Practices that will gain critical thinking skills and to enable teachers to see the Practice process, experimental studies should be included and it should be ensured that they can reach teachers.

In order for primary school students to gain critical thinking skills, studies examining appropriate methods and techniques should be carried out and developing practices should be determined.

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**Ethical approval**

In the writing process of the study titled “**Examining primary school teachers' views on critical thinking: a case study**”, the rules of scientific, ethical and citation were followed; it was undertaken by the authors of this study that no falsification was made on the collected data, “Journal Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research [JAQMER] and Editor” had no responsibility for all ethical violations to be faced, and all responsibility belongs to the authors and that the study was not submitted for evaluation to any other academic publishing environment.

**Ethics committee approval**

Ethics Committee Approval of this research was obtained from Çukurova University Social and Humanities Sciences Ethics Committee numbered E.599008 and 06 decision numbered on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

## Problems faced by teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economic disadvantaged regions and suggestions for solutions: A case study

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### To cite this article:

Erdem, S. (2023). Problems faced by teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economic disadvantaged regions and suggestions for solutions: A case study. *Journal of Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research [JAQMER]*, Volume 2 (Issue 2), 23-46 [Online] [www.jaqmeronline.com](http://www.jaqmeronline.com) DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8319403

**Article Info:** Received: August, 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Revised: August, 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Accepted: September, 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Abstract.** The aim of this research was to reveal the problems experienced by teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economic disadvantaged regions, the main reasons of the problems and the solutions they found, and to present a case analysis with findings and suggestions. This research is expected to contribute greatly to the emergence of problems that are constantly seen, heard or never known, and to understand the problems and the students who experienced these problems. It was carried out in a state secondary school with a population of students and parents from a socio-economically disadvantaged region in Bolvadin district of Afyonkarahisar Province. The sampling of the research consisted of teachers from 5 different subjects. As a result of this research, it was found that socio-economic problems in schools in the region that were the subject of the research affected the school, student success, absenteeism and education life. It was seen that the problems were caused by various reasons, and it was stated that these reasons were also noteworthy. In terms of education, it was understood that it was difficult to find fast and permanent solutions that this process could be cooperative and only the effects of reducing the problems could be possible.

**Keywords:** Disadvantaged regions, secondary school, teachers

### Introduction

One of the most important factors affecting the quality of education is the problems that educators, who have a curricular role for the development of societies, face while performing their profession. It is thought that the problems experienced by teachers constitute the basis of education problems in general (Uygun, 2012).

To take a look at the professional problems experienced by teachers, academic career barriers, additional course differences, different graduation areas, lack of support from school administrations, lack of counseling services in schools, not being appreciated by supervisors, work and private life circles, high scores and disadvantaged areas can be negative perception of the profession. Problems such as the difficulty of appointment due to regions, the problem of the employment of substitute teachers (Polat, 2014) who cannot be appointed can be given as examples suitable for this title.

Regions that can be considered disadvantaged offer less opportunities for people in terms of economic, sociological and cultural conditions and educational status. It is an accepted fact that education is very important in these regions and their surroundings. Social self-realization of the individual is possible through education. The disadvantage mentioned in this research is social and economic. OECD (2012) defines socioeconomic disadvantage as living in worse social and economic conditions and being in a lower status in society than other people in general. In other words, it emerges in a place where families

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struggle with economic problems, parents live apart in some cases, there are second marriages, broken family types and many psychological problems are experienced, a mass of uninterested parents, an out-of-centre or ignored region. It is also observed that such schools are addiction centers in some regions.

Recent researches have shown that teachers in schools facing difficult conditions need to work harder and be more dedicated than their peers in more favorable socioeconomic conditions. Furthermore, they must maintain this effort to sustain development, as success can be short-lived and fragile under difficult or challenging conditions (Whitty, 2001; Whitty and Mortimore, 1997). Especially in recent years, studies have been carried out on the effect of the general situation of disadvantaged regional schools on the school process and quality in disadvantaged regional secondary schools (Lupton, 2003), the problems faced by teachers working in socio-economically disadvantaged preschool institutions during the implementation of science activities (Önal, 2020) and social aspects. Studies dealing with issues such as the problems faced by social studies teachers working in disadvantaged areas (Taşdemir, 2016) have taken their place in the literature.

As seen in the studies done so far, teachers and students in those disadvantaged schools are often negatively affected. Thus, it is very important to examine the problems in these schools in detail, to understand to the main reasons of the problems, to try to reach solutions with education if any, or out of education, and to inform the relevant authorities about this issue.

The aim of this study was to understand and interpret the problems teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economically disadvantaged regions faced and their solutions to these problems, with the opinions of the teachers who experienced working in socio-economically disadvantaged regions.

Within the framework of the problem statement “What are the problems teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economically disadvantaged regions face and their solutions to these problems?” answers were sought to the following questions:

1. What kind of problems do teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economically disadvantaged regions face?
2. What are the main reasons for the problems faced by teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economically disadvantaged regions?
3. What do teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economically disadvantaged regions think about the impact of these situations on student achievement?
4. What kind of temporary solutions do teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economically disadvantaged regions produce within the school for the problems they face?
5. What do teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economically disadvantaged regions recommend for a permanent solution to the problems face?

### **Method and paradigm of research**

The paradigm of this research is interpretive as it is ontologically and epistemologically based on subjective and inter-subjective views of the individuals based on their perspectives (Gunbayi & Sorm, 2020). Accordingly, a qualitative approach was chosen in this study. Because in the research, individual interviews with the participants was carried out and their views on the research topic were included and supported by documents. In this context, a descriptive case study with holistic single case design was used. Case studies are deep-based studies that try to richly describe events that occur in their natural conditions, under the constraints of time and space, using various data collection tools (Yin, 2017).

### *Sampling*

Sampling was formed by selecting among different subject teachers working in Kemalettin Sami Pasa Secondary School in Bolvadin district of Afyonkarahisar, in accordance with the holistic single case design. The study group of this research was chosen on a voluntary basis. In this study, it was tried to understand the problems faced by the teachers working in the secondary school located in an economically and socially disadvantaged region in the Bolvadin district of Afyonkarahisar province and to examine the solutions they found with a case study. The sampling of the research consisted of 5 participants, one each from Science, Turkish, Social Studies, Mathematics and Religious Culture and Moral Science teachers working at Kemalettin Sami Pasa Secondary School. In the research, convenient sampling, which is one of the purposeful sampling techniques, was used, adding speed and practicality to research. Because in this method, the researchers chooses a situation that is close to them and easy to access (Palys, 2008). The sampling of the research were 5 subject teachers selected on voluntary basis. As seen in Table 1, the teachers participating in the research were in the subjects of science, Turkish, religious culture and moral science, mathematics, and social sciences. In terms of educational status, all of the teachers were under-graduate.

**Table 1.**

*Distribution of participants according to subjects*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Graduation</b>
P1	Teacher	Science	Undergraduate
P2	Teacher	Turkish	Undergraduate
P3	Teacher	Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge	Undergraduate
P4	Teacher	Maths	Undergraduate
P5	Teacher	Social Information	Undergraduate

### *Data collection*

The data related to the research were collected from the teachers through interviews and documents between February 20<sup>th</sup> and March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023. A recording device was used to record and keep data during the interview. Two different qualitative data collection methods were used in the study. The first of these data collection methods was interview forms. Individual interview forms based on open-ended questions and semi-structured interview questions were used to get the opinions of the participants on the problems they experienced. Interviews with the participants lasted approximately 30 minutes. In terms of efficiency and time saving, the interview was continued by recording on a voice recorder. The second data collection method in the research was the school documents of all kinds of correspondence, minutes and other documents that contained the success of the students, the student behavior and information such as absenteeism.

### *Ethical procedures*

Scientific research ethics were followed at all stages of the research: (1) ethics committee approval of the research was obtained from Akdeniz University Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the meeting of 1 decision numbered 8 on 08 on January 10th, 2023 and (2) an informed consent form was signed by the participants prior to the interview.

### *Validity and reliability of the research*

In order to increase the internal and external validity and reliability based on the criteria of credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability, (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of the qualitative data, followings were carried out: (1) In order to increase the internal validity (credibility) of the research, in addition to interview, documents were also used in data collection and questions were created with the literature review, and immediately afterwards, preliminary interviews were held with the participants to



finalize the interview form. Then, semi-structured interview forms based on open-ended questions were created. (2) in order to increase the external validity (transferability) sampling was formed by selecting among different subject teachers via purposive sampling method based on voluntarism to get views of participants based on their perspectives, (3) in order to increase the internal reliability (confirmability) of the research following the coding by two independent researchers, Cohen's kappa coefficient was calculated to determine inter-rater reliability of themes as 0.83, a perfect level of agreement between the codings d) in order to increase the external reliability (dependability) of the research, all data collected were kept accessible on demand (Landis and Koach, 1977; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2007, Gunbayi, 2018).

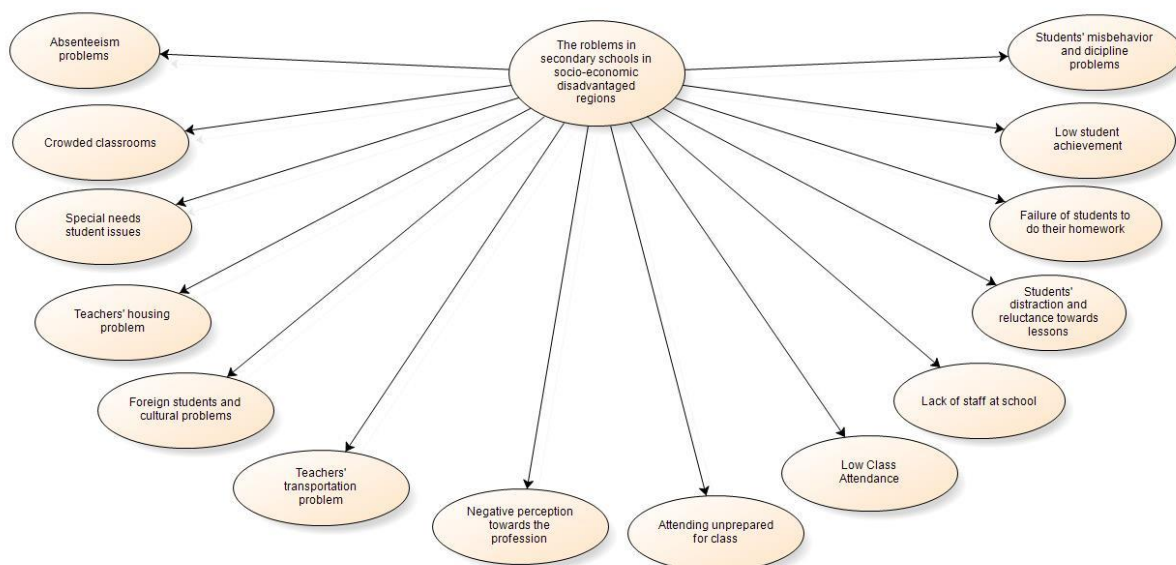
### Data Analysis

In qualitative data analysis, the thematic and descriptive analysis (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2007, Gunbayi, 2018) were used in the research to analyze the data obtained from interviews, and documents. First, the interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, then coded using the Atlas.ti qualitative software together with the data obtained from the documents. Finally, the codes and themes were arranged and the results were analyzed and interpreted.

### Findings

#### 1. The problems in secondary schools in socio-economic disadvantaged regions

In the first sub-problem of the problems in secondary schools in socio-economic disadvantaged regions were asked to the participants. The opinions of teachers working in socio-economically disadvantaged secondary schools about the problems they faced and the themes related to those problems are given in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The theme and sub-themes of the problems faced by teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economic disadvantaged regions

As seen in Figure 1, the problems faced by teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economic disadvantaged regions gathered under the sub-themes of negative perception towards the profession, teachers' housing problem, failure of students to do their homework, low student achievement, special needs student issues, absenteeism problems, attending unprepared for class, crowded classrooms,

students' distraction and reluctance towards lessons, foreign students and cultural problems, lack of staff at school, low class attendance and teachers' transportation problem.

First of all, the interviewees were asked about the definition of "socio-economically disadvantaged region" and all of the participants touched on the negative concepts of "deficiency, weakness, differences, bad situations" with an almost similar statements.

*Here come the differences between students. In these differences, especially the social order and the differences in literacy rates at work, the inadequacy in the income level can spread to the education level of the parents (P5).*

*I think of regions where children's economic conditions are poor. I especially think of places where their families had low levels of education (P4).*

*When it comes to disadvantaged regions, of course, the economic situation of the family is weak or moderate, and this is reflected in school and education (P2).*

*Socially and economically substandard region (P3).*

*It is a concept that includes social and economic factors such as income, economic situations as well as culture and education. We can say that there is a lack of these (P1).*

Participants were asked if their opinion on whether the school they worked for was in a disadvantaged area, and four people said they were in exactly that area:

*Yes, I think so. Although the school I work at is in the district center, it is a school on the coast we call more provincial. Although the family ties in this region seem to be very strong with each other, unfortunately this is not the case in terms of education. More children aspire to do the jobs they see in the family, they have little to do with the future that education will bring. They see education as an advantage only to get a diploma (P5).*

*Yes, I think so. Especially in terms of parents, we are in a disadvantaged school due to the low level of education of our parents, that is, graduates from high school equivalent schools, graduates from primary school equivalent schools. We are in a socio-economically disadvantaged region. Because we live in a region where there are very few social, cultural activities. Since our school is in that kind of area in particular, we live in this economically dead zone. We suffer from family members who have experienced separation and troubled families. In addition, the fact that family members have communication problems with each other reflects negatively on children (P4).*

*Well, our school looks like the central school, but because the economic situation is also bad, because this is a transition zone to the village, and because there are usually workers' children, so economically it is bad. I think it is a disadvantaged school, we are experiencing this and we have been living it for 5 years. So I think that's the case (P2)*

*I think that the school I work for is in a disadvantageous area in terms of all factors. Because I think it is in a disadvantageous region like the 3rd degree in terms of income, education and culture. In addition, I see it as a school that includes disadvantaged students in terms of the students covered by our school. Because it accommodates students with cognitive autism or IEP. The way families approach school and the educational status of families are generally low. The vast majority of families are minimum wage earners. She can't take care of her children enough. But I think that socio-economic factors such as population, transportation, health, labor force, agriculture, tourism, justice and culture constitute a problem for our school and our region, and that they are in a disadvantaged area. In addition, another factor that reinforces the fact that our school is a disadvantaged regional school is that it also hosts foreign students such as Syrians (P1).*

One participant stated that the school was "partially" in a disadvantaged area:

*In part, many of the students' families are substandard in economic terms, so they don't have enough reference books. In addition, although their families want to help because their education level is at the primary school level, they may be inadequate in this regard (P3).*

After the definitional questions of the interview, the problems faced by teachers working in socio-economically disadvantaged secondary schools were asked to the participants with some sub-questions.

The four participants agreed that the students should come to the lessons prepared, mentioning that the lessons were generally unprepared and that there were not many students who came prepared.

