Evaluation of Boarding Secondary Schools in terms of Education Equity[*]

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Abstract: The present study aimed to evaluate educational equality in regional boarding secondary schools (YBO) in Turkey opened to meet the educational needs of children who live in rural areas and are in the age of compulsory education. The research was qualitative using the in-depth interview technique and was carried out with the participation of 39 teachers working in BSSs in Ankara, Bingöl and Bartın provinces. The data collected was analyzed with the content analysis technique. In the analysis, according to teachers working in these schools, the education given in YBOs was of sufficient quality and YBOs provide disadvantaged children with access to quality education. However, the children studying in these schools experienced family deprivation, which reflected negatively on their academic success. In Turkey, YBOs provide educational equity in terms of access to education for children living in rural areas, but children have some problems stemming from staying away from family. Additionally, since schools do not meet certain standards, the problem of inequality continues. Based on the results of the research, it is recommended that the differences in quality between boarding schools should be eliminated, teacher turnover rates in these schools should be reduced and permanent teachers should be employed. Also, boarding secondary schools should not be an obligation but an option for children considering that children long for a family which in the absence can have negative effects on academic success.

Keywords: Equity in education, boarding schools, boarding secondary schools, Ministry of National Education

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Introduction

How to provide mandatory formal education for the children residing in rural locations where schools are either not open or have limited number of attending students has been one of the prominent issues facing the education system in Turkey. The attempts to keep the schools in the rural areas open and appoint teachers to work in these schools have not reached the desired level. Therefore, the opening of boarding schools has widely been promoted since the early years of the Turkish Republic to eliminate the problem of limited access to education.

Following the extension of compulsory schooling from five to eight years in 1997, education was divided into three groups: transported, regular and boarding. During this period, boarding schools gained more importance and the authorities tried making such schools more prevalent by increasing their numbers (Gunduz, 2006). To overcome the issue of limited access to education in rural areas, the system of transported education was also implemented in addition to the opening of boarding schools (Ari, 2002). It could be said that upon the closure of the regional primary boarding schools in 2012, the tendency was to give more importance to transported education rather than boarding education.

After the extension of the age of compulsory education to eight years in 1997 and twelve years in 2012, a significant increase in the rate of schooling was recorded. According to Ministry of National Education (MoNE) statistics, schooling rate in 1997-1998 for primary and secondary schools was 86% and 74% respectively (MoNE, 2006), from 2020 onwards the rate of schooling for primary, secondary and high schools rose to 93.5%, 96% and 85% respectively (MoNE, 2020). Although significant progress has been made in a quantitative sense on the issue of limited access to education, there are claims in criticisms and debates that not enough improvement has been made in a qualitative sense and the education system is still not able to offer equal educational opportunities to all parts of society (World Bank, 2013, Educational Reform Initiative [ERG], 2017, Ferreira & Gignoux, 2010; The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2017, Tedmem, 2016). To be more specific, the factors leading to educational inequality in Turkey are highlighted by many sources as follows (World Bank, 2013; ERG, 2017; Ferreira & Gignoux, 2010; Karakutuk, 2016; Polat, 2009, 2014; Yolcu & Polat, 2015, Tabak, 2019): Lower access to education among females compared to males, large discrepancies among regions in terms of educational quality, high-dropout rates and low attendance, large discrepancies between the sparsely populated and densely populated residential areas in terms of educational quality, inequalities within socioeconomic groups such as the lower, middle, and upper social classes in the society and particularly against the lower class, large discrepancies between rural and urban areas in terms of access to education and the quality of education, differences in teacher quality. Many attempts have been made towards resolving these issues in the Turkish educational system. The implementation of boarding schools has started in an attempt to provide quality education for the students having limited access to education (MoNE, 2003). However,

because boarding schools face various issues (Cetinkaya & Gelisli, 2013; Almis, 2014), research into Regional Boarding Secondary Schools is considered worthwhile. The present study revolves around boarding schools established to provide access to quality education for children who do not have the possibility of attending school due to such reasons as parental loss, financial issues, or lack of a school in their area of residence. Within this scope, the present study seeks to investigate the educational opportunities offered in boarding schools in terms of educational equity.

Educational Equity

Equity is a fundamental principle in democracy emphasizing equal opportunities and rights for every member of a society with no discrimination against any particular group and involves the elimination of all forms of existing discrimination (Gozler, 2000). Equity is innately related to the notion of justice as well. In this sense, equity should not only be considered as equal distribution or share of resources among the individuals and groups in a society. Equity also involves how resources are distributed among the individuals and groups as well as the realities of this distribution. (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 2006). Various types of equity exist in the literature but Turner's (1986) four types of equity is a widely recognized list. According to this list, equity is categorized into (1) ontological equity, (2) equity of opportunities, (3) equity of conditions, and (4) equity of outcomes. Ontological equity relies on theological and ethical schools of thought and it refers to the fundamental equity of persons as human beings before God. However, this type of equity is not considered effective enough in resolving the equity issues of modern communities which are more advanced and sophisticated. This inadequacy led to the second type of equity. The concept of meritocracy is used to define equity of opportunities and the importance of earned qualities like achievement is emphasized more for human success rather than attributed qualities such as gender and wealth. However, those who do not have equal opportunities or whose conditions are different compared to others at the beginning of their competition for success will also be disadvantaged in their competition for opportunities. In light of this, the third type of equity emerged. Equity of opportunity presupposes equity of conditions in which all the competitors in a given situation face the same circumstances. All the competitors need to start at the same point and compete with relatively minimum barriers. Equity of outcomes, as the last type of equity, involves the political dimension as well. This type of equity ensures the equity of outcomes through law enforcement and political tools regardless of the starting point and innate abilities of human beings. This type of equity postulates the need for social programs offering positive discrimination in favor of disadvantaged or underprivileged members of the community. Turner (1986) indicates that western democracy prioritizes equity of opportunities and he argues that equity of opportunities is not feasible with equity of conditions and it would not be sufficient to achieve social equity. Libertarian views on education developed by Friedman (1995) and Hayek (2011) play a very crucial role in prioritizing equity of opportunities in the west. The belief in absolute sovereignty lies at the heart of Libertarian values. The minimum amount of government involvement leads to the maximum amount of freedom, which results in diversity,

peace, and prosperity since no one is made to reconcile his or her beliefs for the sake of others. In the liberal economy model, it is believed that the government must have a limited role in the provision of educational service mainly because it is assumed that government intervention would restrict free education and the marketing of education. Therefore, education must be left to a free market, in which it can obtain higher quality, accountability, efficiency, and diversity of choice. Since the government is not responsible for the education of youth, parents determine when and how they would educate their children including homeschooling or technology-based education. Upon ensuring the equity of opportunities, conditions must be determined by market competition, not the government (Friedman, 1955, 1997). However, such an attitude is not without its limitations.

Within this conceptual framework, taking education, considered as a fundamental human and citizen right, only in terms of equity of opportunity would be insufficient for our study because the present study does not only focus on who studies in Regional Boarding Secondary Schools and how students for such schools are selected but also on the quality of education and conditions. Therefore, this study necessitates a point of view encompassing both equity of opportunities and equity of conditions. Field, Kuczera and Pont's (2007) conceptualization of educational equity lay the foundation needed in this sense. In the following section, the conceptualization of educational equity by Field et al., (2007) is defined after education equity is defined in general.

Educational equity is defined as providing educational services to all members of the society regardless of their gender, political beliefs, ethnic origin, native language, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic status in such a way that those who have limited access to education benefit the most (Karakutuk, 2016). In the conceptualization of educational equity, providing everyone with the right to hold the key positions or institutions in the society without favoring anyone and following the universal criteria while doing this (particularly achievement and ability) is highly emphasized (Tural, 2002). Three concepts are related to educational equity. These are equality of opportunity, equality of conditions, and equalizing. While equity of opportunity refers to the provision of the right to have education for everyone, equity of conditions involves supplying everyone with equal conditions for education. The concept of equalizing, on the other hand, means eliminating the inequalities in education (Altunya, 2003). What needs to be highlighted at this point is that educational equity is not only about equality of opportunity but also about the quality of education offered. In the relevant literature and regulations in Turkey, equality of opportunity is not used on its own but along with equality of conditions. Field et al., (2007) defines equity in education as a concept in terms of opportunity and circumstances as two different dimensions. It is also seen that organizations such as OECD (2017) carry out analysis based on Field et al., (2007) conceptualization.

Field et al., (2007) define equity in education with two dimensions are considered as closely intertwined. The first dimension is fairness which implies ensuring that personal and social circumstances such as gender, socio-economic status, or ethnic origin should not be an obstacle to attaining educational potential. The second is dimension

is inclusion which means ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all. Inclusion involves the provision of minimum abilities and capabilities necessitated by the modern society for all members of the community independent of personal and social circumstances (Fiel et al., 2007; Polat, 2009). Fairness and inclusion are the most powerful tools available to make education more equitable. Based on this conceptual framework, the present study evaluates regional boarding schools (YBO) in terms of equity in education by looking into the dimensions of fairness and inclusion.