*Students don't come to class very prepared. Both as a brain and as a mental structure, I think they still see themselves at the elementary school level, even though they are in middle school. Parents are also not aware of this future and the LGS (Upper Secondary School Entrance Exam) exam that we will take in the eighth grade. We face unplanned work. Students don't have a goal they set for themselves. Because they don't have goals, they can't adapt to planned work; parents are not aware of this, or they approach some subjects with prejudice, or they approach them in a completely simple way and say, "Normal, okay, we do, we pass. Isn't it physical education, music, painting?" They see some main subjects as very difficult and say "We will not be able to do these things anyway" and give up like this (P5).*

*Unfortunately, students do not come to the classes prepared. Especially we have a shortage of books and notebooks. So we normally text families, we call them, we tell them at parent meetings, but we even tell the children that they should check in the evening. They do not check from the evening. Especially if we get up late in the morning, that is, if our school starts at half past eight, for example, they get up at eight and immediately pack their bags in such a hurry and bring their bags like that, and there are no books, there are no notebooks, sometimes they do not bring homework, sometimes they do not bring the tests we give, sometimes there is a news from the topics we write. Especially today, for example, I experienced such an incident. The notebooks of the absent students were empty in large quantities. Parents do not pay attention to these (P4).*

*These are situations where students don't do homework, you know, "somehow my father works at home, he doesn't question. My mom is busy with other things," and they're unprepared. We've all been kids. There are too many situations where he is dealing with other things and not fulfilling his responsibilities ( P2).*

*In general, our students do not come prepared for class. In classes of 15-20 people, 2 or at most 3 people come prepared. 7 and 8. The number of students who come prepared in the classes is 1 or maximum 2 people (P1).*

In their opinions on the participation status of the course, three participants thought that the participation was low and two people had different opinions:

*It's always limited to certain students. You know, there are students that we can add later, but active students are limited to certain people (P5).*

*Participation in the course can actually change as the year goes by. As the year goes by, as the kids get smaller, it's very different, especially between what we graduate from the eighth grade and the five that just arrive. Especially as I said, we have trouble doing homework, we have trouble raising fingers, or the child does not know the subject. For example, we have a lot of trouble because we do not know the subject. Especially in my major, because it's not very interesting, the topics don't participate so much because the kids have prejudices. Especially in elementary school, they are not very interested, so they can come to my class and middle school unprepared. My major is mathematics, by the way. Since there is a prejudice in mathematics, there is also a*

*prejudice in parents. Since there is prejudice in children, unfortunately, we may have problems in the participation of children in the course (P4).*

*Attendance at classes is limited to certain students. Participation is low in general terms (P2).*

Two participants, unlike the other participants, expressed their opinions and stated that they had full participation in the course:

*In my class, I see that all students are participating. (P1)*

*Although the level of participation in the course is good, the level of answering in terms of quality is insufficient. (P3)*

When asked if they had faced undesirable student behavior in the course, two participants mentioned that they had behavior problems. One participant did not respond.

*Yes, we do. There are students who cause problems. Especially students with individual needs, special needs (P5).*

*If the reflection on the school is that of course this is a financial problem, of course, we lived in time. In such houses, some discipline problems also occur in the family. This is reflected in the school by the student and he becomes a little more aggressive in his behavior (P2).*

Two of the participants mentioned that there were no major problems:

*Sometimes it happens, but it's not a huge problem. For example, some students want to stand and walk around when they should be sitting during class. Some of them disturb their friends on their left and right next to them. In these cases, it can be difficult to control the class. There's a lot of talk in class (P4).*

*There are no bullying students in our school that I have seen. Generally respectful. There are no students in our school who cause excessive problems. There are one or two students who are older in age. Sometimes they act irresponsibly with the psychology of adolescence (P1).*

When asked whether there were students who were absent from school courses and supportive training courses, the participants mentioned that there was a problem of absenteeism, especially in foreign students, while in Turkish students, excuses were arbitrarily made, continuous reports were received and absences caused by transportation problems. Four participants expressed close statements on these issues:

*Yes, there is. Especially in our foreign students, we experience the problem of absenteeism a lot, or in seasonal periods, as I said, there are times when we call it field, animal, workers, hoe time. Students are absent a lot during these periods or in special cases, we have students who go out of town by saying "we have a wedding" and "I don't know what I know, I have circumcision, I am going to my aunt, I am going to my sister", we have students who go away with illness. We live this from time to time. When we look at, we see that students cannot continue too much because of the service problem again, and they turn to central or different departments. But not all students are financially well. That's why there are students who attend the Support and Training Courses at the school. But these students are also limited.(P5).*

*We have students who are absent. Especially in foreign students, we had problems last year. This year, we have a general absenteeism problem in our students again. Especially since this is a cold country, we have a lot of students who have a lot of flu, who have a cold, who have a low immune system. That's why we are experiencing absenteeism this year as well. They can't come because of the shuttle situation and the distance of the school from the houses, and the service is as follows: we have a single service problem for those who will leave in the morning and take the new ones in the evening, for example this year. Last year we did not have such a problem, but this year our*

*students have to come by shuttle because the houses are far away. We don't have any students from the immediate vicinity. That's why they have trouble, of course they can have trouble staying in courses or coming to school.(P4).*

*If we are realistic, we expect them to attend the courses fully because they do not have extras such as private lessons. You know, it happens in certain places, that is, partly because our school is moving from the neighborhood. You know, coming and going at the time of the course is actually a material, materiality. You know, if it's a service, it's economical. If there was a school in the middle of the neighborhood, everyone would come for sure. You know, I also taught in the village. There is full participation in the courses we have in the village. The student has no choice but to be the teacher. In other words, he or she could have as much of a dream as the teacher in the village, as much as the teacher in the village taught, and he or she could have as much goal and success as the teacher in the village. So they were fully participating. There is a bit of a transportation problem here, again a material comes into play. Because of this, there is a situation of not coming to the course. But in such places, if the school is close to the houses, if it is in the middle of the neighborhood, the participation in the courses is much higher than in successful places. Because in successful places, there is much less participation in the courses because they spend their course time with private lessons and private education institutions. I can easily say this as I have worked in central places in the past years. (P2)*

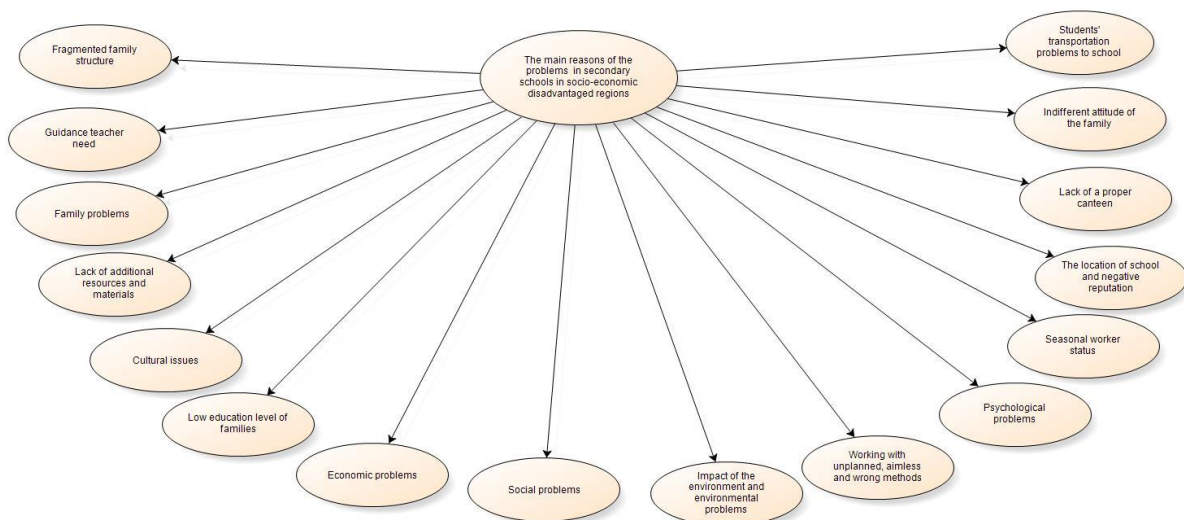
*Families who have difficulty in meeting the service fee cannot send their children to courses (P3)*

A participant's statement on this subject is given below.

*I think courses are beneficial to eager students, and I see their success growing (P1)*

## 2. The main reasons of the problems in secondary schools in socio-economic disadvantaged regions

In the second sub-problem of the views of teachers working in socio-economically disadvantaged secondary schools about the main reasons of the problems they experienced and the themes related to the root causes of the problems are given in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2.** Themes on the main reasons of the problems faced by teachers in socio-economically disadvantaged secondary schools

As seen in Figure 1, the main reasons the problems faced by teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economic disadvantaged regions gathered under the sub-themes of low education level of

families, lack of additional resources and materials, students' transportation problems to school, counseling teacher need, indifferent attitude of the family, psychological problems, the location of school and negative reputation, cultural issues, impact of the environment and environmental problems, economic problems, seasonal worker status, fragmented family structure, social problems, family problems, working with unplanned, aimless and wrong methods and lack of a proper canteen.

When asked whether they thought the problems were caused by the student or the region where they lived, three of the participants mentioned the situation of the region in general, the situation of the students, and the impact of economic and social problems. One participant answered this question broadly along with the next question:

*Yes, I do, and unfortunately I am experiencing this obviously. Especially the children of broken families are around us a lot, or we have parents of students who are having their second and third marriage. At a young age, our student parents were married or married. Therefore, unconscious parents are raising children who are not conscious, and unfortunately, their level of consciousness has not yet been fully fulfilled despite being parents. In addition, they have experienced and are experiencing differences in morality, respect and culture. We also have parents who have a culture conflict. The parents who lived in this area grew up in this region but married someone from a different region or married someone from a different country. That's why the child is trying to grow up in a culture conflict. Unfortunately, we see the difficulties of this in our lives. (P5)*

*I think it's because of both. I think it is especially due to the apathy of the parents. The students are trying to behave accordingly, so of course the parents behave. In other words, I can say that what they see in the family is actually imitating them at school. If children, for example, parents live at home, children experience the same things at school with their friends. (P4)*

*I can say that the problems I face as a teacher, the problems related to the psychosocial development of my students, the interest status of the families, income and culture differences. The number of parents who come to the school to follow their students is almost non-existent. But it comes if the teacher calls. Some students have difficulty accessing recommended resources (not resources related to my school). For example, if parents have the power to buy play dough, I will have students make "organelles of the cell" (P1).*

The answer that differed between the answers to this question is the following statement of the participant, who saw the source of the problems as purely the student:

*I think it's entirely due to the student; If they want to be a successful student, they can solve many problems. Rotating resources, such as exchanging books... (P3)*

Economic problems, family problems, which were especially mentioned by the three participants who expressed their opinions on the impact of family problems and financial impossibilities on students, were the difficulty of students who could not meet even their basic needs to give themselves to classes, not to show behavioral problems and to adapt to school:

*Yes, unfortunately it reasons problems. The economic situation is especially low, whether it is at a medium level or below average, of course, it also affects students. Because most of the parents who live here, most of the parents in our school, generally work for military wages or the two have to work together, the parents have to work. Therefore, it also affects the student (P4).*

*Family problems often affect students negatively. The child becomes more silent. It inhibits learning on its own. The financial situation, that is, the income, has some effect on the students. That is, when I give period projects, I choose projects accordingly since the family's financial situation is low (P1).*

*So we've seen the training for this as Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" really comes into play here. Because when the child comes to school, if he or she does not have a basic breakfast, his or her economic situation is not so encouraging, that is, when there are students who come before he or she can fully prepare his or her dress, how it is that education is on the top of the respect step. You know, we are in the part of the students who come without being able to meet the security, physiological needs in the family or something. Socio-economically disadvantaged places are at the first and second level of the hierarchy of needs. Obviously, we are trying to take them from there and take them to the upper rungs with the support of the teachers or the school administration, to cooperate with the family and to save them from there. Because when the kid is there, there are things like you said. So the parents are separated; I also went through the economic dimension of it, if the spiritual dimension was very, very tight. You know, both financially and spiritually, since ninety percent of the students are still in the first and second level, why didn't you study for them? Rather than why he doesn't fulfill his responsibilities, yes, we say that sometimes, we forget because they went through it. But you know, we catch the students who are here and have a little bit of light in their eyes and look at what we have been able to save as snow. Obviously, the expectation of other places from here is: once there are one or two Science High Schools from here, it is considered a success. Because the person who comes is already certain, it is known in the society that you are in a school that is disadvantaged. Therefore, it is even a profit for us to remove one or two students from among them. But actually, of course, it is necessary to equalize these things, at least to minimize them, and to save many children. Of course, this does not only mean to bring Science High School, it is to bring it to life. Because of the exam race, we are trying to bring to the forefront those who shine a little bit there. But here, students who are experiencing economic difficulties, who are experiencing spiritual problems, are a little further behind, and since they are also behind in exams, it is as if there is a lot of loss of education in such schools as children who are completely in the background. We are trying to save as much as we can, but unfortunately it is not happening. (P2)*

Participants were asked whether there were socio-economic or cultural differences among the students and whether these differences were the source of the problems. Two participants stated that there were generally economic, social and cultural differences and that they negatively affected the psychology and mood of the student:

*Yes, such differences exist because our students sometimes think that they are dressed as a beautiful brand and have the potential to show off to other students like this. Or the other student can emulate his clothes and save money in different ways, "Let me go to work, save money, and I can buy a branded shoe, a branded phone. In other words, instead of this, he can say "let me target this school" and he can make savings in different subjects. You know, there is the potential to save more days and follow the material popular culture in our students, not the accumulation of knowledge. There are also cultural differences between families. Especially since the region we live in is on the edge of the district, we see the great differences between a family living in the center and a family living in the region where our school is located. We have cultural differences among students. Yes, as I said, what I call broken family children are the children of parents who have married for the second time and are trying to grow up with a different culture. When he goes and meets mom or dad occasionally during the summer holidays, he comes up with a different culture on his return. This can lead to the breakdown of previous friendships and the exclusion of the student. Foreign students also have a difference. The fact that our foreign students cannot fully adapt to our culture from time to time and the cultural difference experienced by these students attract the attention of other students. These differences can sometimes isolate them at school school. They can be alone due to cultural differences, or if they are related to each other, they can unite and become a group ((P5).*

*Yes, there is. There are those who are above the intermediate level, there are those who are at the intermediate level, there are those who are below the middle. Of course, children are not*

*aware of this. In other words, our students, who are above the middle level, that is, in the part that we can call rich, can bully and make fun of the students who are at a low level, that is, economically low. Of course, children are not aware of this, but because there are such problems in families and in the part we call the environment, children can easily come and make fun of their friends who are in a bad economic situation. It happens in the classroom, it happens in the school. Because children are not aware of them. His mother and father are separated or his parents are united, so he can talk easily because he is not aware of the events. Actually, our children are not in the way that I am thirsty, I don't make fun of, I don't bully; Usually children who can talk about everything comfortably. That's why they talk about what happens at home, for example, in class, and they tell their friends. Kids who can tell everything, anywhere. For this reason, even when you buy something from the canteen in the friend environment, for example, there are many examples like "your mother is your father" or "your financial situation". They can make fun of those students or oppress them. To put it crudely, they can "crush", that is, their children (P4).*

One participant also mentioned that there are differences especially in social, psychological and cultural terms:

*There are differences between students socially, in terms of student personality and psychosocial. We have a student with autism spectrum disorder. We have four or five students with IEPs. We have foreign national, Syrian students. I think this leads to a difference and problems with other students (P1).*

Participants were asked whether the fact that the school was in a socio-economically disadvantaged area had a negative impact on the reputation of the school and teachers. The three interviewees stated that the school was or was seen as socio-economically or locationally disadvantaged and therefore the parents who would send their children to this school avoided sending students to such schools, prejudiced and created an image that lowered the reputation of the school / teacher:

*In today's world, where the school has a label in the school the student attends, such an approach comes to the fore when the student says "I go to this school", the school's success at work label or other activities. The activities of teachers come to the fore. Parents also direct their children according to this name of the schools. They may have negative thoughts about the school, the environment and the region (P5).*

*As an environment, I can say that unfortunately our school is in a slightly shallow area around us, so it is in a separate area from the district in terms of location. So we can have a shortage of stray dogs, there can be a shortage of animals at work environmentally, there can be animal attacks. It has happened to a lot of children in recent years. Kids can come by bike, they can come by electric motorcycle or motor, or they can come by electric bike. Therefore, environmental factors affect children in this way. Parents also fail in this place, drawing the image of a school outside the district and underestimating or seeing the group of students coming to the school (P4).*

*This is not only our district in general, but also in general districts, such schools are already known by name. You know, it's seen as a village school, or a little bit more out-of-center schools, it's seen in the countryside. So it's very big, yes, success is not expected, but for students who are at the bottom of big failures or students who have low nets, they say, "Why are these things low?" But before that, they don't say, "What can we do?" It's only when the problem is, "Why did they do it so low?" This is also our disadvantage. So I think everyone is aware of this (P2).*

### **3. The impact of student problems on student success**



In the third sub-problem of the opinions of the teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economically disadvantaged regions on the impact of these situations on student achievement are given below.

When asked about the status of students' participation in the supportive training courses and whether their experiences had an impact on their participation, four participants mentioned that the effect was social and economic, that the parents had difficulty in terms of transportation, that is, in meeting the service fee, and that the school was far away, that parents could not send the students due to cold weather conditions, so the participation was low and negatively affected. Of course, it was worth adding the reluctance of students and the apathy of the parents.

*When we look at, we see that students cannot continue too much because of the service problem again, and they turn to central or different departments. But not all students are financially well. That's why there are students who attend the Support and Training Courses at the school. But these students are also limited ((P5).*

*They can't come because of the shuttle situation and the distance of the school from the houses, the shuttle goes like this; For example, we have a single service problem for those who will leave in the morning and buy new ones in the evening. Last year we did not have such a problem, but this year our students have to come by shuttle because the houses are far away. We don't have any students from the immediate vicinity. That's why they have trouble, they can have trouble staying in courses or coming to school, of course (P4).*

*If we are realistic, we expect them to attend the courses fully because they do not have extras such as private lessons. You know, it happens in certain places, that is, partly because our school is moving from the neighborhood. You know, coming and going at the time of the course is actually a material, materiality. You know, if it's a service, it's economical. If there was a school in the middle of the neighborhood, everyone would come for sure. You know, I also taught in the village. There is full participation in the courses we have in the village. The student has no choice but to be the teacher. In other words, he could have as much of a dream as the teacher in the village, as much as the teacher in the village taught, and he could have as much goal and success as the teacher in the village. So they were fully participating. There is a bit of a transportation problem here, again a material comes into play. Because of this, there is a situation of not coming to the course. But in such places, if the school is close to the houses, if it is in the middle of the neighborhood, the participation in the courses is much higher than in successful places. Because in successful places, there is much less participation in the courses because they spend their course time with private lessons and dershanes. I can easily say this because I have worked in central places in the past years. (P2)*

*Families who have difficulty in meeting the service fee due to financial insufficiency cannot send their children to courses. (P3)*

One participant also commented below:

*I think courses are beneficial to eager students, and I see their success increasing. (P1)*

When asked about the students' distractions, reluctance to attend the course and the effect of their socio-economic status on their success or psychological status, all participants stated that economic, social, cultural and environmental problems negatively affected the students and their learning life. Family problems and indifferent attitudes of parents were also expressed as the biggest factor:

*Yes, students are sometimes in the classroom within the school, but they are not there in spirit. When we look at him in the eye, he seems to be answering, as if he understands us, but after five minutes we realize that when we solve any question, the student does not fully understand and is out of the environment. He may be distracted, or he may have a different behavior disorder*

*in his mind, or he may not be able to get out of an event he is affected by, or he may continue to experience family problems at school, which is very normal for his age. Because our children are students who are in their teens, in the period of forming thoughts and ideas. He always has such a confusion in his mind, a reasoning, he does not know what to do or what to do. It decides which behavior is right wrong, good or bad more by looking at the teachers. Because the best idol for them is teachers. Of course this is true. Not wrong. But in addition to this, people who can be different idols, who can set goals at work, who can say "let me learn and envy the achievements of this". When I think about it, writers, poets, scientists from the environment or other provinces should know various professional groups or when they are not, our students should be able to reach such places by making sightseeing observations, they can visit museums and scientific travel places. I think this is a reason that will positively affect the success of our students (P5).*

*Let me put it this way, for example, we have children who can't buy shoes, or we have children who can't buy clothes. We warn children that there should be only one outfit in our school, for example. Because if we think that children all come with different clothes, for example, children can be the subject of making fun of each other, we can experience distress. That's why we usually want children to wear one outfit. In the situation reflected in the children, the reason why they are pensive at work is usually because they cannot buy shoes or, for example, we want something to be bought, they tell their father, but the parent responds negatively. Perhaps because of the financial situation. The child can think about this and wander in the lessons. For example, our big parents are too many. Our elderly parents are in our schools too much. The multitude of elderly parents also have such older children. Let me tell you about a problem we had recently: the child had trouble sleeping. I looked at the class and said, "What is happening to my child?" and so on, and then there was the girl. I said, "What's going on?" I said, "Do you have a problem?" He said, "No, sir." Then I asked again in between classes. "My teacher is not with my family, my mother is not with me," he said. Her sister was going to give birth and went to her. So we have a lot of troubles like this. Her sister is getting older, she's going to give birth, she's going to get married. If we look at the previous issues, they are absenteeism, for example. They say, "My sister and brother have a wedding, I attended it," and these students are affected in terms of their classes and achievements. When the parent is busy with the wedding and association affairs of their older children, the parental apathy reflects negatively on the child (P4).*

*As I said, if there is a problem at home or we don't know what to know, we have said one book, a student may be stuck on something very small. At recess, his friend may have picked something up in the canteen and even if he didn't, he might have hung out. You know, normal life is so fast and protracted that we can't see such a small trauma of children. He took a friend at recess, he didn't order him, he didn't eat it, he couldn't drink it, he said the book, he didn't get it, it was called trial money, it couldn't be given. Problems such as those who are attached to other problems in the house, such as your parents are separated and you went to your father, you couldn't go... And I hear that I did a study called the "room of secrets" for my own class, and that kind of thing was coming up there. When you open the student's insides, there are bad bad scenarios, very bad dramas. That's why they get distracted, they break away from the lessons a little bit, and so on. Of course, if everything is very good at home, if everything is taken away, if the socio-economic situation is good, the only concern of the student is "What does the teacher say?, What is being done here? How can I listen to the lecture?, How can I be successful?", but of course this happens a lot in schools like ours (P2).*

*Unfortunately, these situations of the students (living in socio-economically disadvantaged regions and their problems) have an impact on student success (P3).*

*I think that the most important factors affecting student success in our school are the lack of interest of families (social), the fact that there are generally low-income families (economic),*

*the effect of psychosocial learning situations (students with autism spectrum disorders, the adaptation of IEP and foreign students). I also observe that these situations adversely affect education and training at some points (P1).*

In the 2022-2023 academic year, participants were asked about their students' LGS (Upper Secondary School Entrance Exam) results and how they evaluated their success status, their thoughts on success or failure, and the factors that may affect success / failure. Three of the participants mentioned that what the working students achieved could be a success in that respect, but there were also students who failed, that is, who did not work, who did not work planned, who did not show interest, who had small dreams or who had no dreams at all. The factors were expressed as the environment lived, parent apathy, economic, social, environmental and cultural problems:

*When we look at last year's exam results, I see that our students are a few students who set realistic goals and they really reach their goals. I know that students are settled as science high schools, high schools with points, open high schools and vocational high schools. We observe that there is more placement with school points. Because the student is already focusing on his diplomat, as I said, with small goals, he is turning to some occupational groups that we call small tradesmen or trade or butchery at work (P5).*

*On LGS, there were two Science High Schools in LGS last year, there were three or four social sciences high schools, and we also had students who went to vocational high school, went straight to high school and openly studied high school. That was the case last year. We had a successful student, but we also had a failed student. We had more students going with school points, though. Failure starts from the child himself. More precisely, it starts in the family and ends in the child. Unfortunately, as I said, the fact that the child's parent is not interested in the child simply does not check books and books shows that the child does not have any labor on him. So when we give him homework, he doesn't follow his homework. We give it a week, we say it again when we check in next week, we say "bring it back next week". For example, we have parents who don't even do that. They are also very much influenced by the environment. For example, we have a problem in this environment. Obviously, we are in a region where mothers have the potential to travel a lot. You know, there is a lot of going to the day here, there is a lot of going to the evening outings. Last year, for example, I had one student who failed just because of that. For example, I have a student who has failed to take his mother for sightseeing, for evening outings, to take her here and there during the day. He couldn't do his homework, he couldn't focus on his studies (P4).*

*When I think in terms of the eighth grade central exam, the number of students is not 50-60 students because of our criticism just now, but we had 23 students, two subjects. Of these, even the central schools are doing this, our ten students can win, certain people can win. In our country, 4 5 students had the potential to win the central high schools. Two of them won science high school. Both three of them are close to the levels they can win, in fact, they got the points that could enter Science High School in other districts. In other words, our struggle with the teachers took place again in the center of the students, without missing the book, without missing their studies, and we put them into the exams. In fact, we seem to have centered and balanced the socio-economic level there a little bit. Of course, we had some benefit because the economic situation of those students and families was one click above the general one. But of course, 23 people and 10 people could have won the Science High School. There are dimensions to this that come from the very fifth grade. Since we live here in such a region, there have been any casualties in between. So, we were able to send two Science High Schools, which is a success for us. You know, as I said before, if two science high schools come from such a place, it is considered a success. Therefore, we can say that it is successful (P2).*

One participant clearly mentioned only success:

*I think our school was successful in terms of last year's LGS exam (P1).*

When asked how the attitudes of the parents of the students on student success/failure and the parent profile were in terms of the region, they expressed their views as follows:

*When we look at the student, the parent's mirror. The parent profile is usually in a situation where we can say primary, secondary or high school graduates, and almost no university graduates. This means that we see that they raise students who will live their own lives. We have a group of parents who don't have a very high level of awareness, or who don't know how to do it when they do. He thinks it's all about "study, study, study, don't get up from the book for 10 hours," but that's not it. The student can and should experience situations such as working for an hour or two to study efficiently, to evaluate the time well, to accelerate his reading. Unfortunately, the parents of our students visit the school from meeting to meeting, or because there is a major discipline problem and they do not come very close to the school until the class teacher calls them. Because he thinks, "I entrusted it to the school, I'm leaving." You know, that's a wrong idea. It should deal with the student one-on-one. It's true that he shouldn't come and go to school every day. However, both the student, the teacher and the administration should be aware that they are interested, and the student should feel this (P5).*

*When I give the homework to the children in the evening, they don't check their homework, they don't check their notebook books so that they can bring it full the next day. They do not care about the achievement evaluation exams, they do not care about the written statements, they do not care about the oral notes given, that is, the behavioral grades. Therefore, they do not come to the parents' meetings of the children. Children's success also seems to be insignificant. You know, the child leads to failure by thinking "my family is not behind me either" (P4).*

*There are cases where the parent profile, usually the worker, the working child, the mother also works. Parents' separate situations are not uncommon in such familial fissures. I know it because I've been here for five years from the old classes that I heard in the classes. In material terms, I can say that they are at the intermediate level or below the middle. We can see this from the fact that he already takes his clothing from his clothing during the year. In general, Ağılönü is called "butcher children, butchers". He has a bias anyway. You know, this is reflected in such behaviors and styles, etc., which is received negatively by others, but I can say that the economic situation of the family is middle and below. I can say that there is little interest in children for this school. So if we support it, if we force it, they can only come to the school and get into this communication. This is the case. You know, there are already situations such as "we are going to work, we can't come" and so on with the excuse of general school parent association meetings and parent meetings (P2).*

*The way families approach school and the educational status of families are generally low. The vast majority of families are minimum wage earners. She can't take care of her children enough. The parent profile is of little interest to our school, to speak. They are not relevant enough. Concerned parents are parents who are concerned with their student, who visit the school frequently, monitor their student and follow up on his condition. Their students usually succeed or solve many of their problems (P1)*

#### **4. Temporary suggestions to problems**

In the fourth sub-problem of the opinions of teachers working in socio-economically disadvantaged secondary schools on temporary solutions to the problems they experienced are given below.

In the answers given to the interviewers about the counseling services in the school and how the problematic students were approached, what kind of temporary measures were taken, they stated that there was no counseling teacher in the school, that when a problem occurred in the school or in the classroom because they were not experts in counseling services, the teachers were in a difficult situation,

they took temporary measures, and in case of major problems, the counseling teacher came from the district only to deal with whatever the event was.

*Our counseling teacher is not available at our school. He used to come once a week as an assignment, but now there is no counseling teacher who comes to our school regularly. Since there are many problems that students live with, teachers experience, and because of the disconnect, I think that there should be a counseling teacher in our school. When we meet such students, we have solutions in the form of written, verbal warnings, advices, suggestions or directions. This is how we approach both students and parents. We try to provide preventive counseling. Maybe as class counselors, but because there is no counseling teacher in our school, we may not be able to fully realize this. Because we are not experts. ((P5).*

*Unfortunately, we do not have a counseling teacher, there was an assignment last year, but this year there is none. He was a teacher who could come once a week, who could come in between, I would say he was a teacher who had a problem, who could come for the student, or where the student went to the teacher. The lack of a counseling teacher also affects us in our approach to children. Since I'm not usually an expert on this subject, I honestly don't want to ask too many questions when kids have problems, I can't get close, I have a fear of doing something wrong. I don't really want to ask questions because I'm not an expert. I don't want to overwhelm him, I don't want to make a wrong behavior and harass the child, or because I don't want to cause something wrong, I usually forward the students who have problems and need them to the relevant places in those subjects. I'm trying to get him to get help (P4).*

*There is no counseling teacher in our school. In other words, if they are small-scale psychological problems, we try to solve them by talking to the class counseling teacher or with the teachers with whom they get along well. There have been situations that have exceeded us before, such as having a little more nervous breakdown. Then we contact the counseling teacher closest to our school and talk to him immediately. We are trying to solve such a problem. (P2)*

*There is no coun teacher in our school. In addition; there are students whose parents are separated or divorced. A monitoring-counseling teacher is absolutely necessary for these children. Because we are not experts in these matters. Those kids don't tell you their problems. Those children's affective skills are impaired. It is necessary to take care of them. As a Subject counseling teacher, there are three students in my class. I try to help them through my counselor teacher friend outside of school. I dearly want UNESCO's "Education for All 2015 Inclusion" views to be implemented (P1)*

Students who exhibited undesired behaviors at school, who experienced behavioral disorders, who had psychological problems / troubles were asked what the methods or solutions were, and the participants stated that they gave verbal / written warnings, applied methods such as advising, communicating with parents, trying to understand, and if the problem was large, they referred them to the Student Behavior Evaluation Board.