The long-term social and financial costs of failure in ensuring educational equity are high. The most important costs are low success rate, high dropout rate, juvenile delinquency, and poor adaptation of children to society. (Field et al., 2007). Receiving quality education, on the other hand, brings important benefits to an individual. Improving the educational attainment of the individuals can pay off in the long run at both social and personal levels with shorter periods of unemployment, higher income levels, quicker promotion, greater participation in social and cultural activities, and the resulting increase in tax revenues (Psacharopoulos, 2009; Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 2006). Therefore, equity in education is crucial for both individuals and society as it means providing quality education that helps everyone to succeed.

Equity in education is a fundamental principle of the Turkish Republic and the Turkish Educational System. Article 42 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey ensures the right to education. National Education Principal Law guarantees "the right to education (Article 7)" and "equality of opportunities and conditions (Article 8). Article 7 highlights that every Turkish citizen has the right to education and every citizen can benefit from the educational institutions after primary school according to their interest and abilities. Article 8 which is directly about equality of opportunities and conditions indicates that equal opportunities for both male and female members of the society, financial assistance such as free boarding schools, scholarships, and loans are to be given in an attempt to help those who are financially deprived reach the highest level of education. Also, special measures are to be taken to help those in need of special education and protection. In addition to Turkish national laws, there are also several international contracts and agreements binding the educational practices in the country regarding equality of opportunities and conditions. Turkey has recognized several agreements such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Declaration of the Rights of Children, the conventions on the Rights of Children, and the Paris Agreement aiming at ensuring equal and quality education in light of children's rights (Gulcan, 2019). Therefore, equity in education is legally preserved through both national and international laws. The following section sheds light on YBOs as the present study deals with these schools in terms of equity in education.

Regional Boarding Secondary Schools (YBO)

YBOs are schools with boarding opportunities established to provide primary education for children of poor families in villages and smaller settlement units of Turkey where the population is low and dispersed and there is no school facility available. In these schools, all the needs of the students including school uniforms, bags, books, notebooks, and pocket money are provided by MoNE (MoNE, 2003; Ozdemir, 2009). Thousands of primary schools where multigrade schooling is practiced with combined classrooms have been closed down as the number of students attending these schools dropped significantly with the declining population as a result of immigration. Building schools and lodgements in every village, provision of materials, and teacher appointment policies to these schools are considered to be more costly than the Regional Boarding Secondary Schools. With boarding schools, fewer facilities and classrooms are built and fewer teachers are needed. In this sense, one of the primary reasons behind the prevalence of boarding schools is lower costs; however, this practice is also criticized (Almis, 2014). The attempts to lower the costs of education without leading to any kind of inequality in education have constituted a great challenge. The number of students attending YBOs is presented in Table 1. Boarding school students are given according to grade level but only the total number is given for day students attending.

Table 1.

Number of students in Regional Boarding Secondary Schools

Student numbers	Male	Female	Total
Grade 5	7.174	6.336	13.510
Grade 6	5.907	5.063	10.970
Grade 7	6.401	5.382	11.783
Grade 8	7.309	5.942	13.251
Total number of boarding school students	26.791	22.723	49.514
Day students	19.983	21.241	46.624
General total	46.774	43.964	96.138

Source: MoNE, 2018a

The figures in Table 1, based on 2018 data, show that the total number of students attending YBOs is 96.138, and 49.514 of them are boarding school students. In terms of gender, the figures demonstrate that male students outnumber female students. While the number of male students in boarding schools is 26.791, the number of female students attending is 22.723. This is the opposite of those attending boarding schools as a day student. The number of female day students who attend the boarding schools (21.242) is more than the number of male day students (19.983) attending these boarding schools. Looking at the total number of students in YBOs, the number of female students (43.964) is lower than male students (46.774). The fact that the number of female boarding school students is lower than male boarding school students can be attributed to the reluctance of parents to send their daughters to boarding schools. The number of YBOs by region is given in Table 2.

Table 2.

Number of YBOs by Region

Region	Number of YBOs
Mediterranean Coast	33
Eastern Anatolia	132
Aegean	15
Southeastern Anatolia	30
Central Anatolia	32
Black Sea Coast	68
Total	325

Source: MNE, 2018a

The figures in Table 2 demonstrate that YBOs are more prevalent in Eastern Anatolia (132 YBOs). Seven provinces with the highest number of YBOs are located in Eastern Anatolia (20 in Bitlis, 19 in Muş, 18 in Erzurum, 14 in Ağrı and Van). The region with the second-highest number of YBOs (68) is the Black Sea. A common feature of the first two regions with the highest number of YBOs is that the number of provinces with dispersed and small settlement patterns in both regions is quite high. Moving towards the western part of Turkey, the number of YBOs is observed to decline. The region with the least number of YBOs (14) is the Aegean region. In Turkey, 66 out of 81 provinces have YBOs. There are no YBOs in the remaining 15 provinces (Bilecik, Bolu, Burdur, Kırşehir, Kocaeli, Kütahya, Muğla, Nevşehir, Şanlıurfa, Tekirdağ, Uşak, Yozgat, Zonguldak).

The implementation of YBOs has been modified with the amendments made in 2012, taking secondary school institutions into compulsory education process, with the amendments adopted on March 30th, 2012 in 6287 Primary Education Law upon being published in the Official Gazette dated on April 11th, 2012 (issue number 28261). Under the circular issued by the Ministry on May 5th, 2012 only 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders were allowed to use the boarding opportunities in the regional primary boarding schools. It was announced that the necessary measures would be taken to help primary school pupils continue their education in village schools or through transported education in both regular and regional primary boarding schools as a day student (MoNE, 2012). This was put into practice in the 2012-2013 school year and only 5th, 6th, and 7th graders were admitted into Regional Boarding Secondary Schools. Those who had already registered for the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade levels were moved to transported education (Cetinkaya & Gelisli, 2013, p. 5). This change had an impact on the number of schools and students. For example, it can be understood from MoNE Directorate-General for Basic Education data that the number of YBOs was 597 in the 2007-2008 school year and the number of students attending these schools was 165.468. On the other hand, in the 2017-2018 school year, the number of YBOs dropped to 313 and the number of students attending such schools declined to 51.439 (MoNE, 2018a). Therefore, the change in the status of boarding primary schools into regular schools led to an important decline in the number of students.

Looking at the distribution of YBOs across Turkey, we can see that these schools enable students coming from residential areas with no school facilities and rural areas to continue their education while providing shelter. Therefore, it would be fair to say that these schools play a very important role in ensuring equality in opportunities and circumstances in the Turkish Educational System. To serve this purpose, however, the conditions offered to the students and the education and teaching taking place in YBOs need to be of good quality. YBOs are given a lot of importance, especially in Eastern Anatolia, Black Sea, and Southeastern Anatolia regions. It has been observed that MoNE seeks to ensure equity in education by providing an orderly education and teaching atmosphere through YBOs for the school-age children living in remote rural areas.

Considering the mission and locations of YBOs, it can be said that the aim is to provide access to education for children of compulsory school age. On the other hand, it is also highlighted that YBOs face several issues most of which are related to equity in education.

Issues Facing Regional Boarding Secondary Schools

There is a great deal of research available in the literature on the existing conditions in YBOs and problems encountered in these schools. A few of these studies dwell on general or managerial issues existing in YBOs (Aytekin, 2009; Cetinkaya & Gelisli, 2013; Dikmen, 1990; Gulbeyaz, 2006; Koroglu, 2009; Ozdemir, 2009; Simsek, 2010, Ulusoy, 2006). There are also other studies investigating the psycho-social state and life satisfaction level of students in YBOs (Cilgin, 2007; Gokyer, 2011; Nigar, 2014, Simsek, 2010; Toksoy, 2009; Yavas Karatas, 2006; Yilmaz, 2012). Since the present study focuses on YBOs in terms of equity in education, rather than the findings of the previous studies on administrative issues such as running lodgings in YBOs, the findings on the issues facing YBOs related to the students and educational processes are prioritized.

The previous studies on YBOs revealed that the issues that YBOs face are not related to the education and teaching process but to the fact that these schools are boarding schools. Cetinkaya and Gelisli (2013) emphasize that there are advantages and disadvantages unique to YBOs. YBOs are both a school and a home to children (Başarır, 2009; Cetinkaya & Gelisli, 2013). YBOs include provisions for living, sleeping, eating, studying, and hanging out. Students in these schools spend 24 hours within the school facility. The lives of students carry the risk of being a life of routines, sameness, and monotony as the date and place of all the activities are scheduled and every day is just like the day before (Almis, 2014). On the other hand, the relatively larger amount of time spent in the school and the intensity of discipline and inspection increase the time that students in YBOs can allocate for their studies, which is argued to have a positive influence over their academic studies (Basarir, 2009, Yagmur, 2014). Various studies; however, revealed that boarding school students suffer from severe psychosomatic disorders, intense homesickness, weakening sibling

relationships, worsening bonds with parents, not being wanted by parents, and emotional abandonment leading to physical and mental problems as well as academic problems (Almis, 2014; Basarir, 2009; Eraslan, 2006; Nigar, 2014). For some children, YBOs seem to be the only option to be able to continue their education and even life. For some others, YBOs act like an alternative form of education enriching their lives but for a group of children, YBOs are places where they are sent away to reside in lonely abandonment or exile. In some studies, it is indicated that some low-income families with many children send their offspring(s) to YBOs so that they can meet their essential needs-food and shelter (Basarir, 2009; Cetinkaya & Gelisli, 2013).

It has been revealed in some studies that being away from family and home atmosphere cause students studying at YBOs to experience such issues as poor academic performance, aggression and psychological withdrawal (Ari, 2002; Halici, 2005; MoNE, 2011; Yagmur, 2014). Nigar (2014) mentions that boarding school students' subjective well-being and their level of meeting their basic psychological needs are lower than non-boarding school students.

Savci (2014) indicates that the fact that children receive education away from parental love leads to psychological issues and has negative effects on children's education. Besides, the appointment of inexperienced, novice, or intern teachers who are not familiar with the needs of the students in boarding schools is one of the important issues YBOs face (Almis, 2014). According to Russell, boarding school students are more likely to have limited knowledge about life and real-life issues and also they tend to be emotionally detached from their parents. To be devoid of parental love may lead children to develop some negative personality qualities. Russell (2006) thinks the negative effects of boarding schools seem to be so severe that they actually outweigh the benefits of such schools. Almis (2014) likens the difference between boarding and regular schools to the difference between fish living in a lake and fish living in an aquarium in terms of life and learning experiences. Boarding school students spending time in an artificial environment isolated from society are more likely to have limited life experiences compared to those staying home. In addition to deprivation from their parents and parental love, boarding school students also have limited opportunities to interact with people of various age groups, gender, and occupations (Almis, 2014). On the other hand, boarding schools also bring benefits to children. Children participating in activities organized in and outside the school including school and field trips have the opportunity to develop in educational, artistic, and sportive ways. There are studies available in the literature mentioning that these activities organized in the boarding schools help children to get to know themselves and have better abilities to express their ideas and feelings (Beklevic, 2004). It has also been indicated that children attending boarding schools are more likely to develop the ability to stand on their two feet, communicate, live together with others and obey rules (Toksoy, 2009).

Inal and Sadik (2014) highlight that YBOs create issues for teachers as well leading to low teacher satisfaction. It has been identified that teachers working in regional primary boarding schools (YBOs) are not satisfied at work due to the students' low level of readiness and academic success, inadequate cooperation with parents, and

additional responsibilities like day and night shifts (Gulbeyaz, 2006; Gunduz, 2006; Inal & Sadik, 2014). Not having enough lodging services and having to live in a nearby district or province and commute to the place where YBOs are located and reluctantly working day and night shifts to receive additional payments to improve their low salary make the teachers' job more difficult (Almis, 2014). An inadequate number of tutors and counselors is another issue in YIBOs. Assuming the responsibilities of a tutor and counselor lowers their efficiency in their courses (Ak, 2004). A study conducted by Koroglu (2009) with the participation of principals and teachers in YIBOs revealed that these schools do not have the software necessary to meet the managerial needs unique to their context; health centers do not have the necessary equipment and medical devices; schools experience power cuts and water cuts; schools do not have enough sports facilities and sports equipment. There is also a need for support personnel such as nurses and security guards, lodgement services to meet the accommodation needs of the personnel, and additional payments to the teachers for their duties in these schools which are considered insufficient.

Parents' not interacting sufficiently with the school and not showing enough interest in it is a crucial problem YBOs face. A lot of research related to YBOs have demonstrated that parents are not interested in the school and schools do not receive parental cooperation and support at an adequate level (Celenk, 2003; Inal & Sadik, 2014; MoNE, 2011; Yilmaz, 2012). However, another factor, that leads us to think parental indifference towards school is not the only reason behind this problem, was also pinpointed. YBOs are located in far-off destinations and this seems to constitute a barrier between parents, students, and schools (Ak, 2004). Therefore, it would not be right to blame parents' lack of interest for poor interaction between schools and parents. Parents often have limited transportation opportunities, causing communication problems between school and parents. Considering the influence of parents over children's academic success, receiving education away from parents is a major problem on its own and poor communication between schools and parents takes the issue to a more serious level.

There are studies available showing that YBOs still do not have the necessary physical conditions and they do not share a common set of standards. These studies also revealed that most YBOs lack facilities like sports hall, hobby workshops, and multi-purpose halls preventing YBOs from providing enough opportunities for children to be involved in educational and social activities (Acar, 2008; Cılgın, 2007; Gokyer, 2011; Inal & Sadik, 2014; Ozdemir, 2009, Yavas Karatas, 2006). It is emphasized that schools need to be built with good physical and sanitary conditions and functionality; however, beyond these essential conditions, the schools have to be places that children find attractive (Yolcu, 2010).

The institutional information and research given so far aim to accentuate the role of YBOs in the educational system and the issues they face in various aspects. However, there is no study in the literature investigating YBOs solely in terms of equity in education. It is very important to examine the characteristics of children attending YBOs, the reasons pushing these children to study at YBOs, and the benefits and

drawbacks of studying at such schools for the children compared to those attending regular schools. In other words, the characteristics of students attending YBOs are examined with regards to the justice dimension, the quality of education, and conditions of accommodation offered by YBOs. YBOs are also examined according to the inclusion dimension of equity in education. One of the most important functions of YBOs is to provide educational service to the underprivileged groups of society who have limited access to education, which makes it essential to investigate these schools in terms of equity in education. Therefore, the extent to which YBOs provide access to underprivileged groups and the quality level of the education given has become an important research subject. The present study aims to evaluate YBOs in terms of equity in education based on the views of teachers working in such schools. Within this scope, the study aims to answer the research questions below:

1. How do the teachers working in YBOs define the students attending these schools in relation to the dimension of equity in education?

2. On the concept of inclusion as another dimension of equity in education, how are the existing conditions of YBOs evaluated by the teachers working in such schools with regards to the following? :

   a. The quality of education-instruction offered,
   b. Lodging and school facilities and educational equipment,
   c. The fact that students are boarding students,
   d. Extra-curricular activities offered to the students,
   e. School-parent interaction.

Method

Research Design

The method used in the present study is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. The purpose of the phenomenological analysis is to identify and illuminate the nature of specific phenomena through the way they are perceived by the actors in a situation (Patton, 2014). When the study aims to reveal the experiences of a community and the feelings they attach to these experiences, the most plausible approach seems to be the phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2015). The phenomenon illuminated in this study is the facilities offered to children by boarding schools in terms of equity in education. In other words, the study evaluates the education and accommodation facilities that YBOs provide students with in terms of equity in education by relying on the observations and views of the teachers working in these schools. The phenomenological approach seeks to reveal the nature of subjective experiences through a disciplined analysis (Patton, 2014). Therefore, this study aims to reveal the basic characteristics of YBOs in relation to equity in education by relying on teachers' subjective evaluations.

Participants

Qualitative studies aim to reach participants who can provide you with comprehensive data and information related to the topic researched. Therefore, the importance of using purposive sampling methods is emphasized (Creswell, 2015). To determine the participants for the present study, maximum variation is used as one of the purposive sampling methods. Yildirim and Simsek (2008) indicate that with maximum variation technique, it is possible to work on a relatively smaller sample; however, the participants included in the study have to optimally reflect the diversity of the population related to the research question of the study. With the sample selected in this way, it is possible to obtain richer findings compared to the other sampling methods (Neuman, 2007). With maximum variation, the purpose of sampling is not to reach generalizable results like in a quantitative research method but to reveal common or shared phenomena by dealing with the research problem based on multiple perspectives (Baltaci, 2018). In this study, the use of the maximum variation technique to reflect the diversity of teachers working in YBOs helped to ensure that the research problem is not restricted to the perspective of a certain teacher or group of teachers or a district.