*Of course, we have students with conduct disorders. Let's say fifth grades to eighth grades, especially among different age groups. When someone lives with the dream of graduating and leaving, they are in the mode of "we are the top students of the school, we own this place", but the fifth graders are in the mode of "we have just arrived, here we are still novices". Large classes can bully small classes. The student can distress his other friend in all kinds of ways, rich, poor, cultural, social, and economic (P5).*

*I have students who have behavior problems. We especially have children with hyperactivity problems. We have a lot of trouble fighting inside the school. Children in particular bully each other both verbally. Sometimes they bully as physical violence, and of course it is up to the teacher on duty or the teachers who attend his class to solve this incident. So it's up to us and we're trying to help with that. First of all, we warn children to make behavioral changes. Then*

*we say we will report it to the Student Behavior Review Board and give a definite warning. In other words, we make a definite warning about bullying, we keep a record. We are planning to activate the Student Behaviour Review Board again this year as we did last year (P4).*

*From time to time, such generations come with behavioral problems. Let me put it that way. When I first came to this school, the eighth graders were quite naughty. These "butcher children" were exactly what I call them, such as those who grew up among the tradesmen with the mouth of the tradesmen, who according to him behaved in such a way that they were older than their age, and there were children whom you could call disrespectful. It's a little bit more broken right now, but we still have students who are in our classrooms right now. So, for example, I'm not in eighth grade classes right now, but because of their behavior during recess, because my own students are in sixth grade or something, or because of their behavior outside of school, there are students who get used to come and go when they go out of school. There are especially spoiled boys in the eighth grade with conduct disorder. We have formed the disciplinary committee for the last year. In other words, when the complaints started to get a little more serious, we tried to calm down the behaviors of the student by forming the disciplinary board, giving the necessary warning to his family and withdrawing the student and explaining the punishments, the comments about his punishments, and what disadvantages these penalties would bring him for the future. This year, I see that the disciplinary board will work actively. When anything happens, I hope that we will try to solve the discipline problem immediately with the minutes when there is an above-normal behavior. (P2)*

The participants, who were consulted about whether these applied solutions/suggestions worked, mentioned the measures taken and the temporariness of the solutions implemented. They mentioned that it worked a little better in the parents involved, but it was still far from being permanent:

*It works temporarily because when it is permanent, we would not have a recurrence of this problem. Unfortunately, temporary solutions do not create temporary problems. It turns into a chronic one in the form of permanent problems (P5).*

*It works for our students whose families are a little bit interested, but in children whose parents are indifferent and who have a lot of behavioral disorders, of course what we say goes to waste after two days (P4).*

*Especially in those types of students, it's temporary. So it's like a moon effect. After his father's warning, he seems to pay attention to his behavior for a week and continue. You know, that year is over, the new year has begun. Of course, they're growing up, they're teenagers, they're eighth graders. So they see themselves as big. They became the elders of the school. Because of these, they can forget such a moment, so childhood, adolescence, we have all lived. But to remind you that a new disciplinary board may need a new report. Because, you know, we saw the yes effect last year, a summer passed when it was done, and they continued with the same behavior. They met with friends. A new report seems to have been forgotten at the moment because there is no new disciplinary board (P2).*

*We do parent-school-teacher cooperation. We try to give one-on-one attention and counseling to our students. In addition, the coaching system is being developed and implemented in our schools. Student, parent, school and teacher success-failure chain is better followed. The state gives textbooks, auxiliary resources. In addition, students who do not have the condition are helped by the Municipality and related ministries. These also support the parents and students to some extent (P1).*

## **5. Permanent solutions to problems**

In the fifth sub-problem of the opinions of teachers working in socio-economically disadvantaged secondary schools on permanent solutions to the problems they experienced are given below.

When the participants were asked what can be done permanently throughout the country or district/school on the basis of students or teachers to these problems experienced by teachers and their suggestions, it was mentioned that the suggestions that could be permanent were difficult, that there were temporary solutions, that there were things that could be done before the Ministry throughout the country for permanent solutions and other solution suggestions.

*We need to come up with more serious solutions that we can do about these issues. For this, it is necessary to give training to students about anger management, to sign permanent contracts, to talk about the seriousness of minutes and formal documents, and to train students who use disproportionate force on this subject. We see that receiving warnings is not valid; it's temporary. Therefore, it may be to direct such students to the relevant places, to increase the cooperation between the student, parents and the school administration by making family visits and to establish more intimate relations. To give importance to family education and if necessary, to gather the parents of the students to certain conference halls available in schools or in the district from time to time and to give seminars. In other words, since we say that "education starts in the family", I think that we should first raise the awareness level of those at home and then make the students feel this to us. One of our permanent solutions to the problems we face is that training programs should be organized for parents as well as the education given by the Ministry of National Education to both students and teachers. This process can be managed by the Ministry of National Education. Of course, we can send the contents to homes in booklets or slides, or they can provide us with feedback. Then, the Ministry of National Education should definitely follow up on this. Just like the inspectors inspect us... After the trainings given about the parents, feedback can be taken again. Then we will see how useful the feedback is (P5).*

*As teachers, I think we should start from schools first, and then, for example, the region where we live, that is, from private to general. As I said, starting from the school and starting from the teachers in the school, towards our ministry in general, or our teachers can make decisions as a community or combine the problems and combine the solution methods and produce such a solution. There may be projects, for example, projects can be produced. There are also a lot of educational projects on this subject. At first, we can educate the parent, that is, the family, and then the children can be educated in different subjects. We can produce such solutions. However, it remains difficult to find a permanent solution (P4).*

*In my opinion, it is very difficult for the teacher to find a permanent solution for students who are sociologically disadvantaged in terms of school or district. What we can do is only listen to the problems of those who have these problems temporarily, and we can alleviate their distress by guiding them. Because we can't solve his family problem, we can't solve his economic problem. You know, we can take their books, we can give them their books, which we already do. You know, the permanent solution is only to equalize all the families in general if it is karsa from Edirne. So it's something that can happen with an economic click up. No. Teachers are only trying to save students who are badly affected by that economic disadvantage within the school, and these are always temporary solutions. It's just that we don't know what he was going through in high school when we sent him from here to high school. So there are no permanent solutions we can do. We can call it a permanent solution, but only the state is doing it again in terms of source books, and now it is sending workbooks and so on, but this is still not enough. Instead, students in such places can be identified name by name, determined according to their economic level and given gift certificates for all the source books they can use during the year. For example, rather than the workbook, I gave this book not to study, but to take whichever book he needs, whichever one the teacher recommends, with gift certificates. This may be the permanent solution of the source book, but as I said, the essence of the permanent solution starts from home. The house cannot be touched by the teacher's hand. This needs to be touched a little more within the state. It is the work of our elders (P2).*

*I foresee an increase in teachers' stationery allowances (P3).*

*I would also like to thank the Ministry of National Education for the 240-hour seminar on education and training that the Ministry of National Education has given us these days. Because education is a process and it is in a constant state of development. New problems (such as the pandemic) are emerging in the world. Teachers also have to renew themselves by virtue of the vision. I think that a teacher who knows and implements inclusive educational practices can be more productive. Teacher selections should be voluntary. EU teacher qualifications should be implemented. Schools need to establish emotion coaching centers. Children's social, affective skills need to be increased. In order to raise critical, self-confident, open-minded and technology-savvy students, inclusive educational environments should be increased and the "understanding of education for all" should be spread. In addition, counseling teachers should be taken to frequent seminars and academicians should be trained in this subject. Academics should also train teachers who can descend to the level of society (P1).*

## 6. Findings regarding documents

Document analysis was carried out by using the documents of Kemalettin Sami Pasa Secondary School. By using the documents of 2022-2023 related to the subject, data were reached on the subject. The findings of this study as a result of the examination of the documents were aimed at understanding whether there was a basis for the problems and solutions experienced by the teachers. Kemalettin Sami Pasha Secondary School was a secondary school with 89 students, 1 principal and 1 assistant principal. There were no officers at the school. There was 1 employee and 13 teachers. Some of the teachers joined as assignments from other schools.

### *Problems Faced by Teachers, Reasons of Problems and Solutions/Suggestions They Produce*

The number of documents examined in the document analysis conducted to understand the reasons of the problems faced by the teachers is presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.**

*Number of Documents Examined in Document Analysis*

Document Subject	Number of Documents Examined
1. Problems caused by students	416
a. Student Absenteeism	89
b. Student Conduct	170
c. Student Success	157
1. Problems Arising from Relations with Higher Authorities	134
a. Formal Meetings	34
b. Urgent Journals and Requests	100
Total	550

### *Problems caused by students*

**Table 3.**

*Student absenteeism*

Class	Number of Students	Average Number of Absences
Grade 8	26	1,50
Grade 7	17	1,09
Grade 6	30	2,08
Grade 5	16	0,85
Total	89	5,52





*Student absenteeism*

When the documents of the 2022-2023 academic year were examined, it was understood that a foreign student did not come to school by constantly absent. In addition, the absenteeism rates obtained by examining the class documents and student report cards are given in Table 3.

In the 2022-2023 academic year, a total of 55 absence letters were prepared to the parents of the students. 1 of these letters belonged to the foreign student who was constantly absent and the sending process was not carried out, and the remaining 54 letters were sent to the parents of the students and informed.

*Student behavior*

When the documents for the 2022-2023 academic year were examined, a total of 4 students were referred to the Student Behavior Evaluation Board and were dismissed with reprimand punishment. In addition, a total of 5 students were warned both verbally and in writing by signing a contract on the condition that they would not repeat the behavior due to the undesired behaviors they exhibited.

*Student success*

When the year-end records of the 2022-2023 academic year were examined, it was understood that 24 students were entitled to receive the certificate of excellence and 28 students were entitled to receive the certificate of appreciation. 34 of the students had at least one low mark. Student achievement status are presented as follows.

**Table 4.**

*Student success*

Class	Number of students per class	Number of students receiving excellence	Number of students receiving appreciation	Number of students who had at least one low mark	Unsuccessful students total students to rate
Grade 8	26	8	8	8	%30
Grade 7	17	2	6	9	%52
Grade 6	30	11	7	11	%36
Grade 5	16	3	7	6	%37,5
Total	<b>89</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>%38,2</b>

*Problems arising from relations with higher authorities*

*Formal meetings*

When the school's documents for 2022-2023 were examined, teachers attended in-service training meetings after hours on average 3 times a year. In addition, they were invited to the Teachers' Board Meeting held at the school 3 times a year, to the Subject Teachers' Board Meeting 3 times a year, to the Group Teachers Board Meeting 3 times a year, to the Student Behavior Evaluation Board meeting 1 time during the year, and to the parents' meetings 3 times a year.

*Urgent daily letters and requests*

When the documents coming to and leaving the school in the 2022-2023 academic year were examined, approximately 30% of the documents were urgent and expected to be signed by the teachers and the participation was requested, and the remaining 70% are the documents that were expected to be answered daily. In addition, student achievement status and coaching progress certificates requested from teachers are also a factor that tired teachers during the year. The disadvantage of the region and the school also

made it very difficult for teachers to present realistic results to higher authorities.

## Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, teachers' views on the problems they faced and experienced in socio-economically disadvantaged regional secondary schools were investigated qualitatively. In this section, the findings obtained as a result of the research and the results of analyzes are included.

As a result of the research, it was revealed that teachers had many problems in school and in working life, there was a general consensus about the main reasons of the problems, the discomforts were common, the problems wore the teachers down a lot, but despite all this, it was understood that the teachers tried to do their best, applied temporary methods / solutions and performed their duties appropriately.

In the research, the importance of counseling services was understood and it was seen what kind of problems teachers dealt with in case of deficiency. This study revealed the difficulty of teachers to reach big goals with children who struggled with family problems, who experienced the negative effects of the environment, who had small dreams, and the extent to which the effects of the environment they lived in were, and how family, economic, social and cultural problems forced students and teachers. Distractions, undesired student behaviors, not being prepared for the lesson, indifference of parents, students not feeling valuable, low literacy rate in the environment and family and lack of people who would set an example for students, unplanned work of students, lack of access to source books, lack of social activities, fragmented family structures and dilemma between parents of students, problems of adaptation of foreign students to school and region, and situations such as cultural problems were mentioned as factors that affected both students and teachers. In a similar study, Lupton (2003) investigated the effect of conditions, namely general situation, on school process and quality in disadvantaged regional secondary schools, and investigated the effect of socio-economic status on school success in disadvantaged regions by comparing them with central schools. By mentioning the existence of low quality and giving place to the success results of the previous years, he concluded that the achievements in rural or disadvantaged places were low. In addition, Taşdemir (2016) examined the problems faced by social studies teachers working in socially disadvantaged areas, in his study, the difficulty of accessing the source books due to the low socio-economic status of the students, the overcrowded classrooms due to inadequacy, the pushing of education to the second place due to economic conditions, the indifferent attitudes of the students to the lesson. On the other hand, it was concluded that teachers were not satisfied with their status and salary, had difficulties in accessing course materials, and insufficient course hours. In Önal's (2020) study, which dealt with the problems faced by teachers working in socio-economically disadvantaged preschool institutions during the implementation of science activities, it was also stated that teachers were exposed to an event or problem in terms of disadvantage at least once, and the socio-economic situation of the family was the reason for these. Reasons such as low level of education, unconscious behavior of families, low literacy rate, low family participation, ethnic differences were found as a result. In summary, in such socio-economically disadvantaged regions, these problems, which affect not only students or their families but also all teachers, appear as an ongoing chain of problems and stories and situations that will be the subject of sociologists' researches occur.

In the document analysis conducted by the researcher, a total of 550 documents were examined. 416 of these documents were related to the problems of teachers arising from students. When these documents were examined, absenteeism rates, negative student behaviors, student failures were at a level that would enable the teacher to face many problems. Due to the high absenteeism rates, the parent and the school were responsible as well as the student for the child's attendance at school. When the absenteeism rates were examined, it was concluded that it was not low not only in the upper grades but also in other grades except for the 5th grade, and this was one of the problems that teachers were dealing with. With these absences, students fell behind in their lessons, did not participate in the lesson, did not even take the

exams and the teacher dealt with the student. With the absence letters sent, the necessary warnings were made to the parents in this regard.

In addition, apart from the documents examined, the preparation of a report for a total of 10 students due to their undesirable behavior was evidence of how much they forced the teacher and caused problems. In a study on undesired student behaviours, Elban (2009), in his study titled Examination of the situations of facing undesirable student behaviors and finding solutions by the teachers working at the primary education level, he states that the students are indifferent to the lesson, complaining about their friends, the student walking around the classroom without permission, excessive and unauthorized speaking behaviors, and to deal with those behaviours, teachers use activities that will attract the attention of the students.. He also states that teachers use methods such as dealing with the student one-on-one, getting support from the school administration and counseling service, showing the right behavior, giving responsibility to the student, disregarding, verbal warning, punishment and reward.

When the success and failure status table was examined, the failure rate of a student who was weak in at least one course is 38.2% on average. Considering this situation, if the school success was low, both parents, senior management, school administration and the environment would put pressure on teachers. It was also a known fact that always in the eyes of the society and senior management, if there was success, the student had done it; if there was failure, the teacher was to blame, he did not do his job well.