In line with the maximum variation technique, while selecting the teachers working YBOs, deliberate efforts were made to ensure that participants are from various schools, genders, and years of services. While identifying which provinces to focus on, it was made sure that the provinces are from various regions and development levels. Ankara is selected as it is a metropolitan, Bingöl is chosen as it is located in Eastern Anatolia and YBOs are prevalent there and Bartın is also included because it is in the Black Sea region and YBOs are widespread there as well. To this end, participants were comprised of 39 teachers (13 female and 26 male) working in Ankara, Bartın, and Bingöl provinces during the years 2016-2017. The characteristics of participants in this study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Personal Information About Teachers Participating in the Study

Personal Characteristics	Characteristics	F	%
Gender	Female	16	41
	Male	23	59
	Total	39	100
Years of service	1-5 years	2	5
	6-10 years	14	36
	11-15 years	21	54
	16-20 years	1	2,5
	21 years and above	1	2,5
	Total	39	100

As seen in Table 3, most teachers participating in the study have been in service from 6-10 years to 11-15 years. It can also be seen that male participants outweigh female

participants, which resulted from the fact that participation in the study was voluntary. Robinson (2014) indicates that it is very common to observe in research having the principle of voluntary participation that participants who are directly affected by the phenomenon in question or who are interested in it naturally show a lot of interest in the research. While it is mentioned that participant characteristics emerging from the principle of voluntary participation might create limitations regarding the generalizability of research findings, voluntary participation is one of the fundamental requirements of research ethics for any interview done to gather data (Robinson, 2014). Each participant's gender and years of service are presented in Table 10 by using pseudonyms.

Data Collection Tool

The investigation of YBOs in terms of equity in education was done through the views shared by the teachers working in these schools. Therefore, an in-depth interview method was opted for to collect the data needed for the research. Basically, this data collection method seeks to gather detailed information beyond initial and surface-level answers cleared from prejudices and errors like poor listening skills in the day-to-day communication and interaction process. This method is not as easy as it looks since it requires engagement, sensitivity, understanding among individuals, being mentally aware, foresight, and discipline (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). In-depth interviews are one of the widely used data collection methods to explain the experiences of participants concerning a phenomenon in question (Creswell, 2015). This method aims to gather in-depth data regarding the participants' experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge through the use of open-ended questions. The data obtained in this way facilitates the use of direct quotations optimally reflecting the context in which interpretations can be made (Patton, 2014). To this end, a semi-structured interview form was developed by the researcher to evaluate YBOs in terms of equity in education.

Prior to the development of the semi-structured interview form, a literature review was done. Based on the literature review, a template question form was prepared. To check scope validity, the template question form was presented to a panel of three specialists. Besides, the questions in the template form were also proofread by a Turkish language specialist in terms of grammar and appropriacy of expressions. In the light of the feedback given, various changes such as reordering, reduction, and merging of some questions were made on the interview form. On a final note, practice interviews were done with two teachers working in a boarding school in Ankara to check the clarity and appropriacy of the questions. At the end of this process, the interview form reached its final version. In the first section of the data collection tool, questions are related to the gender and years of services and in the second section of the data, the questions aim at identifying the extent to which YBOs can meet the requirements of educational equity in terms of opportunities and conditions. The two questions in the semi-structured interview form used in the research are given below:

> What do you think about the educational equity provided by Regional Boarding Secondary Schools for their students compared to their peers attending other types of schools?

What are your observations regarding the effect of studying as a boarding school student on student's academic success in YBOs in comparison with other types of schools?

Data Collection

Upon being granted permission by MoNE to gather data, interviews were done with the participants during March-June in 2017. Fettleman (1989, cite in Yildirim, 1999) emphasize the importance of perceiving the research subject within its natural contexts and the necessity of the realities of such contexts to lay the foundations for the research findings.

For this reason, schools were visited by the researchers in person. School principals were approached to arrange a convenient day for the interviews and teachers were notified about the subject and date of the research in advance. On the date and time of the interview, researchers went to the school and recruited the teachers who volunteered to participate in the study. Nearly all the teachers volunteered for the research; however, the participants to be interviewed were recruited based on gender, experience, years of service in boarding schools, and branch. In addition, some teachers who expressed their interest in the research subject were also interviewed. Very few teachers refused to participate in the research due to such reasons as course preparation, being hectic, or having to leave the school right after the semester is over. Interviews were conducted face to face in places like classrooms or teacher rooms and special attention was given not to disrupt the teaching and learning process. It was ensured that interview rooms were silent and a third person was not there. The classrooms used for the interviews were those that had no class at the time of the interview. Teacher rooms were also arranged so that the interviews could be held while the other teachers were teaching. Prior to the interviews, teachers were informed about the purpose of the research and how the research would be conducted. Researchers tried their best not to influence or manipulate them throughout the interview. Yildirim (1999) points out that being close to the sources of information may interfere with the natural flow of the events; therefore, qualitative research may differ from a traditional research perspective and the research has to be conducted without the researcher interfering in the natural flow of the events to collect data subjectively as much as possible. Interview duration ranged from 21 minutes to 43 minutes. Interviews were recorded with a sound recording device to prevent data loss. Identity information was not requested from any of the participants and it was made clear that voice recordings would be used solely for the study. To this end, participants were informed that interviews would be voice recorded prior to the interview and their consent was sought. All the participants granted permission and all the interviews were voice recorded. Besides, participants were also informed that after the voice recordings were transcribed, they would be emailed the transcriptions of the interviews and if participants requested any part of the interview to be extracted it would be done. Only two participants requested to see the transcriptions and shared their email address. However, they did not ask for any extraction from the transcriptions emailed to them.

Data Analysis

The data gathered within the scope of this study was analyzed in line with the content analysis technique. The purpose of this technique is to determine the presence of concepts and connections in the data that can shed light on the phenomenon in question. To reach the concepts and connections that can not be identified with a descriptive approach, data goes through a more in-depth analysis with the content analysis technique (Yildirim & Simsek, 2000). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) current applications of content analysis follow three distinct approaches: conventional, directed, or summative and researchers use all three approaches together to interpret meaning from the content of text data. The major differences among the approaches are coding schemes, origins of codes, and threats to trustworthiness. In conventional content analysis, codes are derived directly from the text data. With a directed approach, analysis starts with a theoretical framework as guidance for initial codes. A summative content analysis starts with counting and comparisons of keywords or content and continues with the interpretation of the underlying context. Within the scope of this study, a directed content analysis technique was employed. To this end, an initial coding system was derived based on the literature for the data analysis. However, changes and additions were made to the codes in line with the findings obtained from the interviews.

There are several strategies suggested for qualitative research to ensure validity, defined as the credibility level of data. The triangulation method is a common and well-known practice of using multiple sources of data or multiple approaches to analyzing data to enhance the credibility of qualitative research (Merriam, 2015). Triangulation is defined as a technique that relies on multiple perspectives for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Creswell (2015) defines triangulation as a technique that improves credibility. For the present study, the use of multiple sources of data was preferred as a triangulation technique. Within this scope, during the interviews, the researcher observed the interview location and took notes.

Besides, participants' changes in their tone of voice, mimics, emotional state, and emphasis were also observed and noted down as they considered as data for qualitative research by Merriam (2015). These notes were used in the analysis and interpretation of transcriptions comprised of participants' expressions. Among the multiple interviews conducted, two randomly chosen samples were analyzed by two different external researchers and coded. The codes put forward by these two researchers were compared against each other. The comparison was made by the two authors of the study. Within this scope, codes were compared against each other and those developed by the two authors of the study. In the end, new codes were added to the ones derived by the researchers; some were merged and all codes were refined to their final version.

In the findings section, findings put forward in relation to the themes and subthemes were supported and exemplified with direct quotations from participants' expressions. In the direct quotations, pseudonyms were used by researchers rather than the real names of the teachers interviewed.

Findings

Student profiles in YBOs

Within the scope of the first sub-problem, the teachers were asked about the characteristics of students attending YBOs in relation to the justice dimension of equity in education. The aim was to identify the kinds of students that enroll in YBOs by exploring student profiles. To this end, the categories and codes regarding the profile of students attending YBOs defined based on the teachers' views are presented below:

Table 4.

Findings on the Theme of Student Profile in YBOs

Categories	Codes
Students having issues with attendance and access to school	Students with no school in their village
	Students who cannot regularly attend their school
Disadvantaged students	Students with financial difficulties
	Students who experienced parental loss
	Students with a broken family

Looking into the findings related to the theme of student profile (Table 4), most students attending YBOs are those that do not have a school in their village or are not able to attend school regularly. Besides, some students had broken families, had lost their mother and/or father, or had financial difficulties in their family. As teacher Fatma says "children who have to stay with their grandparents after their families are broken up prefer regional boarding schools… Most children's parents are divorced." This on its own can be considered as an indicator showing that YBOs provide children in need with an important opportunity. Children who cannot continue their education due to reasons such as the absence of a school in their village, parental loss, broken family, or financial difficulties can receive good education through YBOs. Besides, YBOs also offer great opportunities for education to children whose parents suffer from financial difficulties. Teacher Bilge described this situation by saying "families registered in the school have limited financial resources". Likewise, teacher Ayhan said "YBOs constitute a remedy for those having hard times leaving their children alone." In this sense, YBOs provide education services not only to those who don't have a school in their village but also to those with broken families or financial difficulties.

Teaching and learning opportunities offered in YBOs

The categories and codes identified regarding the teaching and learning opportunities offered in YBOs are given in Table 5.

Table 5.

Findings Regarding the Teaching and Learning Opportunities Offered in YBOs.

Categories	Codes
Advantages of YBOs over other school types	One-on-one interaction between teachers and students
	Opportunity to have a balanced diet
	Accommodation in a healthy environment
An environment fostering student success	Easy Access to teachers
	Opportunity to study regularly
	Relative increase in student success
Differences in teacher profile	High number of inexperienced teachers
	High number of paid teachers

As it can be seen in Table 5, teachers' views on the theme of educational and instructional services provided in YBOs under three categories and eight related codes. In general, it seems that teacher participants prioritize elements such as one-on-one interaction with students, providing students with a balanced diet and healthy environment for accommodation, and a convenient atmosphere facilitating students' academic success. It is seen that these opportunities that YBOs offer contribute to meeting students' needs sufficiently, helping students receive psychological and social support, and fostering students' academic success through the educational and instructional services provided. On the other hand, teacher participants also highlighted the issue of paid teachers and inexperienced teachers working in YBOs.

The first category derived from teacher perspectives obtained within the scope of this research is YBOs having advantages over other school types. Teachers working in YBOs emphasized that educational opportunities offered in YBOs are better than in other types of schools. The fact that teachers interact with the students in study hours on a one-on-one basis and the students are opportune to have a healthy diet and accommodation make these schools advantageous for the students.

Teacher Bilge expresses the adequacy of the educational services offered in YBOs in the following way:

> I personally believe that YBOs have more advantages than disadvantages in terms of educational services compared to other types of schools. Staying away from their parents might be a disadvantage. One of the primary needs of the students is parents but needs like shelter and food are also very important and many children do not have the opportunity to eat healthily in their home. In a dormitory environment, hot meals every day, conditions necessary for a balanced diet, and a warm atmosphere can be offered, which helps students meet their other needs as well. This is a crucial support. Besides, students can reach and communicate with their teachers whenever they have a course-related issue. (Teacher Bilge).

The adequacy of the educational services offered by YBOs was also expressed by another participant, teacher Yeliz in the following way:

> The advantages of studying in such a school outweigh the disadvantages. With the reduction of student numbers staying in boarding schools, tutors and teachers can interact with the students individually, which promotes student success. Incidents taking place in the boarding houses and the high media coverage it has received helped the institutions to draw attention to the issues of boarding schools and opened the door for solutions. (Teacher Munevver)

One of the positive qualities of YBOs is easy access to teachers. Students in YBOs can contact tutors about academic or non-academic issues. Many teacher participants think that the possibility of reaching teachers offered by YBOs is an important opportunity for the students. Another point highlighted by teacher participants is that students in YBOs have the opportunity to study regularly, which positively influence their academic success. Teacher participants all agree that YBOs create a learning environment fostering student academic success based on the easy access to teachers, opportunity to study regularly, and positive changes observed in success.

Regarding the category of variations in teacher profiles, the perspectives of teachers working in YBOs differ. Some teacher participants consider the presence of paid teachers in YBOs as a problem. Teacher Mehmet, one of the participants, expresses the situation in this way: "several issues are experienced due to shortage of tenured teachers…paid teachers may not be competent in the field." Similar opinions were expressed by another teacher: "Better results can be obtained in terms of academic success by working with well-educated permanent teachers." (Teacher Hakan).

Another positive comment made about the teachers working in YBOs is that most of the teachers are young: "Participants generally see the young teaching staff as an advantage. Young and dynamic teaching staff help the students individually with the areas students feel weak in like in private tuition. This significantly affects the quality of the school. The fact that teachers are young and treating students in a friendly manner is also a benefit." (Teacher Pinar). The positive effects of the young teaching staff was highlighted by another participant: "as we have young teaching staff, student-centered education is conducted and everybody does his/her best. This affects students positively" (Teacher Tuncer). These expressions can be considered as indicators showing the positive influence of YBOs in education resulting from teaching staff being more successful and willing to use up-to-date teaching methods. However, according to a teacher participant who has a negative attitude towards young teachers working in YBOs: "But the presence of young teaching staff with no permanent staff in a complete staff constitutes a barrier to the delivery higher quality education." (Teacher Cemil). Because YBOs are located in remote places away from the city center, teachers working in these schools are comprised of novice teachers and teachers with few years of service. Teacher turnover in YBOs is high and therefore not having a permanent teaching staff is considered a problem for YBOs.

Appropriacy of boarding houses and equipment in YBOs

Under another sub-problem of the research, participants' opinion was sought regarding the appropriacy of boarding houses and equipment in YBOs for the

children's developmental and educational needs. The relevant findings for the themes and sub-themes derived from teachers' perspectives are given in Table 6.

Table 6.

Findings on the Appropriacy of Boarding Houses and Equipment in YBOs For the Children's Developmental and Educational Needs

Categories	Codes
Diversity in physical conditions	Play areas
	Multi-purpose hall
	Library
	Social activity areas
	Sports hall
The need for improving school and boarding houses	Limited financial resources
	Environment in line with student needs
	Quality differences among YBOs
	A stimulating school atmosphere

As it can be seen in Table 6, two categories and nine related codes were created on the theme of appropriacy of schools and boarding houses in YBOs to the developmental and educational needs of the children.

The first category which emerged from the opinions of the teacher participants in the study refers to the diversity of physical conditions in YBOs. The areas highlighted by teacher participants are play areas, multi-purpose halls, library, social activity areas, and sports hall which they believe YBOs have at an adequate level. The participants indicated that important progress has been made to improve the physical conditions in YBOs, which have turned YBOs into schools that offer a wide range of physical facilities to children.

This is expressed by one of the participants (Teacher Mustafa) in the following way:

> With the improvements made in the boarding houses, a more effective environment was created for the students. In our boarding house, there are rooms where they can do sports activities, a TV room to play table tennis and spend leisure time, playrooms for various intelligence games, and computer rooms to do research. The important detail here is students have the freedom to choose. The students are free to choose any activity they want. (Teacher Mustafa)

Another point emerging from the statements above is that the improvements in the physical conditions helped the children to feel happier and freer in addition to providing them with the opportunity to do various activities. It is also emphasized that personality qualities aimed to develop children such as a sense of responsibility need to be promoted through extra-curricular activities in YBOs.

The second category emerging from the comments of teacher participants is related to the need for improving the conditions in schools and boarding houses. Some of the teacher participants indicated that the physical conditions of YBOs are not adequate and there are significant differences among YBOs. Teacher David, one of the teacher participants, expressed the reason behind it in this way:

> Having a lot of space and equipment in boarding houses, comfortable and educational areas, a wide range of social activity areas contribute to child development. For all these, not every YBO may have adequate physical conditions. For example, in our boarding house renovations are continuing. In the last two years, the heating system has been changed; WCs and showers were renovated as they were in terrible conditions; bunk beds and closets were replaced to make them more comfortable. Resting rooms were opened and the opportunity to watch TV in these areas was created. However, in my opinion, our ministry should make it compulsory to create social activity areas no matter what the physical conditions of the boarding house are and they should provide the necessary equipment for the schools. (Teacher Fatih)

One of the points that can be understood from what Teacher Fatih said is boarding houses in YBOs may differ from each other. Therefore, a standard on YBOs has not been determined yet. In YBOs, "improvements in the environment of boarding houses have been prioritized over the last few years to cater for the needs of the students" (Teacher Munevver). On the other hand, "boarding houses and areas are effective in promoting children's development and meeting their needs." (Teacher Zeki). As Teacher Fatih stated above, YBOs have many facilities but to what extent they can be used is open to discussion. In other words, the fact that YBOs have certain facilities do not necessarily mean they are functional. For example, children in YBOs do have bunk beds for their personal use; however, to what extent they are clean or if they are too old to be used is not clear. The researchers also observed differences in the YBOs they conducted their interviews in terms of hygiene and the equipment quality in boarding houses. While the buildings, furniture, toilets, and bathrooms in some YBOs were clean and in good conditions, in some others they were in poor conditions.

Another point emphasized concerning the physical conditions of YBOs is the need to offer children the conditions supporting their development beyond their needs like nutrition and shelter.