In the second part, a total of 134 documents were examined in order to reveal the problems arising from the relations with the higher authorities, and 70% of these documents consisted of daily writings, and the very urgent writings that teachers had to sign and participate in were 30% of these documents. According to the conclusion to be drawn from this, the urgent writings requested in the institution caused problems that would affect the private life of the teacher and force the teacher to work out-of-hours. In addition, the fact that teachers were called to meetings or held meetings about 16-20 times a year on average adds a new one to the workload of teachers in the school and caused them to disrupt their lessons and worked in school and is a problem.

### ***Recommendations***

In consistent with the results obtained, following suggestions can be put forward:

As a result of this study, which was conducted in order to identify the problems faced by teachers working in socio-economically disadvantaged regional secondary schools and to understand and interpret the solutions they applied for the problems they experienced, some of the following suggestions can be presented:

Through parent visits, a stronger communication link should be established between the school, the family and the student.

The reasons of the problems faced with referrals to the counseling service should be investigated and in serious cases, situations should be communicated to the relevant institutions.

At the beginning of the problems, the student should be discussed, the source of the problem should be questioned and ignoring / depriving the reward, written, verbal warning and warning methods should be applied.

The implementation and dissemination of the inclusive education approach should be carried out by the ministry.

In order to strengthen the school-family cooperation, school-parent association meetings should be held more frequently, in accordance with their purpose, and in a way that increases the participation of parents in school administration.

The Student Behavior Evaluation Board should be made more active and the seriousness of the minutes kept to the students and the steps to be taken in case of undesirable behavior should be explained at the beginning of the year and a serious stance should be taken on this issue.

The quality of student coaching services should be increased and their function should be increased by making it a duty of responsibility to the teacher willingly, not as a chore.

Necessary steps to increase the social and cognitive skills of students should be taken both at the ministry and at the provincial centers.

In-service trainings that exist for teachers to renew themselves should not be carried out outside of working hours.

By increasing the quality and counseling services, the need for counseling teachers in every school should be eliminated and counseling teachers should be provided.

Students should be trained on anger management and presentations, visuals and videos about counseling should be used.

The family trainings, seminars and conferences that are currently being given should be made more functional, parents should be encouraged to participate in these trainings voluntarily rather than forcibly, the purpose should be explained in a clear language and these trainings should be given by experts from the Ministry of Family and Social Policies or the Ministry of National Education, not teachers.

The efforts to increase the equality of opportunity and opportunity in education throughout the country should be further increased and developed by using the school allowances that started to be given this year efficiently and correctly. The grants should be followed up and necessary steps should be taken to use them for the benefit of the teacher and the student.

Incentives for teachers working in disadvantaged regions in terms of points or wages should be increased and the productivity of employees should be supported to do their jobs for solutions in these regions away from financial concerns.

Especially considering the problems faced by teachers working in disadvantaged areas, the reputation of teachers should be increased throughout the country and the safety of teachers should be ensured in order to minimize and eliminate incidents of violence against teachers.

Considering that teachers face so many problems, social activities should be increased more and student-teacher-parent should be integrated and problems should be reduced.

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## Ethical approval

In the writing process of the study titled “**Problems faced by teachers working in secondary schools in socio-economic disadvantaged regions and suggestions for solutions: A case study**”, the rules of scientific, ethical and citation were followed; it was undertaken by the authors of this study that no falsification was made on the collected data, “Journal Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research [JAQMER] and Editor” had no responsibility for all ethical violations to be faced, and all responsibility belongs to the authors and that the study was not submitted for evaluation to any other academic publishing environment.

## Ethics committee approval

Ethics Committee Approval of this research was obtained from Akdeniz University Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the meeting of 01 decision numbered 08 on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

## Comparison of school readiness level of 66 months and 72 months old students just started primary school: A phenomenology study

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### To cite this article:

Ozben, D. I. & Eski N. (2023). Comparison of school readiness level of 66 months and 72 months old students just started primary school: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research*, Volume2 (Issue2), 47-60 [Online] [www.jaqmeronline.com](http://www.jaqmeronline.com) DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8320934

**Article Info:** Received: August, 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Revised: September, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 Accepted: September, 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Abstract.** This research aimed to understand and interpret the readiness level of students in different age categories (66 months and 72 months old) studying in the first year and the adjustment problems experienced in schools as children 66 months and 72 months old had to study in the same class with the 4+4+4 arrangement. Accordingly, the comparison of these students' preparation for school education is an important research problem. The sample of the research was composed of the guidance counselor of the school and 4 1st grade class teachers and 4 parents. As the data collection tool of the research; a semi-structured interview form was used. The research results aimed to understand and interpret cognitive, affective, psychomotor and social learning domains of the children, 66 months old and 72 months old, and whether there was a significant difference in the school-starting age of the children, 66 month olds and 72 months old. As a result of the research, it was found that students, 66 months old, were not enough to be ready for school in terms of their cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, social, and language development.

**Keywords:** School readiness, primary school, teachers, students

### Introduction

School and school starting age, which will affect the child's whole life, is of great importance for children. The child, who comes out of the protection zone and first comes together with his peers in the school environment, learns to participate in the activities required by the programmed education, obey the rules within a certain discipline, plan, to fulfill the teacher's instructions, to read-write, arithmetic, etc. Along with competencies, they are faced with social and school adjustment.

The child who starts school for the first time is exposed to her new status and the changes brought about by this status, new environment, new social experiences, and different cultural influences, and he or she needs to adapt to this situation. According to Başar (2013), an individual must have cognitive, affective, and psychomotor behaviors in advance, that is, be ready for learning new behaviors. What is mentioned here is the child's school readiness or school maturity. It is important for school maturity that the child's age, height, weight, large and small muscle development, visual and auditory perception, and hand-eye coordination show a healthy development process. It can be said that these stated school maturity development criteria are also important criteria for the child, the parents, and the teachers and school administrators who make up the school environment. The child who starts school for the first time may find the new status and identity presented to him/her strange at the first stage, and then face problems or adaptation problems in adapting it to his/her life. How to cope with these changes, how to adapt to the

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new role, and which strategies to overcome these difficulties can become important problems for the child. At this point, children's readiness for school (cognitive, affective, biological, psycho-motor, and social) is of great importance in coping with problems and making a healthy and smooth transition to school (school readiness level (cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social (Erden & Akman, 2004; Erden, 2011). Each child's cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and social skill levels are different. This reveals the fact that the age of school maturity may differ for each child. It can be said that a 6-year-old child may have reached school maturity with her competencies, while a 7-year-old child may not be able to p these competencies.

In Turkey, in the 2012-2013 academic year, the 4+4+4 education system was enacted and with amendment numbered 28360 and dated 21/7/2012 published in the Resmi Gazete of the Regulation on Primary Education Institutions of the Ministry of National Education, Children who have completed 66 months as of the end of September of the year are registered in the first class of primary schools. Children aged between 60-66 months, who are understood to be ready for a primary school in terms of development, are also enrolled in the first grade of primary school, with a written request from their parents. (Resmi Gazete, 2014). A change that Children 66 months and older who have the right to age enrollment, but are not sufficiently developed physically or cognitively and cannot adapt to school, can also be directed to pre-spreschoolation upon a medical report from health institutions that are not developed physically or cognitively or their renrollment may be delayed for one year. has also been introduced (Resmi Gazete, 2014). There are 113 countries with a school starting age of 6 years old, 44 countries with 7, 33 countries with 5, 4 countries with 4, and 1 countries with 3 in the world, ranging from 3-7 years old. The duration of compulsory education in the European Union and some other countries varies (Bayat, 2015). While the criterion for the child to reach a certain age to start school is accepted as a criterion, school maturity is ignored.

As can be seen, with the amendment made in Article 7 of the Regulation on the Amendment of the Regulation on Primary Education Institutions of the Ministry of National Education numbered 28360 (Resmi Gazete, 2012a); It is compulsory for children who have completed 66 months as of September 30. Children who are between 60-66 months as of September 30; they are registered at the school at the request of the parents. This application has been softened a little more as a result of the reaction; To be able to send it at the request of the parents for 60 - 65 months with a parent petition for those 66 - 68 months old and those who are 69-71 months old can be delayed for one year with a report. was reorganized. (Resmi Gazete, 2012b). Various non-governmental organizations, academic circles and political parties expressed their opposition to the changes made. Some non-governmental organizations, educators and universities have found 60 months early to start compulsory education. (Güven, 2012; Duran, 2013). Reactions have taken effect and according to the regulations of primary education institutions; the school directorates approve the acceptance of the children who have the right to enroll at their age, with a petition to the school, for the children who have reached the age to start compulsory school; being able to direct them to any pre-school education or postpone their registration for one year with a health report certifying that they are not ready to start primary school made its provision. (MEB, 2013).

This study aimed to understand and interpret school readiness level (cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social) of students in different age categories (60-66 months and 66-72 months) who are studying in the first grade. In this sense, the main research question that this research deals with is "How are the school readiness level (cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social) of the 66-months old and 72-months old students who have just started primary school?" For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the school adjustment and classroom management problems observed by primary school teachers, school counselors and parents for students aged 66 months and 72 months?
2. What are the school readiness level (cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social) of children starting school at the age of 66 months and 72 months old according to primary school teachers and school counselors?

3. How are primary school teachers, school counselors and parents' views on readiness levels (cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social) of students, 66 and 72 months old?
4. What are the opinions of teachers, school councillor and parents on school readiness level (cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social) difference according to the demographic characteristics of the students 66 months and 72 months old?
5. What metaphors do primary school teachers, school counselors and parents produce for a 66-month-old child to start school?

## Method and paradigm of research

The paradigm of this research is interpretive as the interpretative paradigm is based on understanding and interpret subjective and inter-subjective views of the individuals and ontologically it is hermeneutics based on practical interests of individuals. (Habermas, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Gunbayi& Sorm, 2020). This study was the qualitative research approach designed as descriptive phenomenology. A phenomenological study is a research that focuses on the things people experience and the description of how they experience what they experience, a phenomenological study describes the meaning of an individual's lived experience of a concept or phenomenon. In other words, it focuses on the experience related to that phenomenon, not the phenomenon. Accordingly, phenomenological studies investigate and reveal conscious structures in human life. (Polkinghorne, 1989). The main goal of the phenomenological study is to reveal the essence of his perception of lived experiences. (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990).

### Sampling

For the sample of the research, 4 parents and 4 first grade teachers and 1 school guidance teacher of 66-month group and the 72-month group students studying in the first grades of primary education under the Ministry of National Education in the 2022-2023 academic year, within the borders of Antalya province Konyaaltı / Kepez / Muratpaşa were the participants in the framework of purposive sampling method and convenient sampling technique (Palys, 2008) as seen in Table 1 and Table 2.

**Table 1.**

*Sample of teachers*

n	Gender	Branch	Seniority	Department
A	Male	1st-grade teacher	21 years	Primary Class Teaching Department
B	Female	1st-grade teacher	31 years	Primary Class Teaching Department
C	Female	1st-grade teacher	15 years	Primary Class Teaching Department
F	Male	Guidance Counselor	22 years	Guidance and Consultant Department
I	Female	1st-grade teacher	6 years	Primary Class Teaching Department

The sample of parents of children according to gender, their child's class, the number of children in the family, the age order of their children, whether their children attended pre-school before primary school, educational status and their job are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

*Sample of parents*

n	Gender	Parent Status	Child Number in family	The age order of child	Pre-school before primary	Educational Status Mother (M)-Father (F)	Job Mother(M)-Father (F)
D	Female	2nd Class	1	1	Yes	M: Dropped out of High School	M: Housewife F: Pharmacist





						F: Dropped out of High School	
E	Female	1st Class	2	1	No	Mother: High School Father: High School	M: Esthetician F: Self Employed
G	Female	1st Class	3	2	No	Mother: Elementary Father: High School	M: Housewife F: Self Employed
H	Male	2nd Class	2	2	Yes	Mother: Elementary Father: Undergraduate	M: Housewife F: Retired Teacher

**Data collection**

As the data collection technique of the research, individual interview technique based on semi-structured interview form was used within the framework of the qualitative research approach, qualitative research, in which the study group is usually small, interview is used to gather rich and comprehensive information (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007).

In this study, firstly, a literature study was conducted and a semi-structured interview form was prepared. In the semi-structured interview form, questions were asked about the main purpose of the research, after a brief demographic section for parents, primary school teachers, and guidance counselors. The interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and the data obtained from the participants were transcribed verbatim. The results obtained were classified with the qualitative research software NVIVO 11 (Kelle, 1995), and then reliability were tried to be increased with Kappa analysis. The data obtained are presented with a descriptive explanation addition, and the findings obtained within the framework of emerging themes and patterns were explained and interpreted.

**Data analysis**

Descriptive analysis technique, one of the analysis techniques, was used to analyze the data of the research. The interviews of about 15-40 min, which was carried out by the researchers, was recorded on a voice recorder with the permission of the participant during the interview, then it was transcribed verbatim. The data obtained from the interviews conducted between the two groups were subjected to descriptive analysis, and the results were presented with a descriptive narrative, and the findings obtained within the framework of the emerging themes and patterns were classified in line with the research objectives by giving place to direct narratives (Gunbayi, 2018).

**Ethical procedures**

Scientific research ethics were followed at all stages of the research: (1) ethics committee approval of the research was obtained from Akdeniz University Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the meeting of 1 decision numbered 7 on January 10th, 2023 and (2) an informed consent form was signed by the participants prior to the interview.

**Validity and reliability of the research**

The followings were carried out to increase the validity and reliability of the research.

To increase the internal validity (credibility) of the research, while developing the interview form, a conceptual framework was created as a result of the literature review. In addition, immediately after data collection, the results and comments were confirmed with the data sources and participant confirmation was provided. On the other hand, the fact that the information recorded in the interview was only used for scientific purposes and the signing of a consent form was an important factor in ensuring mutual trust. Thus, it was ensured that the data collected during the interview process reflected the real situation.

To increase the external validity (transferability) of the research, the research process and what done in this process were explained in detail. In this context, the model of the research, the sampling, the data

collection tool, the data collection process, the analysis of the data, were defined in detail. In addition, interviews were conducted with the participants voluntarily with the purposeful sampling method to reveal the events and facts as well as their varying characteristics.

To increase the internal reliability (confirmability) of the research; all of the findings were given directly without comment. In addition, the data were coded by a researcher and an expert in qualitative research, and the codings were compared and subjected to kappa analysis. Kappa value of the research was 0.96, indicating a perfect fit.

To increase the external reliability (dependability) of the research, by keepin ready to present all the data collection tools, raw data, coding made during the analysis phase, and the perceptions, notes, writings, and inferences that form the basis of the report to an outside expert on demand, dependability was ensured (Landis and Koach, 1977; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2007, Gunbayi, 2018).

## Findings

The findings obtained from the research are given below according to the sub-objectives of the research..

### *1. Class adjustment and classroom management problems of students between 66 months and 72 months old*

The thematic analysis of the question, “What are the school adjustment and classroom management problems observed by primary school teachers, school counselors and parents for students aged 66 months and 72 months old?” based on the views of primary school teachers, school counselors, and parents is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

*Class Adjustment and Classroom Management Problems*

<b>Class Adjustment and Classroom Management Problems</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>
1. Peer Relationships		√	√		√	√		√	√
2. Making excuses	√	√	√		√	√			
3. Parent Behaviors	√	√		√	√				
4. Following the Rules				√			√	√	√
5. Micro Muscle Skills	√	√		√					√
6. School – Parent Alignment			√	√		√			√
7. Violence	√	√	√						√
8. School – Teacher Love		√			√		√	√	
9. Self Care Skills			√			√			√

As seen in Table 3, when children Table 3, when asked about their views for children aged 66 and 72-month-olds on Class Adjustment and Classroom Management; Participants generally expressed different statements. Six of the participants stated that 66-month-old students had problems with their classmates, 72-month-olds were better in peer relations, and five of them said that 66-month-old students made various excuses for teachers because they wanted to leave school and go to their families. Four of them stated that parental behavior was a major factor in children's compliance with the rules. children coming from an disorderly environment had difficulties in the adaptation process, Three of the participants stated that 66-month-old children had difficulties in long-term writing because their micro-muscle skills were not fully developed and that their child had difficulty in adapting. After all, as the family was not in harmony with the school, and the child who was exposed to violence at home also used violence in the school environment however they loved the school and their teachers. They

stated that they had difficulties for the self-care of their 66-month-old children. The views of participants are given below:

*...we had a hard time. There were constant complaints from her friends. Here, while playing with her friends, she accidentally falls, gets injured, talks constantly in the classroom, cannot pay attention to the lesson, and her friends make fun of her as a minor.(H, 1)*

*Of course, young people ask more questions due to more distraction. I do not want to do it!, It is enough!, I am so hungry!, I'm so thirsty!, I got bored!, Do I have to do these? These are the reactions usually seen in those 66 months old. Distractions are higher.(B,2)*

*Children come to school with the influence of parents. It's already in the regulations. If the parents consent for up to 3 months, they can be returned to the kindergarten. we usually recommend kindergarten for those who are not ready for 1st grade. but even if the parents are not ready, they want the children to enter the 1st grade, they say yes, the child will force you a little, but what can we do, the child will get used to it in time. You can't say anything. However, the future education life of the child is affected. This is why we say it.(B,3)*

*...there were problems such as talking constantly, not paying attention to the lesson, not obeying the class rules...(G,4)*

*Since the 66-month-old student's fine-gross motor skills, which we call micro-muscular skills, are not developed, they cannot hold a pencil. they can't button up, they can't tie their shoes, they can't even catch the ball.(I, 5)*

*For example, I had a student this year. His age is suitable for the 1st grade. (72 months) He never wanted to attend class. She is ready for anything but does not want to go to class. (F,6)*

*Once a child is beaten at home, he doesn't listen to you unless you beat him. 2, 2 more 4. Well, the beating is from heaven. Look. Of course, we don't show violence. But some children don't act unless violence is used. This generation is so arrogant. This generation doesn't want to learn. he starts to misbehave because the lessons don't interest him. Look, there is a saying. 'whoever didn't settle down with advice should be warned, whoever didn't settle down with warning deserves to be whacked" We used to talk when we got together with the teachers. Verbal violence, not physical violence. We always talked like that.(A,7)*

*I don't think there is a difference between a 66-month-old and a 72-month-old child. I think that teachers affect whether children like school or not. For example, the parent of a student who did not want to go to kindergarten last year thanked me for his son's love of school this year.(C,8)*

*66-month-old students barely do their self-care. For example, since toilet training cannot be given in primary school, parents must have taught toilet training to the child at home. However, some parents send them to school without providing this education. and the child has trouble going to the toilet at school. When this situation is noticed by his friends, he is mocked and humiliated.(F,9)*

## **2. The school readiness level of 66-month-old children and Regarding the Readiness of 72-Month-Old Children**

The descriptive analysis of the question, "What are the school readiness level (cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social) of children starting school at the age of 66 months and 72 months old according to primary school teachers and school counselors?" based on the some views of primary school teachers and guidance teacher is presented below.

*Attention perception is lower than others. They get distracted more quickly. We have problems with the perceptions of 66-month-old students. For example, when I say to a 66-month-old child that he should draw better, the child answers me thI am only five years old and can do that much ... Of course, there is a difference. 72 months old understand and reflect on behavior. But even though 66 months old know the rules, they can't reflect on the behavior. For example, when you ask 66 months old, What are the rules? That, at work, we must be quiet in the classroom. When the bell rings, we must enter the classroom. They say like that, but when they come to practice it, they can't put it into action.(B).*

*We had a lot of sleep problems. Although she went to kindergarten for 2 years, we had an extreme sleep problem in the first grade of primary school. In addition, when the lesson is given, he constantly says, I can't write this. I don't want to write. I want to play the game. I don't want to study. I don't have to do these things. He had many reproaches like.(C).*

*66 months not ready. More addicted to parents. Not ready emotionally and physically. Using a pen, using scissors, and small muscle development is not enough. They also lag in emotional development. More family dependent. More selfish. pushes us harder. They become more selfish. I cleaned her butt. Even basic needs are problematic. They are afraid of falling into the toilet, think about it!( F).*

*When we look at it in terms of friend relations; They are in the age of play, mostly because they are younger than their peers. For this reason, they want to play games more than others. In games, for example, they always try to be me center. They can easily upset their friends in games. They may not follow the rules. Of course, emotionally; they get too fussy. They may cry when you are immediately angry, or vice versa, they may react more harshly. They make funny gestures to your face. It's like teasing. As we get older, we see that these attitudes are less. But we can generally observe this in this age group.( I).*

*The psycho-motor aspect; Now, even say this word E and the word EV together, he can't write it. He can't put it on paper. Can't transcribe even when combining E with V Here, of course, his muscles are not formed yet. If his muscles are not fully developed, he cannot lift the pencil for more than five minutes, even if he is holding a pencil. Starts to get tired after 3 minutes. Sure, it's crowded in the classroom. Some things have to go fast. Of course, the teacher will not have time for this. Naturally, the child lags behind a bit.(F).*

*72 months, he is in a more developed condition physically and he said that he pays attention better in the lesson, I see that my child understands the lessons better. If I say that he has become more conscious, it is like that.. 72-month-olds both understand and reflect on behavior. But even though 66 months old know the rules, they can't reflect on behavior(A).*

As seen in descriptive analysis based on the opinions on school readiness level of 66-month-old and 72 month-old children, primary school teachers and guidance teacher generally expressed the same statements. all of the participants stated that the cognitive readiness of 66-month-old children was not sufficient in general compared to 72-year old children and they had difficulty paying attention to the lesson and instructions. They stated that being physically younger than 72 months old caused injuries. all of the participants said that 66-month-old children were still at the age of play affectively, they want to play more games than lessons, and they missed their mothers. They also stated that the 66-month-old students frequently asked the question of when they would go home and that the students had difficulty waking up in the morning. Also, they stated that 66-month-old children had insufficient hand-muscle skills compared to 72-month-olds, their hands were often tired during the lesson and they did not want to write. Additional they stated that children still exhibited self-centered behavior as a social skill, and they only acted without considering their wishes and the wishes of their friends.

### **3. The Difference in Readiness Level of Children Between 66 Months and 72 Months**

The thematic analysis of the question, “How are primary school teachers, school counselors and parents’ views on readiness levels (cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social) of students, 66 and 72 months old?” based on the views of primary school teachers, school counselors, and parents is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.**

*Difference in Readiness Levels of Children Between 66 Months and 72 Months*

Difference in Readiness Level	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1. Psycho-motor Development Difference	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		
2. Social Development Difference	√	√	√	√	√	√			
3. Affective Development Difference				√	√		√	√	√
4. Language Development Difference				√	√	√			√

As seen in thematic analysis in Table 4, on the comparison of the school readiness difference of children between 66 months old and 72 months old, participants generally expressed common statements. Seven of the participants expressed psycho-motor development, six of them Social Development, five of them affective development, and four of them Language Development regarding the difference in School Readiness of children between 66 months and 72 months. Some of the views of participants are given below:

*Now I have been working in this school for 5 years and in primary school for 22 years. Since primary school children start early in this age group, I have seen that some of their cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor deficiencies are slightly higher than their peers. I was able to observe. Although we do not experience any cognitive difficulties, I can say that there are problems with motor skills and behaviors. Of course, this cannot be said for every child, but it can be generalized.(F, 1).*

*Groups over 72 months old listen to you very well. School culture is children who sit at the moment. (D, 2)*

*A 72-month-old child is more ready both emotionally and physically. 66 months old child is not ready. More addicted to parents. He is not ready emotionally and physically, either.(G, 3).*

*...in addition, children in this age group cannot express themselves comfortably and express their thoughts with simple, imperative sentences...(I, 4).*

**4. Findings concerning the effect of demographic differences on readiness levels of students between 66 months and 72 months old**

The thematic analysis of the question, “What are the opinions of teachers, school counselors and parents on school readiness level (cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social) difference according to the demographic characteristics of the students, 66 months and 72 months old?” is presented in Table 5 below.

**Table 5.**

*Opinions on the Demographic Differences of Students Between 66 Months and 72 Months*

Demographic Differences	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1. Gender	√		√		√	√			√
2. Family Life	√		√	√	√				√
3. preschool				√	√	√		√	√
4. Living Zone		√	√			√			√
5. Violence	√	√		√					√
6. Economical situation	√		√			√	√		

7.	Sibling Factor		√		√		√	
8.	Basic Needs		√	√			√	
9.	Parental Interest	√				√		√
10.	Parent Educational Status		√		√	√		

As seen in Table 7, when asked about the effect of the demographic difference of Children between 66 Months and 72 Months old on school readiness; participants generally stated differently. While five of the participants stated that gender difference, family life, and kindergarten had a great impact, 4 of them stated that it was very important for the child's school life whether he was exposed to violence or witnessed violence or not, the economic status of his family, and whether he or she had a sibling or not. Again, while four participants expressed the demographic characteristics of the methods of meeting the nutritional needs as basic needs that affected the school life of the child, they expressed the parental interest and the demographic characteristics that affected the school life and school readiness in the parent's education status. Some of the views of participants are given below:

*...whether he went to nursery school whether he went to kindergarten, The genetic structure of the child, the cultural structure of the family, the environment in which he grew up, the family environment, for example, the child who grew up in a separated family and came to us may have a serious adjustment problem. Sometimes the child is violent. because the child was abused. He is always against the grandmother, against the parents. He was beaten a lot. At first, the custody was given to the mother, then to the father, now it is like the mother. Of course, the child reflects what is on in the house because he sees it. The child became neurotic..(D, 3, 4, 5).*

*...In the past years, a student came. She is studying in kindergarten. I said can she to them. They said yes. The parents were also parents with a high level of conscious education. Indeed, the family was very interested in the child. The student came to Me, Can you try a little? My teacher? I wonder if she can adapt to the classroom? the student was a girl. Girls are a little better at this. Gender also makes a big difference. Girls are more adaptable in this regard. Boys are more likely to go into exuberance, definitely in terms of behavior...(E, 1, 9,10).*

*...Nutrition is very important, the student goes to kindergarten, Coming from the village, city life, Family interest, Family education level, Economic structure of the family, Being the first child, Being the last child, Being a twin child. These are all factors that are very effective on the student ...( C, 2, 6, , 8 ).*

## 5. Findings on Metaphors

The thematic analysis of the question “What metaphors do primary school teachers, school counselors and parents produce for a 66-month-old child to start school?” based on the views of primary school teachers, school counselors, and parents is presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.**

*Metaphors for a 66-month-old child to start school*

Metefor	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1. Butterfly on a vine yard	√								
2. Sadness		√							
3. A baby trying to walk without crawling			√						
4. Writing on a blank page				√					
5. Strength					√				
6. A broken remote control car						√			
7. Handicapped track							√		
8. Starting the Race Early								√	
9. Early cycling									√

As seen in Table 8, when asked to produce metaphors for a 66-month-old to start school, one of them expressed the negativeness of the situation with the expression butterfly on a vine yard, and the other the expressions were sadness, a baby trying to walk without crawling, writing on a blank page, strength, a broken remote control car, handicapped track, starting the race early and early cycling.

*I liken it to a butterfly perched on a vine gourd. It's funny. Now shower the vine gourd. Consider the butterfly landing on it. This is funny. This situation is comedy.(A,1).*

*... It is a very sad situation. I have a few in my class too. They create serious problems. That's a lot for the kids! Sad for my country! Because we are raising lost children! These children will experience great problems in terms of academic, communication, social and social aspects!(B,2).*

*I liken it to a baby trying to walk without crawling. You haven't learned to crawl yet, but you want to walk. He or she has more time. (C,3).*

*Writing on a blank page, I guess. Since they are small, I see them as blank pages and we fill that page. Games, lessons, orientation according to interests, etc. Assuming that there is an improvement in the level of knowledge with the information he received at school, I can say that the blank page should be filled.(D,4).*

*Strong. I think it will be stronger. I think your feet will be more firmly on the ground. (M,5).*

*I liken it to a car with a broken Remote Control. Because the children come here with the remote control. There is an entity in the house that is coordinating someone. But there is no one controlling here. Child battery installed. There is energy. And it cannot be controlled.(F,6).*

*Handicapped Track. I'm thinking about my daughter right now. My son's older sister is also a teacher. I remember the days when I myself started teacher's school when I started High School, Getting away from home was a new place. At that time, when I started at a boarding school, I had many different emotions. It started early for my son and a month or two earlier for my daughter and her peers and this situation will always be behind in terms of age, for the rest of her life. Each school class or each step it will take will be in front of them as a handicapped track in an important decision. And this Handicapped Track will have future advantages! There will be disadvantages in the future! But of course, we will always be behind them as a family.(G,7).*

*...It's like starting a race early. So the sooner the better, right.(H,8).*

*Early cycling. It's like riding a bike before your physical condition is ready. It's like riding a bicycle even though your feet can't reach the pedals.(I,9)*

## **Discussion and conclusion**

The main purpose of this study was to compare the school adjustment and school readiness levels of 66-72 months old students who had just started primary school. Readiness can be defined as the time when a person reaches the level of being able to perform a certain behavior as a result of maturation and learning (Erden & Akman, 2004). A child with a low level of readiness in terms of cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social development has problems in adapting to the school culture. A healthy development of the child's characteristics such as age, height, weight, large and small muscle development, visual and auditory perception, hand-eye coordination is important for reaching a certain maturity at school start (Güler, 2012). Participant teachers stated that children who had adjustment problems in primary school also experienced problems of academic and psychological lag or school adjustment in their next schools. Maturation is very effective on learning, especially in primary school age (Erden and Akman, 2004). When the literature on the subject was reviewed and the developmental

stages of children were examined, the developmental level of each age period differed. When teachers' opinions were examined; in general, it can be said that they thought that the curriculum was not suitable for children aged 60-66 months old.

When evaluated in general, it was concluded that the psycho-motor dimensions of the children and the micro-muscular skills of 60-66 month-old students were not sufficiently developed. The development of micro-muscles is a situation that develops depending on maturation, and since children's body maturation did not occur, it was found that when the hand-arm skill was evaluated in terms of height - body maturity, it also caused a problem in the child's adaptation to the physical conditions of the school. Since the micro-muscular skills of the child were not sufficiently developed, the child could not reach the toilet sinks or caused her or him to fall behind in the games with his friends, and it could be said that depending on this situation, the self-development of the children might be adversely affected. From this, it can be interpreted that children of 60 - 66 months starting primary school could cause a social, psycho-motor, and biological risk. Participant teachers stated that students starting primary school in the age of 60-66 months old experienced problems in perceiving commands, and that they had difficulties in focusing the attention of the children on the lesson and in keeping them in the classroom because they had excessive attachment to the mother. Again, they emphasized that the given information and commands had a very short retention time due to a lack of interest and attention. This finding is supported by the research results of Gündüz and Çalışkan (2013).