> If boarding houses are made more colorful and suitable to the needs of the children, these children will be affected by this accordingly in a positive way. To enrich children's minds and souls, social activity areas must be diversified. A rich library and reading places must be built in the boarding houses to allow children to read about other worlds. Resting rooms need to be more comfortable and spacious. Children, who spend their whole day at school, need to be provided with a relaxing environment in the boarding houses. (Teacher Fatma)

As it can be inferred from the statements above, beyond meeting the educational and vital needs of children, YBOs need to be improved in such a way that the school atmosphere can stimulate children's creativity, increase their motivation, and promote their self-worth and happiness.

Students in YBOs being boarding students

Findings on the theme of students in YBOs being boarding students as part of the second sub-problem of the research are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.

Findings on the Theme of Students in YBOs Being Boarding Students

Categories	Codes
Benefits of being a boarding student	Meeting nutritional needs
	Meeting accommodation needs
	Socialization
	Staying away from negative atmosphere
	Psychological counseling
	Having a sense of self-worth
Parental deprivation	Missing parents
	Missing home
	Not being able to meet self-care needs
Tutoring practice	Effective studying
	One-on-one instruction with the teacher
	Access to teachers
Educational activities	Tutoring hours
	Studying on a regular basis

As it can be seen in Table 7, four themes and fifteen related subcategories emerged from the participants' perspectives regarding the students' being boarding students. The findings on the advantages of being a boarding school student in YBOs put forward several related benefits in some aspects. In the first place, many teachers expressed that the vital needs of children such as nutrition and shelter are catered for in YBOs at an adequate level. However, it is particularly emphasized that the contributions of YBOs are far beyond meeting the basic needs of children. Some of the teacher participants expressed that the children who had low self-worth due to the poor conditions at home are observed to have higher self-worth after they stay in boarding houses of YBOs. Some other teachers also indicated that it is an important advantage to help children stay away from the negative conditions related to their parents or home. Psychological counseling offered in YBOs to the children is an important opportunity as it helps them to overcome the difficulties they face, feel better about themselves and study their lessons more efficiently. It was also emphasized that children in YBOs receive more attention than non-boarding schools not only from the counselors but also from all the teachers in the school. Teacher Emre, one of the participants, expressed that the students are both advantaged and disadvantaged in terms of shelter in the following way:

> While students in YBOs are considered more advantaged compared to those in other schools due to constantly being under the supervision of teachers and participating in many activities, these students are actually disadvantaged as they are made to stay in YBOs despite their reluctance, away from their families and have issues about living together with others although a hygienic environment is being created, taking a shower, sleeping in a clean bed, wearing clothes and so on. (Teacher Emre)

Despite all the positive sides of YBOs stated above, the most important need of children that is not met in YBOs is their longing for their parents and siblings. Many of the teacher participants emphasized that children suffer from parental deprivation. In this way, the theme of *parental deprivation* has emerged under the theme of students'

being boarding students. Teacher participants indicated that no matter how good the conditions offered to the children in boarding houses are, they can never replace the parental time and interaction that children need to have. This problem is expressed by Teacher Emre in the following way:

> Their biggest disadvantage is that apart from two days a week, children do not have time to spend with their parents. Besides, even on these two days, children cannot spend quality time with their parents as the families work on the field or are busy with farming and this renders these students more disadvantaged than those in other types of schools. (Teacher Emre)

The same problem was raised by another teacher: "The urge to be with parents might overwhelm them at times" (Teacher Yasemin). A different teacher expressed this issue in this way: "Children generally talk about their longing for their family and we enable them to talk with their parents on the phone if we feel the need and if they wish. We have a chat with children, listen to their problems and help them feel relieved."(Teacher Murat). Some teachers said that they show a lot more attention than they normally do to children to relieve their parental deprivation. Teacher Busra wanted to raise this issue by participating in the interviews for this research as she believes staying away from their parents adversely affects children. Teacher Busra's eyes were filled with tears at times while expressing that children experience homesickness:

> Being away from parents affects children's academic success. Longing for a family and parents makes it difficult for children to adapt to the school and consumes the potential they would use for their education. We are trying to pay attention to these children more and children respond to this positively. (Teacher Busra)

Teachers' views point that being away from the family atmosphere is such an important issue that it casts a shadow over all the benefits of YBOs. On the other hand, some teachers think being a boarding student has a positive effect on children. "Children who are away from their parents do not understand the benefits they have. However, boarding schools are more advantageous for children compared to their previous life." (Teacher Serkan). The point that teachers highlight is that it is more difficult for children to live with their parents as some children's parents are indifferent, have some negative qualities or have limited income:

> Being away makes the child have an indifferent attitude. The child does everything in his way as he faces a family that does not keep track of him or his classes. He makes most of the decisions himself. He continues his classes without paying attention to his success. In this way, he causes his success to decrease as he is not interested in the classes at school. (Teacher Busra)

Although here some teachers emphasized that being with their family does not guarantee the best conditions for them, it is also possible to say that there are some exceptions to this. In other words, due to some disadvantages such as family poverty, poor shelter condition, parents' not fulfilling their parental roles adequately or properly, for some students being with their family might negatively influence them. In such cases, studying in a boarding school would be a better option for them (Teacher Emre, Teacher Ali, Teacher Munevver). Apart from these exceptional cases, the need

for students to have the opportunity to stay with their families while receiving their education was emphasized by many teachers.

The third category emerging from teachers' comments on students' being in a boarding school is tutoring practice. Teacher participants share the opinion that tutoring practice has various benefits for children as it provided such opportunities as effective study habits, one-on-one instruction, and access to teachers if need be. As one of the teachers said "tutoring hours are organized in such a way that the students can revise what they have learned on that day and prepare themselves for the following day. In this way, maximum efficiency can be obtained from tutoring hours." (Teacher Songul).

Some participants said that tutoring hours are not spent efficiently. A reason for this is the high number of students. As a teacher participant says:

> I believe if the number of students is high, tutoring hours are not spent efficiently. Because as far as I have observed if there is no big study hall, it is very difficult for teachers to control the students. However, I think if the hall is big enough for all the students, or if the student number is smaller and teachers can control the students, then tutoring hours can be more efficient. (Teacher Fatma)

Another reason why tutoring hours are not efficient is that students do not have enough time to rest and they feel tired before these hours. A participant touches on this issue: "I am of those who think tutoring hours are efficiently used. Having tutoring hours right after the class leads to physical exhaustion. Instead, it would be more logical to do these hours every other day." (Teacher Engin). Some teachers think tutoring hours are completely unnecessary and therefore they are against this practice:

> Tutoring hours are not spent efficiently because students feel exhausted after a busy day at school and most have a tendency to sleep. The obligation to participate in tutoring hours must be eliminated and it is more important to provide children with more opportunities to play games in terms of self-growth. Students have classes during the day, they attend courses in the evening hence have limited time to study. Tutoring hours can be regarded as the time students do their homework but the practice of giving homework has now begun to decline in our current educational system. Students, who attend a lot of classes during the day and attend tutoring hours on top of that, start to develop a weaker bond with the school. For this reason, tutoring hours must be eliminated and should be organized as play hours, which will be more effective in our current educational system. (Teacher Emre)

These findings show that tutoring hours offer benefits to students like systematic studying and access to teachers and receiving support from teachers. However, it is necessary to make changes regarding the place and time of these tutoring hours to increase their efficiency.

Extra-curricular activities offered in YBOs

The other theme emerging concerning the second sub-problem is *extra-curricular activities offered in YBOs*. The findings related to this theme are presented in Table 8.

Table 8.

Findings on the Theme of Extra-Curricular Activities Offered in YBOs

Categories	Codes
Participation in the social and cultural activities outside the school facility	Going to theatre and cinema Knowledge contest Fairs Trips
Participation in various activities held in the school	Choir practice
	Kermis
	Sports and game activities
	Workshop practices

As it can be seen in Table 8, two categories were identified related to the theme of extra-curricular activities, (1) participating in the social and cultural activities outside the school facility, (2) participating in various activities organized in the school. Teacher participants indicated that there are various social and cultural activities organized and offered to students in YBOs outside the class hours. Among the main activities are participation in the theatre, cinema, fairs, and trips.