For 72-month group students, participant teachers stated that as a result of the children's reaching school readiness, they were more successful in adapting to school culture, peer communication, and academic sense and they did not experience any problems. In the studies on school readiness, school readiness is defined as the state of a child's being physically, emotionally, mentally and socially ready for school. (Yavuzer, 2012). A child with school readiness has reached a certain level in terms of cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social development and is ready to successfully fulfill what is asked from her or him at school (Ülkü, 2007).

When the difference between students' school adjustment problems was evaluated; it was seen that there was a significant difference. It was found that the children in the 60-66 months old experienced school adjustment problems more often than the children in the 66-72 months old, and they adapted to the school culture more difficult. Accordingly, as stated in the literature having children from different age groups in the same class also affects their adjustment negatively (Basaran, Gökmen & Akdağ., 2014).

When different age groups (66-72 months old) were evaluated in terms of demographic characteristics, participants stated that in addition to the negative advantage of children coming from disadvantaged regions, the inadequacy of children's readiness caused a major problem for children both academically, socially and biologically especially for the students starting school early when they were 60-66 months old. They stated that if the child started school as a 72-month-old group, at least the child's readiness was at a slightly more adequacy level, it was easier to turn his disadvantage into a positive direction, and they had less difficulty in adapting to the school culture. It can be also said that there was a significant difference between the 66-month old and the 72 month old children from a demographically disadvantaged region.

When the difference between the academic achievement levels of the students is evaluated; it was found that there was a significant difference between the 66-month old and the 72-month old students. Similarly, in studies it was found that the micro-muscle skills of 66-month-old students were not sufficiently developed (Bayat, 2012; Sarı, 2008) and it was stated that the learning and content of the primary literacy program of the teachers were not suitable for the level of the students and that students had difficulties in writing (Bay, 2010; Bayat, 2012). Gündüz and Çalışkan (2013) also found that in their writing and reading preparation studies, about 60-66 students of primary school teachers; It was found that the students had problems such as getting tired quickly, being reluctant, careless and slow. It was concluded that 72-84 and 66-72 months old children had higher literacy skills than 60-66 months old children.



When we examined the findings obtained from parents who participated in the research, it was seen that they considered starting school early as a good situation and that their children started one step ahead of their peers. It was found that they made a positive deduction of this situation and insisted on starting school early, regardless of the opinions of the experts (pedagogues, school counselors, primary school teachers, and many researchers on the subject and their findings) stating the harmful aspects of this situation. On the other hand, teachers who participated in the research stated that the children with low readiness levels starting school caused adaptation problems at school, the children had problems due to insufficient body functions, and when evaluated at the academic level, teachers stated that as their learning speed was slower than 72 months old students, as a result of the activities in which children of different age groups in the classroom demonstrated skills, the 66-month-old children experienced the feeling of inferiority and they also experienced this situation in their next school process and even felt it throughout their lives. Accordingly, The Turkish Medical Association included the some statements related to 66 months old students in its report on early school starting in 2012: hand-eye coordination could not be achieved before the age of six, their fine motor skills have not reached the expected maturity, insufficient development of abstraction, focusing and maintaining attention skills and learning rates were slower than other students (Türk Tabipler Birliği-Turkish Medical Association [TTB], 2012).

The fact that an individual has a healthy personality, is sensitive to his or her environment, harmonious and successful in academic education largely depends on the age of starting primary education. Considering that the school starting age affects a student's whole life positively or negatively, physically, affectively, and cognitively, for a 72-month-old student with hand-arm skills and school readiness (cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social), it is thought that both the education-teaching process and the perception-learning process will be quite productive. Accordingly, based on the fact that the student, whose education process is successful, will not be wrong to deduce that he or she will show success indicators throughout his or her life, 72-month-old children will experience a more productive, problem-free, and more positive process in school and life, but it is thought that children who start the 66-month school process may also have an inefficient education process as a result of hand-arm skills, lesson motivation and school adjustment, cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, and social inadequacies.

### ***Recommendations***

As a result of the research, it was found that the 66-month-old students were not enough to be ready for school in terms of their cognitive, affective, psycho-motor, social and language development. Thus, according to the results of the research, the following suggestions can be put forward:

- After being subjected to the School Maturity test by the Ministry of National Education as a criterion for starting primary school, students should be enrolled in the school.
- While creating the primary literacy program, a curriculum can be developed as a result of experimental and theoretical research (for 60-66 month-old students) based on the age of starting school.
- Considering that children who start school early and children who start school by reaching school maturity are educated in the same class, precautions such as guidance and counseling services, family education, etc., should be taken in order not to adversely affect academically the early starters of different age groups being subjected to the same curriculum.
- Pre-school education should be compulsory for starting school, and the transition to primary education should be considered as a criterion as a result of the presentation of a report by the teacher of the child who graduates Pre-school education.
- To determine the readiness of children for school during enrollment, a school enrollment commission should be established in the presence of teachers, school administrators, guidance and psychological counselors, or child development specialists.

- A brochure of Is My Child Ready for School? prepared in the light of the scientific findings can be given to parents
- Awareness-raising conferences or seminars can be organized by experts for families who think their children will start school

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## Ethical approval

In the writing process of the study titled “**Comparison of school readiness level of 66 months and 72 months old students just started primary school: A phenomenology study**”, the rules of scientific, ethical and citation were followed; it was undertaken by the authors of this study that no falsification was made on the collected data, “Journal Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research [JAQMER] and Editor” had no responsibility for all ethical violations to be faced, and all responsibility belongs to the authors and that the study was not submitted for evaluation to any other academic publishing environment.

## Ethics committee approval

Ethics Committee Approval of this research was obtained from Akdeniz University Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the meeting of 01 decision numbered 07 on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

## A qualitative study on equal opportunity in education

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### To cite this article:

Kahyaoğlu, R. B., Şener, A., Kaçar, E., Orakcioğlu, S. C., Ünlü, A., Yurtseven, A. & Şahan, D. (2023). A case study on equal opportunity in education. *Journal of Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research (JAQMER)*. Volume 2, (Issue 1), 61-73. [Online] [www.jaqmeronline.com](http://www.jaqmeronline.com) DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8328361

**Article Info:** Received: August, 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Revised: September, 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Accepted: September, 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Abstract.** This study was conducted to understand and interpret how teachers working in primary schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in the provinces of Antalya and Bursa during the 2022-2023 academic year evaluated equal opportunities in education based on their opinions. The research was a qualitative study, and it was designed as descriptive phenomenology. According to the findings of the research, it was highlighted that enhancing technological equipment (such as smart boards, tablets, etc.) for students' access to education, opening libraries in schools, and taking measures to reduce student absenteeism were necessary. The research findings also concluded that teachers' instructional strategies played a significant role in providing equal opportunities in education to students. Collaborative teaching strategy stood out as the least utilized method. The reasons behind disparities in student achievement include parental attitude, intelligence level, environment, and the education curriculum. Suggestions were made to continue activities like Remedial Education Course (DYK), Primary School Enrichment Program (İYEP), and Supportive Education to reduce achievement disparities. Additionally, it was found that instructional materials such as reference books were necessary to reduce achievement disparities.

**Keywords:** Equality, opportunity, education, technology

### Introduction

Society consists of individuals who come together in a natural environment within certain limits to pursue common goals, engaging in relationships, cooperation, and solidarity based on rules (Başaran, 1989). To regulate these relationships and maintain the cohesion of society, structures called institutions have been established. Institutions such as health, family, education, science, politics, law, religion, and ethics constitute the fundamental building blocks of society. There needs to be a harmonious collaboration among these institutions. For instance, shortcomings within the healthcare institution (e.g., insufficient dissemination of disease prevention information) can lead to overcrowding in hospitals. Similarly, deficiencies within the education and science institutions can also impact other institutions (Toprakçı, 2017).

One of the most important institutions of society is the education system. Education is a process through which an individual consciously and intentionally brings about the desired change in their behavior through personal experience (Ertürk, 1975). Additionally, education encompasses the transmission of culture and plays a significant role in nurturing individuals who possess the qualities that contribute to

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the continuation and strengthening of the current political system within society (Sabancı, 2016).

The concept of equality in education refers to every individual's right to equal access to educational services and the establishment of equal opportunities in education. The notion of equality aims to create an environment within the education system where differences are acknowledged, but these differences do not hinder individuals from accessing educational services or achieving success in education (Özkan, 2017).

To achieve equality in education, individuals should not face discrimination based on their socio-economic status, gender, ethnic background, or other individual differences. They should have equal access to the same educational opportunities. Equality in education is a necessary condition for each individual to discover and develop their potential (Sönmez, 2013).

The concept of opportunity in education refers to ensuring equal opportunities for individuals to access educational services and succeed in education. This concept aims for all individuals within the education system to have equal access to educational opportunities and benefit from educational services without discrimination (Bursalıoğlu, 2014).

To achieve equal opportunities in education, individuals should have equal access to education without facing discrimination due to their socio-economic status, gender, ethnic background, or other differences. For this purpose, all forms of discrimination should be prevented within the education system, and individuals' differences should be respected. The concept of equal opportunities in education not only guarantees individuals' right to equal access to educational services but also aims to provide them with equal possibilities to achieve success in education. Therefore, equal opportunities in education are essential for ensuring social justice and enabling each individual to fully utilize their potential (Uysal, 2017).

Equality of opportunity in schools is a concept aiming for every student to have the same chances in education. This notion seeks to eliminate opportunities that vary based on factors such as where students are born, their genders, races, or families. Schools can utilize various methods to promote equality of opportunity. These methods may include special programs tailored for different student groups, scholarships, and providing learning materials that suit students' needs (Jackson, 2018).

Equality of opportunity in schools is not only essential for students but also for educational institutions. Achieving equality of opportunity positively impacts students' academic achievements and enhances the quality of the education system. Additionally, it grants students more equal opportunities in societal life. However, achieving equality of opportunity may not always be straightforward. Particularly, resolving differences among students requires significant effort. Yet, through these endeavors, a fairer education system and society can be achieved (Lareau, 2015).

Equality of opportunity aims to eliminate disadvantages arising from students' economic, social, cultural, and geographical differences. In this context, schools can implement various strategies to bridge these gaps among students. For instance, educational institutions can offer additional support programs for disadvantaged students. Furthermore, schools can identify potential obstacles students might encounter during their educational journey and develop policies to remove these barriers. By doing so, students can have equal opportunities in education, fostering a more equitable society (Lucas, 2011).

The fundamental purpose of studies related to equality of opportunity is to ensure that individuals from all walks of life have equal access to opportunities and the chance to fully realize their potential. Economic, social, cultural, and geographical disparities within society can create inequalities in education, leading some students to experience failures, dropouts, or unemployment. This study, distinct from other research on equality of opportunity, aimed to propose concrete strategies to reduce inequalities in education systems in order to enhance the academic success of disadvantaged students. Thus the objectives of this study were to analyze the views of teachers on measures taken for equal opportunities in access and participation for all students, the teaching strategies teachers used to ensure

equal opportunities in education, differences in achievement among students in their schools and the reasons behind these differences, support programs offered to address differences in student achievement and the teaching materials and resources teachers used to address differences in student achievement.

## Method and paradigm of research

This study was grounded in practical knowledge and structured in accordance with the interpretive paradigm based on individuals' subjective and intersubjective perspectives (Gunbayi & Sorm, 2018; Gunbayi & Sorm, 2020; Gunbayi, 2020 a,b). The research adopted a qualitative approach, aiming to examine perceptions about "equal opportunities in education" currently ongoing in Turkey through individual interviews with participants. Additionally, the study encompassed equal opportunity measures taken for students' access to education, teaching strategies employed by teachers to ensure equal opportunities, reasons behind variations in student achievements, instructional materials used to address these differences, and support programs offered to bridge these gaps among students. The study followed a qualitative and descriptive phenomenological design. Phenomenological research aims to comprehend and interpret the meanings individuals construct in their minds, emphasizing their perspectives and experiences related to these perceptions (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1989).

In such research, the researcher interprets the phenomenon in its natural setting, as understood by those involved, by working directly within the natural environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012).

## Sampling

The sampling of the research consisted of 16 teachers who voluntarily participated in the study, working in schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in Antalya and Bursa provinces during the 2022-2023 academic year.

During coding, the names of the participant teachers were not disclosed; 16 (sixteen) voluntary teachers participated. The participants were coded as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15 and P16 according to the order of the interviews.

**Table 1.**

*Distribution of demographic variables of the participants*

Theme	Code	Participants
Age	20-30	P6
	31-40	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16
	41-50	P13
	51 ve üzeri	P7
Gender	female	P1, P2, P4, P6, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P16
	male	P3, P5, P7, P9, P15
Marital Status	single	P4,
	married	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16
Educational Background	Bachelor's Degree Graduate	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P16
	Master's Degree Graduate	P6, P7
	Doctorate Degree Graduate	P15

Years of Professional Experience	1-5	P6
	6-10	P1, P4, P9, P10, P11, P16
	11-15	P2, P3, P5, P8, P12, P14
	16-20	P13, P15
	21 and +	P7
Years of Service in the Institution	1 year -	P4, P10
	1-3 year	P1, P5, P6, P7, P9, P12, P14, P15, P16
	4-7 year	P2, P3, P11
	8 and +	P8, P13
Subject/Field	Mathematics Teacher	P4, P6, P9
	Religious Culture Teacher	P13
	Turkish Language Teacher	P3, P12
	English Teacher	P2, P8, P10
	Social Studies Teacher	P5
	Classroom Teacher	P1, P7, P11, P14, P15, P16
City of Employment	Bursa	P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P11, P12
	Antalya	P1, P5, P9, P10, P13, P14, P15, P16

### ***Data collection***

The data collection process employed a strategy in which the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants to gather data. The collected data were analyzed in detail using descriptive analysis method. The main aim of descriptive analysis was to reach concepts and relationships that explain the collected data. The data were first conceptualized, then logically organized based on emerging concepts, and themes explaining the data were identified

The obtained data were presented to a subject expert and three teachers from two different types of schools for code determination. Similarities between the codes generated in the research and those provided by the experts were identified. To examine the inter-coder reliability, the coefficient of agreement between the coders was calculated, as for the reliability of coding, at least two independent coders were required (Neundorf, 2002).

### ***Ethical Procedures***

Ethics Committee Approval of this research was obtained from Akdeniz University Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the meeting of 13 decision numbered 312 on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, informed consent form was obtained from the participants before the interview and participants were informed that their names would not be mentioned and be given the alphabetical codes as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, and P16.

### ***Validity and Reliability of the Research***

The internal and external validity and reliability of the qualitative data were increased based on the criteria of credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985): the semi-structured interview form was developed by the review of the relevant literature for credibility and for confirmability the themes of the transcripts were noted by two independent researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2007, Gunbayi, 2018).

In the research, assistance was sought from two researchers specialized in educational management. The inter-coder agreement percentage was calculated using the formula "Reliability = Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement) x 100" (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The agreement percentage between the coders was calculated as 74.81%. The findings obtained in

accordance with the research purpose were presented with direct quotes from teacher opinions to provide support. Descriptive analysis method was used in the data analysis. Descriptive analysis is a systematic, repeatable technique in which specific words in a text are summarized into smaller descriptive categories based on specific rules (Büyüköztürk, *et al.* , 2014).