Teacher participants emphasized the crucial need for students in boarding houses to be in different environments for a long time sometimes. As a result of this, many teachers think it is important to design as many extra-curricular activities as possible to meet the needs of children in this sense. Teacher Kubra expresses this in the following way:

> Activities like field trips, sports activities, cinema, theatre, knowledge contests, mock exams, science fairs, kermis, agriculture and poultry farming, choir practice, and so on are very important for the students to get to know their abilities, fulfill themselves and restore their self-confidence. Honoring students at the end makes these positive qualities permanent. For this reason, social and sports activities are given a lot of importance. This is what has to happen in such schools anyway. These activities are highly important for the children's mental, psychological, and self-confidence development. (Teacher Kubra)

It is also understood that these activities are organized to encourage students to do academic studies. Teacher Cemil, as a teacher participant puts it in the following way:

> During the academic year, participation in field trips, activities related to theatre, sports, and art is ensured. If these activities have a competitive nature, students with success participate in such activities. If not, students who are good role models are chosen. In some cases, students displaying the smallest bit of good behavior are selected for these activities simply to reward them. (Teacher Cemil)

However, while this situation can be regarded as encouraging for the successful students, it also can be considered as a negative situation for the students who cannot participate in these activities. YBOs having limited resources and opportunities to offer field trips, theatre, sports, and art activities organize these activities with a limited number of students by selecting those displaying pleasant behavior. However, extra-curricular activities organized in YBOs for boarding students play an important role in preventing these schools from being monotonous and promote students' satisfaction in life. Boarding students spend almost all day particularly weekdays in the school

building, boarding house, or on school facility. Some participants pointing to this matter (Teacher Hasan, Teacher Erdem, Teacher Fatma) emphasize that both school and extra-curricular activities must be offered to all students without any prerequisite. Besides, reward practices based on success are criticized as they encourage the students to race and compete. These activities need to be offered to all students studying in boarding schools (Teacher Gonul). Based on Teacher Cemil's comments, in addition to successful students, students who display pleasant behavior are also selected for these activities. While this is motivating for such students, a majority of the students are deprived of these opportunities.

Parent-school communication in YBOs

The other theme emerging under the second sub-problem of the study is parent-school communication in YBOs. Relevant findings are presented in Table 9.

Table 9.

Findings Regarding the Theme of Communication Between Parents and The Schools in YBOs.

Categories	Codes
Parents' indifference	Not keeping track of students' needs
	Not keeping track of student success
Difficulties experienced in communication with parents	Not participating in parent-teacher conferences
	Being reluctant to contact school managers and teachers
Teachers' efforts to communicate with their parents	Teachers implementing home-visits
	Inviting parents individually to schools

As can be seen in Table 9, three categories emerged based on the opinions of the participants regarding the theme of school-family relationships in YBOs: (1) parent indifference, (2) difficulties encountered in communication with parents, and (3) teachers' communication efforts. The opinions of the participants reveal that communication and cooperation between school and parents in YBOs is far from meeting the expectations of teachers working in these schools. Teachers attribute this to the parents' indifference and the difficulty of communicating with the parents. These findings demonstrate that parents are not willing or demanding enough regarding school-family communication. Parents do not feel the need to be in close contact with the school and the teachers after their children have enrolled and sent. However, since the relationships between the school and the parents are very important in terms of the success of the child and the quality of education at school, the school and teachers make efforts to establish and develop parent communication. This process was expressed by teacher Sevgi as follows:

> The relation between students' parents, the school and the teacher is very weak. We find it difficult to get parents involved in boarding schools. We got the attention of some of our parents by visiting them at the beginning of the term and during the term. However, we could not quite

reach the stage we wanted. I think that if the parents were interested in their children, the students in this school would make a difference from the students in other schools in terms of success. (Teacher Sevgi)

As it can be understood from the statements above, teachers show the sensitivity that parents should show. In cases where parents do not visit the school to communicate with teachers, the teachers themselves strengthen the communication by organizing home visits to the parents. As a result of this practice, some parents could be contacted or school-parent communication was improved. Teacher Fatih expressed his experience regarding this subject as follows:

> The relationship between the parents of students, the school and their teachers have been strengthened positively and these strong relations continue because the village-parent visits and the constant invitations of parents to our school make the parents happy considering the positive development of their children at school, and the fact that they are now more involved in activities. For these reasons, our communication with our parents is constantly improving in positive ways. (Teacher Fatih)

Parents' attitudes towards school, education, and their children also help in the success of the attempts to communicate with the parents. A teacher stated that some parents could not be reached despite all efforts: "If the parents give value and importance to their child and their education, their relationship with the school and teachers will turn out to be very positive as well, but, if not, the relationship with the school and the teacher becomes negative or it does not happen at all." (Teacher Songul). While answering the questions on this subject, it could be understood by the teachers' tone of voice and facial expressions that some of them experienced the disappointment of not receiving the expected response from the parents in return for their effort.

In general, the opinions of the teachers working in YBOs reveal that the parents are not very much interested in the school. The teachers attributed this to the low education level of the parents and their very insufficient financial situation. Teachers stated that the most notable difficulties regarding communication with families are that parents are very difficult to reach and parents do not want to come to school even in emergencies.

It is seen that teachers are trying to communicate with the parents through home visits or by inviting them to the school individually to solve these problems. Given that the level of their relationship has a positive effect on children's school success, YBOs seem to be a disadvantage for children, even if the problem stems from the parents. It can be stated that the success of a child may be negatively affected due to the inadequate school-parent communication in YBOs, and to say the least, the child is deprived of an important factor that will contribute positively to her/his success.

Results and Discussions

In this study, YBOs were examined in terms of educational equity with regard to the opinions of teachers working in them. In general, the first important conclusion that is drawn from the research is that a great majority of the students who receive education at YBOs are children that have to continue their education in these institutions since there are insufficient opportunities for them to access and continue their education in the settlements where their families are located. This conclusion puts forth that YBOs have positive contributions to educational equity as these schools provide students with the opportunity to access and continue their education. Another important conclusion reached through the study is that the quality of education provided by YBOs is not inadequate compared to other public secondary education organizations. With that being said, there are problems such as the homesickness of children studying at boarding schools, the quality discrepancy amongst the YBOs in terms of the opportunities and conditions provided for students, and the inability to establish a good rapport between the families and the school. Since such problems have negative reflections on children's education, it was observed that YBOs have aspects that create inequality problems. The research conclusions, which were outlined above, have been examined and discussed in detail below.

In the research, it was observed that a great majority of the students who receive education at YBOs have to continue their education in these schools since there are no schools in which they can pursue their education in places where their families are located. In addition, some of the students studying at YBOs are children whose mother and/or father have passed away, whose parents are divorced, or whose families have financial limitations. It is understood that students pursuing their education in YBOs are the ones who have dire disadvantages with respect to access to education. Therefore, it can be asserted that YBOs contribute positively to the provision of educational equity as they provide these children with the opportunity to access school. These results are consistent with previous studies on the same subject (Basarir, 2009, Dikmen, 1990, Nigar, 2014). In these studies, it was found out that children who study at YBOs are from poor families and are children who do not have access to education due to the lack of schools in the village or in sub-village settlements such as hamlets where they live.

Research findings regarding the quality of education in YBOs pinpoint that these schools do not constitute a disadvantage for students with regard to educational equity thanks to reasons such as having adequate educational opportunities, providing wide access opportunities for students to have access to their teachers, and increasing the success and motivation of students attending these schools. It has also been underpinned in a fair number of similar previously conducted studies that the educational opportunities provided by YBOs are adequate. In the research carried out by Cinkir (2006), it was concluded that students in YBOs receive education of higher-quality in uncrowded classes and with well-planned sources. Additionally, it was emphasized by the teachers who participated in the research that the opportunity to

easily access teachers in YBOs is important for students. Inal and Sadik (2014) concluded that students have the opportunity to study regularly and sufficiently. They do their homework thanks to the study hours and instructor practices in YBOs, and teachers helping students during study hours are well-received by students. Similarly, studies have revealed that the opportunity for students to always have access to their teachers and teachers' opportunity to guide students individually are the positive features of YBOs (Cinkir, 2006). Accordingly, it can be accentuated that YBOs' instructor practice also provides an important educational opportunity for students. These findings are on par with the results of the prior studies on similar subjects. Thereupon, it can be pronounced that in YBOs, students are provided with the educational environment they need. It can be expressed that students studying at YBOs do not encounter a significant inequality in terms of the quality of education.

This research uncovers many problems that negatively affect the quality of education in YBOs. The major ones among these are the problems such as the high number of paid teachers serving in YBOs, the level of permanent teachers' seniority being low, some of the teachers' being reluctant to work in these schools, and the high rate of teacher turnover. It was stated by the teachers who took part in the research that the expectations from the teachers in the boarding schools are higher compared to those in the normal schools and that some teachers are reluctant to work in YBOs due to additional roles and responsibilities. Teachers experience difficulties in assuming the different roles or establishing a balance between different roles, as they do not have information about the education of children with parental deprivation. Previous studies conducted on this subject share that aside from their role of teaching, teachers in boarding schools have informal roles such as parenting and formal roles such as keeping shifts (Koroglu, 2009; Toksoy, 2009). Along with stating that the parenting roles of school administrators and teachers in boarding schools are of great importance for children, Ari and Toksoy articulate that such roles can be emotionally and physically demanding and wearing for school administrators and teachers (Ari, 2002; Toksoy, 2009). Inevitably, the problems faced by teachers working in YBOs and the teacher turnover rate in these schools have negative reflections on education.

The suitability of the dorms and equipment of YBOs concerning children's developmental and educational needs was considered adequate by the teachers who participated in the study. Conversely, it is affirmed that certain standards pertinent to the facilities YBOs have are yet to be created. It was highlighted that there are inadequate YBOs when considering their dorms. Many teachers who participated in the research hold the belief that the conditions of these schools should be enhanced to meet the educational needs of children at a high level. To improve YBOs, the importance of allocating more resources to these schools and taking action based on student needs was stressed. Regarding educational equity, it can be uttered that the minimum needs of children studying in these schools are met pertaining to physical conditions and do not constitute a cause of inequity itself. However, it is difficult to claim that for all YBOs. As can be understood from the opinions of the teachers who participated in the study, certain standards in connection to physical conditions and

equipment among YBOs have not been met yet. When the studies on the subject of boarding schools are considered, it is seen that whilst the inadequacy of dorms, facilities (Ari, 2002; Dikmen, 1990; Isikoglu, 2007; MoNE, 2007; Ulusoy, 2006) and their lack of physical equipment are mentioned, the recently conducted studies mention that significant physical improvements were made in the boarding schools (Aytekin, 2009; Inal & Sadik, 2014). It is of great importance for the standards determined by MoNE (2011) to be met by all the schools to eliminate the quality discrepancy among the YBOs so that the students receive a good education. In this respect, it is of crucial importance that improvement of the conditions of YBOs is mentioned in the document "Vizyon 2023" (Vision 2023), published by MoNE (2018).

According to the opinions of the teachers who participated in the research, although there are positive results of YBOs on boarding school students such as meeting their housing and nutrition needs and making them study more often and steadier, there are also significant disadvantages with the longing for the family being in the first place. The boarding students' needs of nutrition and accommodation are met, and they can communicate with their teachers whenever they need. With the practice of study time, a place is provided for children to study. On the other hand, regardless of all the interest in and care for the children, the most important need of these students who receive boarding education at YBOs that cannot be met is the longing for parents, siblings, and the atmosphere of a home. The views of the teachers who participated in the research point to the aforementioned problem as a situation that is so negative it overshadows all the advantages provided by YBOs. Also considering the findings in line with the fact that family deprivation can prompt psychological and physical health problems in children, it is understood that being a boarder has negative effects on the education and development of the child. Hence, it can be said that receiving a boarding education constitutes an inequality for children. These findings are consistent with the results of previous studies on the subject (Ari, 2002; Cinkir 2006; Inal & Sadik, 2014; Kahraman, 2009; Savci, 2014). In these studies as well, the attention has been drawn to the fact that though many facilities are provided for children in boarding schools, it has been declared that no practice can eliminate the family deprivation of children, irrespective of the facilities provided. With this in mind, there are also advocates of the idea that a school with ideal conditions may be a better choice for children with unfavorable family conditions (Basarir, 2009). It must not be disregarded that these advantages provided by YBOs only apply to children who are at risk due to problematic factors in their families.

In the matter of the adequacy of extracurricular activities, it is found that the teachers who participated in the research generally evaluated YBOs positively. It is inferred that in YBOs, special importance is attributed to extracurricular activities to prevent the negative effects that may arise from the children's permanently being in a school or dormitory environment, and to ensure the multi-directional development of these children. It has been reported by teachers that YBOs organize various events, seminars, panels, conferences, movie and theater shows, and trips that would enable students to be interested in fields such as science, culture, sports, and arts per their level of

development. Bearing in mind the fact that these opportunities can reduce the disadvantages of being a boarder, it can be claimed that they have positive contributions to educational equity. Consistent with the findings of this study, plentiful other studies on boarding schools underline the importance of extracurricular activities for children who spend the whole day in dorms and schools and point out that such activities should be conducted more frequently (Basarir, 2009; Ozdemir, 2009; Simsek, 2010). In the study carried out by Yavas Karatas (2006), it was reported that students complained they couldn't allocate enough time for extracurricular activities even if they wanted to due to the intensive classes. Based on these results, it is implied that it is necessary to give a place for extracurricular activities that would provide emotional and mental support for children studying at YBOs to make them more motivated toward their lessons. It can be punctuated that, extracurricular activities, which have positive contributions to students' academic achievements (Yolcu, 2018), may also contribute to reducing the disadvantages caused by the consequences of children being boarding students at YBOs.

As for school-family communication, it has been deduced that parents are not willing enough to communicate with schools and teachers and that after enrolling and delivering their children to school, they do not feel the need to be in close contact with the school and the teachers. The majority of the teachers relate this situation to the low educational and socioeconomic levels of the parents. Moreover, it can be italicized that parents' limited opportunity to access YBOs hinders their communication with the school. In parallel with the findings of this study, a good number of previous studies on the subject demonstrated that parents of the students attending YBOs do not demonstrate enough interest in their children's education, they leave all responsibilities related to their education to the school, they do not come to school even in emergencies, and that in some regions teachers are not able to communicate with the students, let alone the local people (Ari, 2002; Halici, 2005; MoNE, 2011; Yilmaz, 2012). While children in boarding schools have many problems caused by being away from home, considering the probability of emotional dread owing to the indifference of their families, the inadequate communication between families and school is thought-provoking. Taking into account that school-family relationships are of significant importance to the academic success of a child, it can be argued that the inadequate school-family relationships constitute an inequity for children who study in these schools.

According to the results of the research, certain suggestions intended towards the enhancement of the contribution of YBOs to educational equity can be made. In this research, it has been detected that there may be severe qualification differences among YBOs and that some YBOs' dorms are insufficient. It is of great importance to get rid of the quality differences among YBOs to ensure that students healthily pursue their education. Reducing the teacher turnover rate in YBOs and increasing the number of permanent teachers may also contribute to the quality of education given in YBOs. Another issue spotted in this study is that YBOs have problems with establishing effective communication with families on account of parents' being away from school.

Measures enhancing school-family relationships in YBOs are essential to help schools and teachers meet children's developmental and educational needs. Also, it can be proclaimed that to prevent families from growing apart from their children, it is fundamental to improve school-family communication. An important finding of this study is that children suffer from homesickness, and this situation has the potential to negatively impact their education. In 2012, the YBO boarding primary schools were closed by the Ministry of National Education, and children at the level of primary school are educated within the scope of mobile teaching. It can be suggested to extend the same practice to the secondary school level and to broaden its scope. It is paramount for children in secondary school to be with their families and receive family support during the sensitive period of adolescence. Within this frame, the last that can be said is that YBOs should be turned into an option instead of being an obligation. In the long run, an option to move away from the mission of solving the problem of access to education imposed on YBOs, and to turn to the option of secondary schools serving for a very limited number of high achievers within a needs-based framework could be evaluated.

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Appendix. Information on the participants interviewed

Table 10.

Information on the participants interviewed

Participants	Nickname	Experience (Year)	Gender
Teacher 1	Fatma	6-10	Female
Teacher 2	Bilge	1-5	Female
Teacher 3	Pınar	11-15	Female
Teacher 4	Can	6-10	Male
Teacher 5	Mustafa	11-15	Male
Teacher 6	Mehmet	1-5	Male
Teacher 7	Ahmet	6-10	Male
Teacher 8	Münevver	6-10	Female
Teacher 9	Erkan	6-10	Male
Teacher 10	Gülsün	6-10	Female
Teacher 11	Emrah	16-20	Male
Teacher 12	Murat	1-5	Male
Teacher 13	Yasemin	6-10	Female
Teacher 14	Songül	11-15	Female
Teacher 15	Hasan	11-15	Male
Teacher 16	Ayşe	6-10	Female
Teacher 17	Tuncer	11-15	Male
Teacher 18	Cemil	6-10	Male
Teacher 19	Büşra	11-15	Female
Teacher 20	Aziz	11-15	Male
Teacher 21	Adem	11-15	Male
Teacher 22	Ömer	11-15	Male
Teacher 23	Nihan	11-15	Female
Teacher 24	Deniz	11-15	Female
Teacher 25	Engin	6-10	Male
Teacher 26	Didem	11-15	Female
Teacher 27	Serkan	11-15	Male
Teacher 28	Zeki	11-15	Male
Teacher 29	Sezin	11-15	Female
Teacher 30	Zafer	6-10	Male
Teacher 31	Özge	11-15	Female
Teacher 32	Kübra	11-15	Female
Teacher 33	Fatih	6-10	Male
Teacher 34	Ayhan	6-10	Male
Teacher 35	Ali	11-15	Male
Teacher 36	Hakan	21-25	Male
Teacher 37	Kemal	6-10	Male
Teacher 38	Erdem	11-15	Male
Teacher 39	Gönül	11-15	Female