### *Data Analysis*

The interviews were carried out by the researcher and recorded as audio files, transcribed verbatim and their accuracy was confirmed by the participants. The answers to the questions were coded and thematic, descriptive analysis were done via NVIVO software (Kelle, 1995; Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2007). In conclusion and discussion, the findings were interpreted and discussed.

## **Findings**

### *1. Participants' views on measures taken for equal opportunities in access and participation for all students*

The findings regarding the measures taken for students' access to education and equal opportunities are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

*The measures for equal opportunities*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Use of Technological Equipment and Materials	Usage of Smart Boards	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P14, P15
Attendance and Absenteeism	Ensuring Students' School Attendance	P1, P8, P11, P12, P14, P15
Supporting Students	Supporting Economically Disadvantaged Students (books, stationery, clothing)	P5, P8, P14, P13
Taking Necessary Measures for Foreign National Students	Providing Separate Classes for Foreign Students to Learn Turkish	P10, P11
Creating an Appropriate Educational Environment According to Students' Levels	Referring Gifted Students to Relevant Institutions, Full-time Inclusion Education for Special Needs Students	P10, P11
Adapting Classrooms Appropriately	Adapting Classrooms into Suitable Learning Environments	P15, P7
Establishing a School Library	Opening the Library for Student Use	P6
Conducting Practice Exams to Assess Students' Levels	Conducting Practice Exams	P13

When evaluating the opinions regarding the measures taken for equal opportunities for access and participation in education for all students as presented in Table 2; participants expressed their views on themes as Use of Technological Equipment and Materials, 'attendance and absenteeism', 'supporting students', 'taking necessary measures for foreign national students', creating an appropriate educational environment according to students' levels, 'adapting classrooms appropriately', establishing a school library, conducting practice exams to assess students' levels '. The participants' views on the themes are given below:



*"We are striving to ensure equal opportunities by effectively using smart boards, which are educational technologies, in our lessons to eliminate learning differences among students." (P2,1)*

*"We ensure and monitor students' attendance by conducting parent meetings and home visits with students who are reluctant to come to school, either due to family reasons or personal preference." (P11,2)*

*"Since our school is located in an industrial area, there are abundant job opportunities. This situation leads to a high level of migration to this area. As a result, we have a significant number of foreign national students in our school. To support their adaptation to school and their learning of Turkish, we create separate classes for foreign national students to learn Turkish." (P10,4)*

*"In order to prevent our students from facing a shortage of both reference books and reading books, we have established a library in our school to ensure their access. Additionally, we provide a secure environment for studying after school hours for students who are interested, aiming to offer opportunities for equal participation." (P6,7)*

## **2. Participants' views on the teaching strategies they use to ensure equal opportunities in education**

The findings related to the teaching strategies used by teachers to achieve equal opportunities in education are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

*The impact of teaching strategies on equal opportunities*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Presentation-Based Teaching Strategy	Presentation Approach	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16
Discovery-Based Teaching Strategy	Discovery Approach	P2, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15
Research-Inquiry Teaching Strategy	Research-Inquiry Approach	P7, P12, P14
Collaborative Learning Teaching Strategy	Collaborative Group Work Approach	P3, P12, P14

When evaluating the participants' views on the teaching strategies they use to ensure equal opportunities in education as presented in Table 3; they expressed their opinions on themes as 'presentation-based teaching strategy ', 'discovery-based teaching strategy ', 'research-inquiry teaching strategy', and 'collaborative learning teaching strategy ' views on the themes are given below:

*"Our classes are quite crowded, so we generally use the presentation approach in our teaching strategy." (P4,1)*

*"Due to the overcrowded nature of our classes, the discovery approach method does not always provide much opportunity in terms of time, but occasionally, to some extent, I use the discovery approach teaching strategy." (P8,2)*

*"Since most of our students do not have internet access at home, we have difficulty assigning research assignments; therefore, we cannot effectively use the research-inquiry approach teaching strategy." (P16,3)*

*"Despite mainly using the presentation approach in our teaching strategy due to the crowded nature of our classes, we also do not neglect to occasionally involve collaborative group activities and strive to actively engage students in the learning process." (P3,4)*

### **3. Participants views on differences in achievement among students in their schools and the reasons behind these differences**

The findings related to the reasons behind differences in student achievement are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.**

*Differences in Student Achievement*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Parental involvement, attitude, education, and disciplinary approach, family's socio-economic level, communication with the family	Family Factor	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16
Student's level of intelligence, physical development, readiness level, interest and attitude towards the lesson, student's mental distress and illnesses	Individual Differences	P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P10, P11, P14
The school being located in an area with high migration, resulting in overcrowded classrooms, school facilities	School Factor	P1, P3, P7, P9, P10, P12,
Student's circle of friends	Environmental Factor	P5, P9, P14
Attitude and behavior of teachers towards students, teacher changes	Teacher Factor	P10, P12, P14,
Curriculum that is not suitable for student level	Curriculum	P10

When evaluating teachers' opinions on the differences in achievement among students in their schools and the reasons for these differences, as presented in Table 4; they expressed their views on themes as 'parental involvement, attitude, education, and disciplinary approach, family's socio-economic level, communication with the family', 'student's level of intelligence, physical development, readiness level, interest and attitude towards the lesson, student's mental distress and illnesses', 'the school being located in an area with high migration, resulting in overcrowded classrooms, school facilities', 'student's circle of friends', 'attitude and behavior of teachers towards students, teacher changes' and 'curriculum that is not suitable for student level'. The participants' views on the themes are given below:

*'Our school is located in a region that experiences significant migration due to its geological location. As a result, we have a student profile from all around Turkey. Additionally, we have a considerable number of students from broken families. Parents of our students work in shifts, which unfortunately leads to their inability to spend time with their children or causes communication problems due to their work schedules. This situation significantly affects the students' success in school. I can say that parents who are involved with their children in every aspect tend to have more successful children both in behavior and achievement compared to parents who are less involved.'* (P3,1)

*'In terms of student achievement, factors such as the student's level of intelligence, readiness, learning gaps in lower grades, interest, and attitude towards the lesson are quite important. Additionally, the psychological distress and illnesses that a child experiences also play a significant role in their success.'* (P4,2)

*'I believe that the environment plays a crucial role in a student's success. Making the wrong choice of friends, when not recognized, significantly affects a student's success.'* (P5,4)

*'Teachers' negative attitudes and behaviors towards students significantly discourage students from lessons and school, thereby impacting their success to a considerable extent. Furthermore, the appointment of substitute teachers or their desire to leave mid-term for various reasons causes constant teacher turnover, which makes it challenging for students to adapt to new teachers and significantly affects their success.'* (P12,5)

#### 4. Participants' views on support programs offered to address differences in student achievement

The findings related to participants' views on support programs offered to address differences in student achievement are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.**

*The support programs offered in schools*

Themes	Codes	Participants
Remedial and Enrichment Courses (DYK, İYEP) and courses for foreign national students	Courses	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15
Mock exams conducted to identify students' learning gaps	Mock Exams	P2, P3, P9, P12, P15
Supportive education programs for students with learning difficulties	Supportive Education	P3, P6, P7, P11, P14
Development of study plans under the guidance of school counselors	Study Program	P14, P12
Homework assignments and follow-up	Assignment	P8, P16
Support program designed specifically for 8th-grade students	Coaching System	P4

When evaluating the opinions regarding the support programs offered by the participants to address the differences in student achievements, as presented in Table 5; they expressed their views on themes as 'remedial and enrichment courses (DYK, İYEP) and courses for foreign national students', 'mock exams conducted to identify students' learning gaps', 'supportive education programs for students with learning difficulties', 'development of study plans under the guidance of school counselors', 'homework assignments and follow-up' and 'support program designed specifically for 8th-grade students'. The participants' views on the themes are given below:

*'In order to support students' achievements and eliminate achievement disparities, we inform both students and parents about the opening of remedial and enrichment courses in our school, and take the necessary measures to ensure active participation of students in these courses. The courses offered are particularly significant for students with limited financial means who cannot receive any additional support, aiming to eliminate inequality of opportunity.'* (P2,1)

*'We provide support education services for students who struggle with learning difficulties, specifically targeting subjects they find challenging.'* (P7,3)

*'In order to ensure lasting learning, we emphasize the importance of assignments and their follow-up. We assign tasks to students via Eba (Education Informatics Network) to promote their engagement.'* (P8,5)

*'For 8th grade students, we establish a coaching system to closely monitor their study processes through collaboration between parents, the school, and students.'* (P4,6)

**5. Participants Views on the Teaching Materials and Resources They Use to Address Differences in Student Achievement**

The findings related to participants' views on the teaching materials and resources they use to address differences in student achievement are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.**

*The teaching materials used*

Themes	Codes	Participants
Use of Source Books and Materials	Use of Source Books and Materials	P2,P4,P6,P7,P8,P9,P11,P12,P13,P14,P16
Using Smart Boards	Using Smart Boards	P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6,P8,P11
Fun Learning Activities	Fun Learning Activities	P2,P10,P11
Seminars and Excursions	Seminars and Excursions	P7,P10

When evaluating the teachers' views on the instructional materials and resources used to address differences in student achievement as presented in Table 6; they expressed their opinions on themes as 'use of source books and materials', 'using smart boards', 'fun learning activities' and 'seminars and excursions'.

*'By distributing reference books to students in the 2022-2023 Academic Year, the Ministry of National Education has eliminated the disadvantage of students facing reference book shortages due to their families' financial constraints.'* (P7,1)

*'The interactive whiteboards available in our schools allow us to make our lessons more visual and auditory, thus making it easier for students to learn and ensuring the permanence of their learning. Additionally, they contribute to effective time management.'* (P3,2) '

*'Engaging activities such as preparing lesson materials together with students, creating bulletin boards, or developing our own games not only make learning enjoyable for students but also result in more lasting learning since they are at the center of their own learning.'* (P2,3)

*'By organizing seminars and excursions for students, we continuously maintain their motivation and support their learning motivation.'* (P7,4)

**Discussion and conclusion**

In this section, conclusions were discussed in the light of the findings obtained from the research and suggestions were put forward in line with the findings. The views of the teachers participating in the research were discussed in terms of factors affecting equal opportunities in education, such as the measures taken for students' access to education, the employed teaching strategies, the reasons behind differences in student achievements, support programs offered to address these differences, and the instructional materials and resources used in schools.

According to the research findings, it can be observed that equal opportunity in education is not being achieved in Turkey and that this inequality is increasing. Similar results were found in the study conducted by Özsoy (2016). Özsoy states that equal opportunity in education is not being realized in Turkey and that differentiation is progressively increasing.

Equal opportunity in education has become a significant agenda item in many countries in recent years. Equal opportunity means that every student should have access to the same educational opportunities without being disadvantaged due to personal characteristics or social circumstances. To achieve this

goal, many countries have developed various policies and programs. In this article, a compilation of studies related to equal opportunity in education will be presented. Early childhood education: Early childhood education is crucial for enhancing children's development and learning capacities. Therefore, many countries have developed policies, especially for children from disadvantaged families, to provide early childhood education. Teacher Training Programs: Having qualified teachers is a critical factor for equal opportunity in education. Hence, many countries have developed programs to improve teacher education.

According to the findings of the study conducted by Tekkaya & Akgündüz (2018), it is emphasized that equal opportunities should be provided to students in order to achieve equal opportunity in education, and teaching methods and curriculum should be diversified taking into account students' differences. Similar results are also found in the findings of this research.

**Reducing Class Size:** Class size is a significant factor affecting students' learning and development. Reducing class size allows for more personalized attention to students and provides a more conducive learning environment. **Digital Educational Tools:** Digital educational tools enrich students' learning experiences and assist teachers in more efficient teaching. As a result, many countries have developed policies to promote the use of digital educational tools. **Scholarship Programs:** Scholarship programs aid disadvantaged students in financing their education. Therefore, many countries have developed scholarship programs to provide educational opportunities for disadvantaged students such as:

**Increasing Access and Participation in Education:** To achieve equal opportunity in education, it is essential to enhance students' access to and participation in education. For this purpose, many countries have developed policies such as extending access to early childhood education and increasing the compulsory education period in primary schools. Moreover, facilitating school transportation is also a factor that enhances students' participation in education.

**Assessment and Monitoring System:** To ensure equal opportunity in education, regular monitoring and assessment of students' learning processes are crucial. Therefore, many countries have developed assessment and monitoring systems to track students' achievements and development.

**Special Education Programs:** Some students have unique learning and developmental needs. Special education programs are designed to address these needs. These programs aim to eliminate learning barriers for students and provide them with tailored educational opportunities.

**Social Awareness:** Increasing societal awareness about equal opportunity in education is also essential. Raising awareness within society about equal opportunity in education helps in the more effective implementation of policies and achieving better outcomes.

The finding in the research that equal opportunity was a crucial element and that equal opportunity could be reduced when appropriate methods and materials were provided is consistent with similar studies done so far. The achievement of equal opportunity in education is one of the fundamental requirements of a just society, and the absence of equal opportunity poses a problem in terms of social justice. (Şişman, 2019) In order to achieve equal opportunity in education, teachers need to understand students' differences and adapt their teaching methods and materials accordingly. (Ercan, 2017)

In Turkey, in order to achieve equal opportunity in education, it is emphasized that policies should be developed to reduce regional and socio-economic disparities, and teaching materials and resources should be distributed fairly to provide equal opportunities to students. (Öztürk, 2019) The finding of this study regarding Equal Opportunity in Education were parallel with Öztürk's study conducted in 2019.

In conclusion, equal opportunity in education has become a prominent topic on the agenda of many countries. Various initiatives are being undertaken in areas ranging from early childhood education to teacher training programs, reducing class sizes, and implementing scholarship programs. The goal of these efforts is to ensure that every student has access to equal educational opportunities without being

dsadvantaged due to personal characteristics or social circumstances.

### **Recommendations**

Various recommendations are put forward to ensure equal opportunities in education. However, it is important to emphasize that the effective implementation of these recommendations relies on political will and the proper allocation of resources. recommendations

In line with the findings, following suggestions were put forward:

Researchers should conduct further research on the topic of equal opportunities to identify existing gaps in this field. Additionally, the outcomes of these studies should be taken into consideration in the formulation and implementation of education policies.

Practitioners should understand students' differences and adapt teaching methods and materials accordingly. Furthermore, in order to provide equal opportunities to students, the distribution of curriculum and resources should be fair.

Policymakers should develop policies to ensure equal opportunities and oversee their implementation. These policies should be designed to reduce regional and socio-economic disparities.

All segments of society should collaborate to achieve equal opportunities in education. Students, teachers, parents, school administrators, non-governmental organizations, and policymakers should establish a shared vision for equal opportunities and work together to implement this vision.

Achieving equal opportunities in education requires time, resources, and patience. Therefore, long-term perspectives should be taken into account, and sustainable policies and practices should be developed.

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**Ethical approval**

The study titled "**A Case Study of Equal Opportunity in Education**" adhered to the rules of scientific, ethical, and citation standards during its writing process; the authors of this study affirmed that no falsification was done on the collected data. "Journal Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research [JAQMER]" and the Editor hold no responsibility for any ethical violations that may arise, and all accountability rests with the authors. Furthermore, the study has not been submitted for evaluation to any other academic publishing platform.

**Ethics committee approval**

Ethics Committee Approval of this research was obtained from Akdeniz University Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the meeting of 13 decision numbered 312 on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023.